IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

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Within Mahdiology's Qura'nic Civilization: The Theoretical Foundation and Practical Examples: A Holistic Approach

Ali H. Al-Hakim[1]

Abstract

This article tries to establish the crucial elements that are required in each and every civilization, while highlighting the fundamental definition and conditions for the Qur'anic-Islamic civilization that is considered the prevailing and ultimately the final one, which shall never be overshined. Some recent incidents have been highlighted, due to the fact that they represent perfect examples of both clash and complementarity of civilizations.

Introduction

In this article we have asked and tried to provide the answer to the following questions:

Are there different forms of civilizations?

What are the crucial and fundamental elements of each

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and every civilization?

What are the distinctive features between various forms of civilizations?

Do civilizations stand in direct clash or are they in a status of peaceful dialogue or even an alliance?

How are the issues of a 'humane civilization' addressed in the Qur'anic revelation?

How would this form take precedence over other unwelcome forms of civilizations?

We shall address the answer to the first three questions in the first section, while the rest is addressed and answered in the second.

What is civilized and how should civilization be approached?

There are different approaches as to how one should look at and analyze civilizations, as normally men don't feel any difference in approaching them, while feminists have been critical of Western civilization. They may describe it as: "The history of gender *struggle* that has been presented and viewed (obscured and mystified) as a history of male deeds and thoughts, from which women have been absent as a result of the constraints of reproduction and motherhood." Accounts which, "In fact trace the chronology of the historical development of *patriarchy*, a coincidence that appears to escape scholarly attention."[1]

However, in this article, the intention is to present the abovementioned matters from a holistic approach that elaborates on the theoretical foundations while highlighting some Qur'anic references as to how an ideal civilization designed, following Islamic and Qur'anic principles, should be. For an Islamic researcher, the instructions by Imam Ali (as) to Malik al-'ashtar could be impressively inspiring and

1. (Ruther Bleirer 1984, 198, 199) as cited in 'A Feminist Dictionary' by Chris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, Pandora Press, London, 1985

should be described as the ideal foundation of a civilized religion, or rather the exemplary political philosophy and practical guidelines dictated by a perfect leader of a Qur'anic-Islamic civilization. He states in one of the excellent phrases:

'*Malik! You must create, in your mind, kindness, compassion and love for your citizens. Do not behave towards them as if you are a voracious ravenous beast and as if your success lies in devouring them.*

Remember, Malik that amongst your citizens there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to, they commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect Allah to show mercy and forgiveness to you."[1]

Indeed, no religious thinker, or any civilized theoretician could have spoken better than that. Based on this, we shall now delve into answering the previous questions that were posed at the beginning of this article.

First Section

To answer the first questions, one ought to examine the various civilizations that have existed throughout the history of mankind. Some of them still exert their influence on the descendants of those nations. The answer would certainly be affirmative, as there were and would always remain different forms of civilizations. All of the ancient

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1. See 'A Perfect Governor', by late Grand Ayatollah S. Muhammad Fazil Lankarani, transl. and edited with annotation by Ali H. Al-Hakim, p. 14, published by IJCA, London, 2012

civilizations have perished for a pivotal reason; namely, they lacked the fundamental elements to prevail and exist eternally.

Crucial and Fundamental Elements Needed in Every Civilization

One may claim that: 1) 'water', 2) 'earth able to be cultivated and built on', 3) 'human thinkers', 4) with a 'specific Worldview' 5) and certain 'legal and moral systems' are the crucial elements to establish any civilization. The first three are needed for establishing any form of urbanism, while the rest are required for forming the civilization. If these are the crucial elements needed in any civilization, one is easily led to discern the conclusion that any differences between dissimilar forms of civilization lie within those five different elements. As such, the first three questions are answered. However, we feel the need to quote some Arab thinkers' ideas in this regard in order to strengthen the presented answers. The best example amongst the Arabs is Malik bin Nabbi.[1]

A Quote to Support the Idea of Needed Thought and Thinkers

In an essay entitled '*The Role of Thought in the Construction of Civilizations*' and dealing with the analysis of Malik ibn Nabbi's ideas, a researcher says:

"…After this swift presentation of the elements that compose a civilization, and after we have cited the role of man in this issue as is reflected by Malik ibn Nabbi's writings, this writer added an important point to the views of sociologists. He wrote about the 'compound' in whose

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1. See chapter 7 entitled: Islam wa Tamadun: Dar Andisheh Hasan Hanafi wa Malik bin Nabi', in the book: 'Kawesh Hay Nazari dar ilahyat wa Tamadun, by Habibullah Baba'ie, pp. 249-288, published by Peshuheshga Farhang wa 'ulum Islami, Qum, Spring 3014

frame the aforementioned elements (i.e. man + time + soil) work.

This compound is no more than thought, which is, in the view of Malik, the philosophy of life that derives its directives from religion. Hence, the elements that compose a civilization are incapable of creating a civilization unless this thought (i.e. compound) is available, because thought can melt all these elements so as to make them active, positive, and contributive in the construction of civilizations.

As a matter of fact, the writer is correct, to a great extent, in the historical investigation that fathomed the worlds of human civilizations throughout history and lived closely with the features of modern civilization in Europe. It thus circumambulates the history of Islam through which it prospects the features of the Muslim civilization and then travels to the civilizations of China, India, Persia, and Japan; and it never mistakes its criterion in the incentives of civilizations and the foretokens of their evaporation.

As for Malik ibn Nabbi, religious thought enjoys a comprehensive, expansive image; it is thus 'the goal', 'the reason for existence', 'the philosophy of life' or even the elements of response and challenge argued by Arnold J. Toynbee, a British historian.

So, therefore, we are vis-à-vis a sort of 'believing', be it believing in Allah according to religious thought or believing in a manmade principle from which the philosophy of life is formed. He believes that religious thought was, in one way or another, the motive lying behind the launch of the majority of ancient and modern civilizations.

This 'believing' of various appearances can alone explain for us the vitality of `Ammar ibn Yasir while he was carrying two rocks to share with the Holy Prophet (sawas) in the establishment of the Medina Mosque, the foremost

feature of Islamic civilization. It is thus not untrue, or it may be the most acceptable opinion, to say that religious thought -in its capacity as possessing the all-inclusive outlook about man, universe, and life as well as pre-existence and post-existence concepts- has the capability, more than anything else, of making active men progress far beyond geography, species, and color.

The aforementioned discussion has been cited through noticing the dangers encompassing modern human civilization and threatening abatement.

This matter draws our attention to the point that, however man may be able to set up a civilization in which he keeps himself a little bit distant from religious thought, he will not be able to maintain it for long.

In the same way as thought is important in cultural construction, its absence in the stages of cultural decline is of the same importance.

Malik says: It is imperative to stop at this fact; the reason for any misfortune that afflicts any society in the outset of a perilous history is not the scarcity of 'things'; rather, it is the scarcity of 'thoughts.'

This concept is applicable to our present Islamic world whose 'things', which are definitely imported, are many, but which lacks vital 'thoughts.'

This, however, does not mean that such vital thoughts must be traditional or must be modern, since the most important point in this regard is that these thoughts be of 'subsisting' specifications.

In summary, Malik's concentration on thoughts in the process of constructing a civilization is based on his understanding of the actuality and philosophy of civilization. Being different from 'materialization' that stands for the material achievements of a nation, civilization is 'a sentimental structure involving high spiritual values,

which motivate a community and all that is revolving around it, such as metaphysical, ethical, social, and aesthetical philosophies.'

For Malik ibn Nabbi, these are 'a set of material-spiritual qualifications that grant a certain society the opportunity to provide the necessary assistance for each individual belonging to it at each of its phases.'

Even such 'materiality' is no more than a reflection of the society's values, views, or philosophy about the universe, and man; it is the meeting point between Malik ibn Nabbi's understanding of the rise of civilizations and the understanding of the researchers who came before him.

As has been noticed, Malik ibn Nabbi has preceded all the others in concentration on the function of thoughts that he considered the compound, spirit, and incentive of civilizations because these thoughts, for Malik, hold sacred characteristics that are obtained from Divine aid."[1]

Based on the abovementioned quotes, it is time to critically elaborate on the various terms and their technical meaning and dissimilar indications, and to provide the answer to the last three questions. This is to be dealt with in the next paragraphs.

Second Section

Some Necessary Distinction

We don't feel the need to distinguish between Islam and Muslims, nor between Islam and [Iman] faith, i.e. the profound and emotional affiliation and practice of the Islamic faith. The reason is obvious, as the first two terms

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[1] Most of those quoted ideas were mentioned in Arabic references, but one can see chapter 7 entitled: Islam wa Tamadun: Dar Andisheh Hasan Hanafi wa Malik bin Nabi', in the book: 'Kawesh Hay Nazari dar ilahyat wa Tamadun, by Habibullah Baba'ie, pp. 274-288, published by Peshuheshga Farhang wa 'ulum Islami, Qum, Spring 3014

are clearly known, while the second set is also known amongst Shi'ah thinkers. Their distinction and knowledge is based on the Qur'anic verse: 'The Bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." Qur'an, c. 49: V. 14

However one feels the need to distinguish between the following terms:

The Terms: The Islamic Civilization vs. the Muslim Civilization;

The two terms were often intermixed and wrongly used referring to each other's meaning. I believe that the same logic that was applied in the previous Qur'anic verse should be applied here. Muslims may have established a civilization that has reached East as far as China, while in the European direction, they may have been close to the West as far as Vienna and Andalucía. However, claiming that the moral principle that this civilization was based on is identical with Islamic values, ethical systems and social norms is a far-fetched claim that is constructed on a wild utopian expectation. The details of this distinction are inspired from the previous distinction between Islam and faith [Iman].

The Terms: Urbanism vs. Civilization;

While human beings throughout history used to live in caves or like wandering Bedouins, once they had settled forming cities and larger neighborhoods, gradually the term 'urbanism' was about to be formed amongst socio-anthropologists. On this level, they did not necessarily rely on a specific Worldview, nor were their social structures based on special ethical and social systems.

On the other hand, the term 'civilization' is solely

referring to the system and those compounds of different cities –which in turn represents urbanism- and communities that are united under a civil ruler and organized through certain regulations, forming a standardized 'greater social unit', namely [ummah] a 'greater society'. This comprised the necessary element for establishing a somehow highly structured urban society, or rather multi-ethnic society that easily encapsulates cosmopolitan principles to be adopted by other people. Therefore, we don't have any civilization throughout mankind's history, unless it was based on previous urbanism. As such, one believes that the answers to many questions posed at the beginning of this article have been given. Therefore, it is time to highlight the distinctive features of the Qur'anic-Islamic civilization, which will be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

The Qur'anic-Islamic Notion about the Required Elements:

One feels the need to be inspired from the Qur'anic verses as to how a Qur'anic-Islamic civilization is to be designed and formed. As one has researched the Qur'anic verses, one cannot claim that the technical term: 'civilization' [حضارة], nor its derivatives, was used. However, the implicit reference to it is indirectly implied through other technical terms, and words such as: '*Hayat Tayybah*' good life, or even '*Kalimatu Tayybah*' good creation.

With Regards to the First Reference

We read that the Qur'an has made it explicitly clear that only while following the right path and the Qur'anic teachings, would one be able to achieve happiness and eternal satisfaction both on earth and in the life-hereafter. The Qur'an states in Surah 16, verse 97, which speaks about the right path life-style '*Hayat Tayybah*' the following:

'Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to **live a good life**, and We will surely give them their reward [in the

Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.'

The previous Qur'anic verses which start from verse 90 are all referring to the discussion of 'Ummah', which in Qur'anic terminology refers to 'the civilized nation', as much as we read in the Qur'an about the 'Moderate Ummah', which is the perfect identification of the 'Rightfully civilized nation'. We read in the previous verse 95, the verse, which states: *'Do not sell Allah's covenant for a paltry gain…etc.'.* The occasion of revelation –as mentioned in various books of Qur'anic exegesis- was after a man came in to the presence of the Prophet (sawas) and said: "O Allah's Apostle (sawas)! I have a neighbor, [namely Umra' Qays], and he has seized a part of my lands." The Prophet of Allah (sawas) called for Umra' Qays, but he denied everything. The Prophet (sawas) asked Umra' Qays to swear by Almighty Allah (swt). He was about to swear, when the Prophet (sawas) stopped him and said that he should take some time to think twice before swearing upon the Almighty name of Allah (swt)." The two men left and it was then that the above mentioned holy verse revealed the warning of consequences of false swearing. When the Prophet (sawas) recited these two verses for them, Umra' Qays said: "The man is right. I will give back his land to him, and will even give him more than what really belongs to him." As soon as the man completed his statement, the third holy verse revealed saying: "Whoever acts righteously, whether male or female, should he be faithful, we shall revive him with a good life.

The Holy Verse includes saying: "We will surely pay those who are patient their reward by the best of what they used to do." The word [احسن] 'Ahsan' best, used in this holy verse, shows that not all good deeds are equal in their virtue, as some acts are very limited and the participants short-sighted, while others deeds and actors are global and civilized. As such, some of them are good, while others are

better. But Allah the Almighty (swt) will give the best reward for all of them, and this is Allah's (swt) generosity while giving rewards to the faithful in this life. The reason is obvious as the reward is equal, and would be an overwhelming and all-inclusive reward, which would apply to this life and to the hereafter. Therefore, it is indeed an all-inclusive reward and the best. Therefore, we insist that this verse is a clear explicit reference to the Qur'anic-Islamic civilization.

The Second Verse:

With regards to the second references, one reads: regarding the Qur'an, the following contemporary Iraqi politician wrote about the composites of the Qur'anic-Islamic civilization as being inspired from the relevant Qur'anic verse as follows:

'The composites of civilization as can be concluded from the Holy Qur'an are to be found in many Qur'anic verses, but the following Qur'anic verse, mentioned in Chapter: Ibrahim (no. 14) might comprehensively hold eight composites of civilization.

The Eight Composites of Civilization in the Light of the Qur'anic Verse:

"Do you not consider how God makes a parable? A good word may be compared to a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches soar up into the sky. It yields its food each season with its Lord's permission. God composes parables for mankind so that they may be reminded."[١]

These elements are as follows:

1. *Word* (Principle of monotheism): This *word* is not a mere expression of an utterance or statement; rather, it entails many concepts and notions. Although many explanations have been given to the expression *word*, its all-

١. Holy Qur'an, Chapter Ibrahim 14, verse 24.

comprehensive meaning can be put in the *word of monotheism*; that is, the belief that there is only one God. This term inclusively refers to the religion of natural disposition that God placed in man and on which He created him and which provides man with an internal content and a spiritual understanding of life, by which the true believer is distinguished from others, distanced from their beliefs and religions.

2. *Good*: This is an indicative of purity and clearness. Originally, the description *good* is said to describe whatever is found delightful by the senses and enjoyed by souls.

3. *Whose root is firm* (genuineness): The root of everything is its base whose all other parts are high due to its height.

4. Whose branch is in the sky (civilizational aspect): The branch of a tree is its twig. Thus the branch of that tree being in the sky is understood from two aspects. The first aspect is tallness; therefore, this word is used to express something's height. The second aspect is width. Likewise, the word is used to express the expansion of something.

5. *It yields its fruit*: This is an expression of productivity.

6. *Each season*: This is an expression of continuous giving, since the word *season* indicates the time of maturity and cropping.

7. *With its Lord's permission*: This is an indication that this tree belongs to the Lord in identity. The Arabic word [*rabbi*] Lord is originally derived from education and raising, which is used to express the process of rearing something through the different stages of its existence until it attains perfection. Yet, this word (Lord) refers to God exclusively, because He provided the beings with what is useful for them.

8. *For people*: This means that the scope and goal of this word is purely humane.'[1]

1. See 'tahaluf al-Hadharat, by Dr. Ibrahim al-'ashiqar al-ja'afari, pp. 15-25, →

He is right in mentioning all of those composites; however one must emphasize that these are the element required solely for establishing an Islamic-Qur'anic civilization, not for any non-specific civilization. As such, these composites are to be summarized as follows:

1. It is based on a Worldview that must be described as excellent and good. This to be grasped from points 1+2.
2. It possesses characters that apply to two dimensions: Material and Spiritual, as only then it would be able to fulfil the everlasting need of all human beings. This to be grasped from elements 3+4.
3. Its main and crucial distinctive feature is that: it belongs solely to the Almighty Lord (swt), who would constantly and continuously bless it with His Mercy to provide pragmatic solutions and human-friendly useful products that shall serve each and every human being. This to be grasped from elements 5+6+7+8.

A Modern Approach

Based on the abovementioned ideas contemporary thinkers of far-east Asia were correct in highlighting the version of 'Civilized Islam' [Islam Hadhari] as was introduced by the previous Prime Minister of Malaysia, i.e. Abdullah Badawi. In an academic approach that attempted to produce those ideas for the academic milieu, we read in a book entitled, 'Islam Hadhari', whose foreword was written by Muhammad Ajmal, that Dr. Badawi summarized ten elements as fundamentally needed for a civilized Islam as follows:

Profound faith and God-wariness;
A trustworthy and just government;
The Defence-ability, that enables deterrence;
Protecting minorities and defending women's rights;
Independent society's members;

published by Mua'assat al-Kitab, Baghdad, 2015

The Priority of knowledge;

An overwhelming and well - balanced economic development;

Protecting the environment;

To establish a standard life-style and well-fare state.'[1]

There is no doubt that such a program for any nation would lead to success and ultimate prosperity.

An Elaboration on the Instruction of Imam Ali (as)

A Contemporary thinker has elaborated on the previous instruction of Imam Ali (as) to Malik as follows:

'The false claimants of human rights who believe in equal rights for all the people of the world, when coming to practical grounds, not only do not observe the equal rights of people but do not even consider the slightest value and importance for the minorities of their countries. If we cast a glance at the pages of history, we will see that, in recent times, the occupiers of Palestine not only have occupied and snatched the houses and lands of the Palestinian Muslims, but also do not even want the existence of the most simple and sad life for the real owners in their own homeland. So every day they [the claimants of equal rights for all people] kill a number of oppressed Palestinians or exile a group of them to the mountains and deserts.

But Islam is not so. The proofs for this saying are the good behaviour of the government of the Islamic Republic towards the religious minorities [who enjoy complete peaceful equality]….We can see how Imam Ali (as), after distributing the people seeking shelter of the government

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١. Most of those quoted ideas were mentioned in the book: Islam Hadhari, but one can see 'paywast 1 entitled: Tarjumeh wa Talkhis: Islam Tamaduni: Pouli Miyan Sunnat wa Tajadud', in the book: 'Kawesh Hay Nazari dar ilahyat wa Tamadun, by Habibullah Baba'ie, pp. 398-391, published by Peshuheshga Farhang wa 'ulum Islami, Qum, Spring 3014

into different groups, advises Malik al-Ashtar to consider all of them equal and distribute their rights equally amongst them without allowing the slightest prejudice among them.'[١]

Towards the End:

Let us first examine some of the civilized aspects that are globally available as first hand materials. Some civilized phenomena:

On the individual stage: When a free minded thinker embraces a new faith not related to his/her previous religious background, he is likely to be is more academically developed and to have a keen perspective with a profound worldview. There is no doubt that the person becoming Muslim is a sincere member of his society, and enters it by use of his reason, intellect, and free will. If we define a "civilized" person as one who opens his/her mind to the truth and seeks it from authentic sources (which, for a Muslim, is the Qur'an), then surely 'embracing' is the most civilized of phenomena.[٢]

On the social collective side: When one insists that any form of a prevailed civilization and 'human-friendly globalization can only be accepted, if it fulfils the following conditions:

All of the programs -regardless of which field and for what purposes they are designed- should take all of mankind's natural needs into consideration. One should also remember that there is a life hereafter where each individual will stand responsible for whatever has been committed.[٣]

All of the programs -regardless of which field and for

١. See 'A Perfect Governor', by late Grand Ayatollah S. Muhammad Fazil Lankarani, transl. and edited with annotation by Ali H. Al-Hakim, pp. 96-98, published by IJCA, London, 2012

٢. See 'Current Issues: A Shi'ah Reflection, by Ali H. Al-Hakim, p. 46, published by I.A.F., London-Oslo, 2015

٣. Kitab Naqd, Dr. Ramin Khanbegi, p. 3Year 5, Nr. 4, Year 7, Nr. 1, Tehran/I.R.Iran, 2003

which purposes they are designed - should accommodate the material as well as the spiritual and Divine values of all mankind's various beliefs.

All of the programs -regardless of which field and for which purposes they are designed - should remain firm with zero-tolerance towards any form of injustice, pointless discrimination, futile invasion or oppression.'[١]

These words and examples are encouraging, if we were to re-examine mankind, his thoughts and its achievements for the last centuries. However, there are a number of incidents that lead us to reflect about the actual conditions of the various civilizations.

Recent Incidents and the Clash of Civilizations

Few individuals have read the name of the late Spanish soldier -a member of the UNIFIL peacekeeping forces-, who was killed during an Israeli attack on the location of the peacekeeping forces in Southern Lebanon on 28.1.2015. His name was not widely disclosed to the public.[٢]

A few weeks before this, European youths were shocked, due to a terrorist attack on French soil, performed by former members of ISIS, who had returned from Syria. They had been trained as professional killers in order to promote French style democracy in Syria. Upon their return to France nobody was able to predict their actions, based on minds fully loaded with anti-social xenophobic hatred combined with bitter feelings, due to the near collapse of the self-proclaimed caliphate and the so-called Islamic state. All the European nations were under shock, but so were the Muslims who couldn't understand why anyone would use

١. See 'Current Issues: A Shi'ah Reflection, by Ali H. Al-Hakim, pp. 85-86, published by I.A.F., London-Oslo, 2015

٢. See: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/29/spain-calls-un-inquiry-death-spanish-peacekeeper-lebanon
Accessed on 14.4.2015

the slogan: 'Allahu Akbar' [God is great] merely to subsequently kill civilians, known only for their provocative cartoons. Since then many youths have carried the political cry: 'Je suis Charlie', as a direct impulsive reactionary response to those terrorist acts. One has no doubt that terrorist attacks are disgusting. No one desires to be killed in the name of God, nor after hearing the slogan of 'Allahu Akbar'.

When the previously mentioned incident took place in Lebanon, did every single individual amongst the majority of those youths ask him/herself the following question: 'Would I -as a European youth- expect to be killed by an Israeli air strike or by mortar shells, when, for the whole of my entire life I have tried to be an ambassador of peace?'

If they had asked this question, I have no doubt that the answer would have been: Of course not!

However, in this chaotic milieu -regardless of how much a great activist one can be for promoting peace- I'm sorry to predict that unfortunately no one can guarantee surviving attacks, either by a few bullets, an air strike, mortar bomb-shells, or, who knows, a natural catastrophe (such as a Tsunami), due to human negligence of nature and milieu!

The fact is that incidents like these should lead each and every Western individual to stop for few minutes to reflect and think twice: Which side -at least – would I prefer to be on, if I were to die or be assassinated in this chaotic world of insanity and flagrant violation of the minimum levels of human rights?

Referring back to the Israeli attack on Lebanon, one can still claim that -at least- the name of the Lebanese young man, who was assassinated by the Israeli air strike, amongst other military members as well as the Iranian revolutionary guard member, Gen. Allahdadi on 18.1.2015, was disclosed

as: Jihad Mughniyah.[1]

The question is what was in the minds of those Israeli perpetrators who fired the bomb-shells, or those who dropped the bombs over the victims? For me, it has removed all doubts that those agents -whether a pilot involved in the airstrike or those who fired mortar shells directed to the southern Lebanese villages- were shouting deep within their hearts: 'Long Live Israel!

As such they are also crimes committed while whispering the name of a nation or for the sake of God! The only differences are that those terrorists revealed their motives, while these Israeli perpetrators were hypocrites, as they preferred to conceal the motives behind their acrimonious attacks. Israel has never acknowledged responsibility, in fact has rather denied anything but a miniscule knowledge about the Iranian general amongst the convoy. Jihad Mughniyah, on the other hand, was not important for them to be counted, as he was a son of a terrorist -and those terrorists, at least in Israeli 'justified' logic- ought to be killed with their sons as well family members, as they did in the murder of Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi in the early nineties. He was assassinated with his wife and son.[2]

Here lies the whole fundamental question: If these were not civilized acts, why weren't they condemned by other civilized nations? If these were not civilized acts, then why does one deny the theory of 'Clash of Civilizations'?[3]

That is the crucial cause as to why one felt the need to

١.See:http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/top-iranian-general-hezbollah-fighters-killed-israel-attack-syria
Accessed on 18.4.2015

٢. See: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/399459/Abbas-al-Musawi
Accessed on 18.4.2015

٣. For further details, see the Clash of Civilizations, by Samuel P. Huntigton
http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Huntington_Clash.pdf
Accessed on 18.4.2015

espouse another moderate theory, which adopts a moderate pathway between contradiction and complementarity.[1]

Whatever the answer to the previous questions would be, one can certainly claim the following here:

'Je ne suis pas Charlie, mais Francisco Javier Soria Tolido, ou Jihad Emad Mughniyah'= 'I'm not Charlie, rather either Francisco Javier Soria Tolido, or Jihad Emad Mughniyah'.

Conclusion:

- In this article we have tried to answer six questions that are essential in order to be able to grasp the technical meaning of civilization and what were and are the crucial elements of any form of civilization.
- One has grasped the fundamental and crucial elements that are needed in the Qur'anic-Islamic civilization, after a clear distinction was presented between the Islamic and the Muslim civilizations.
- Towards the end, examples of good and encouraging cases were produced; however some worrying cases have been highlighted to pin-point the already existing clash and complementarity of the various forms of existing civilizations.

١. See for further details, 'Current Issues: A Shi'ah Reflection, by Ali H. Al-Hakim, pp. 133-134, published by I.A.F., London-Oslo, 2015

The Ethical Presence of the Absence

Dr. Kurt Anders Richardson [1]

The indubitable Book, a guidance to the God-fearing who believe in the Unseen (Qur'an 2:1-2)

The absent Imam (**al-ghadib al-imam**)[2], the Redresser of truth (**al-Qāʾim**), is the divine cause of believers' expectant waiting for the reign of God's righteousness upon the earth. Until then, the Imam's absence is a witness to an authoritative presence by which believers are pointed to righteousness and deterred from corruption. Indeed, his occultation is his divine preservation in righteousness and sinlessness by means of the Justice (**'adl**) and Grace (**lutf**) of Allah. This presence of absence is the confirmation of moral responsibility (**taklif**) and therefore moral agency of all believers.

The absence of the twelfth Imam is like that of any true prophet whose absence does not affect the validity of his

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٢. The locus classicus: "And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'indeed, I am setting a viceroy in the earth."" Qur'an 2:28; as well as 11:17: "And before him is the book of Moses for an Imam and a mercy"; and 'We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings.' (Qur'an 21:107) and "Know that God revives the earth after its death ..." (Quran 30:18).

divinely guided doctrine and judgments. The basis or ground of this occultation, for whatever duration, is determined entirely by Allah in the secret council of his will. The Prophet is said to have declared:

Even if there remains for the world but one single day, God will lengthen it until he sends a man from the people of my House, whose name will be the same as mine, and the name of his father will be that of my father. He will fill the world with justice as it is filled with oppression.[١]

Indeed, it is by absolute necessity that the Imam be absent in order to achieve God's desired ends for the development of faith among believers. It does not merely follow that if the Imam is not present he must be absent, but that it is necessary for faith, since believers do not live by their trust in things seen, but unseen. Indeed, the Imam is occulted precisely that he might represent the divine realm of the Unseen. This is the necessary condition for the proof of God (**hujjat allah**) fulfilled at the divinely appointed time by his appearing and not before, for the guidance and salvation of humanity. This fundamental condition of faith is the occultation of the Imamate fully analogous to the termination or sealing of prophecy with Muhammad's mission[٢]. The scriptures providing guidance to and from the Unseen (Qur'an 2:1-2) conveys truth not only of all creation and the proofs of the prophets who have ascended to heaven but also the Imam who will return (Parousia) on the Day of resurrection.

The total Unseen is the absent proof (**al-hujjat al-gha'ib**) concerning the Imam, whose rule "…in the earth" (Qur'an 2:28) is most excellently exercised only from the dimension of the Unseen. Scripture points to this (in Qur'an 10:21),

١. 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, cited by the Shaykh al-Tusi, Ghayba, 112.

٢. Cf., A.A. Sachedina. Islamic Messianism. Albany: SUNY Press, 1981;

"They say, 'Why has a sign (**aya**) not been sent down upon him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Unseen belongs only to God. Then watch and wait; I shall be with you watching and waiting'". Until the Most High brings an end to the time of waiting, the sign and the proof is the Unseen. Analogously, Allah declares, "and We made the son of Mary and his mother, to be a sign," (Qur'an 23:52), i.e., a proof. This was God's revelation of the story of the Unseen (**ghayb**) to Joseph in the sign of a dream (Qur'an 12:102).

It is not necessary for a unit of measurement to have actual existence. Rather, like hypothetical lines in geometry, a unit of measurement may be formed by hypothesis and supposition. It is not necessary for its actual existence to be established by concrete knowledge and proofs.[١]

The Unseen is the infallible condition by which God guarantees and prepares salvation by his grace at the Parousia, the return of the Imam to establish for all creation God's normative divine order[٢]. Until then, to be present is to live within and under the fallible conditions of the world. Under the conditions of the present, nothing can be perfected; only the waiting for the revelation of the Unseen, infallible, can the conditions be elevated by divine Grace to the condition of the perfect which belongs to Allah alone. Until then, believers rely entirely upon the guidance of the scriptures by the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of Allah who once inspired the scriptures and ever applies them to their hearts and minds for their joyful obedience to God as they wait for the Appearing. Greater than any present imam, the occulted Imam encourages the deep internalization of the Word of God which is the basis

١. S. Nursi. Man and the Universe. Tr., S. Vahide. Istanbul: Sozler, 1987, p. 22.

٢. Cf., W. B. Parsons. The enigma of the oceanic feeling: Revisioning the psychoanalytic theory of mysticism. Oxford: Oxford University Press,1999.

of any true ground setting for his Parousia. The occultation of the Imam was indeed a necessary part of God's design for the cosmic order.

After the occultation, there was no obstacle to the spread of this belief as the power of the Imams was transferred to the Unseen; intercession from heaven is their great role for believers.[1] The Imam in his occultation is enabled by God to minister universally wherever believers trust in this provision:

And before him is the book of Moses for an Imam and a mercy (Qur'an 11:17) We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings (Qur'an 21:107).

Essential to his being sent is his occultation by divine command. Unless the Imam is absent, he would not be dwelling in the sole abode of infallibility and thus leave the world bereft of the only certain temporal means of divine guidance. All of this is according to the immutable divine purpose. In this way believers have the guarantee of their salvation by God's grace, based upon an infallible Word of promise. "There is at all times an imam sent by God from Adam to Noah to Abraham. The imam must be infallible in the sense of free of falsehood because how could a person not free of falsehood destroy it?"[2] The Absence is the best vehicle for the diffusion of this truth of the divine promise in the world. The Absence reinforces the fundamental principle of the Spirit of God for faith rather than anything visible, which can become an idol[3]. The Absence is the most

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١. Cf., S. A. Arjomand. The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

٢. Muhammad Ibn Tumart. Kitab A'azzu ma Yutlabu [The book of the most precious thing desired]. Ed. Abd al-Ghani Abul- 'Azm]. Rabat: Mu assasat al-Ghanmi[]ac r li l-Nashr, 1997, p. 297.

٣. Cf., M. Sells. Mystical language of unsaying. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994; R. Otto. The idea of the Holy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923.

excellent means by which the wisdom of God is internalized within the human heart for the expression of true faith. The Absence connects believers to the Unseen (Allah, Himself). The Absence that is the occultation reinforces the truth and experience of faith. This is necessary because any direct use of the fallible structures of this world would inevitably tie believers to its fallibility, testing them with uncertainty rather than confirming their faith. But because of the invisibility of this spiritual reality, a profoundly integrated mode of ethical being is infused within the believer. Together and individually, believers become the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, transformed by this Spirit into instruments of gracious transformation in the world. Absence is the truest basis for ground-setting.

The communicative function of the written letter or word is to make present the absent subject of a text. Ancient poetry reflects this:

Man has been created to open and unveil (the treasuries of Divine Names and Attributes), be a luminous sign (guiding to God), receive and reflect (Divine manifestations), be a light-giving moon reflecting the Eternal Power, and be a mirror for the manifestations of the Eternal Beauty.[١]

Now a letter is a kind of converse in writing, occurring in the absence of writer to addressee and fulfilling a requisite goal, but a person will speak in it as if in the presence of the addressee[٢].

Even if I have been separated from you for a long time,
I suffer this in body only; for I can never forget you nor

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١. Nursi, 1999, p. 300.

٢. Pseudo-Libanius, quoted by, H. Koskenniemi. Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr. (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, B.102; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1956: 38-42) cited in Jane M.F. Heath, "Absent Presences of Paul and Christ: Enargeia in 1 Thessalonians 1–3", JSNT 32.1 (2009): 3-38, pp. 5-6.

our irreproachable upbringing that we shared from childhood.[1]

The classic term is **enargeia**, meaning "absent-presences" that come by means of a scripture or pregnant text of belonging. The sense of belonging is critical and is something that makes scripture so unique and incomparable as the text witnesses to the fact that all things belong to God the Creator – he is the Lord of all since he made them and therefore is the owner of creation[2]. Moving from the philosophical to profound sense-perception conveyed by the revealed text guarantees the reality of what was perceived

O God, the mirror of your beauty is this heart.
Our soul is rose petal and your love like the nightingale.
In the beauty of your light I see myself without a self
Thus in this world every one's intent is he himself[3].

Thus I saw everything clearly. Then something dawned on me: nothing was allowed to remain of me and my quest except what God desired. And now for years I have had no occupation except seeking to be annihilated in this thing; and God is the source of help in completing what I have turned my face toward[4].

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١. Heath, Ibid., p. 11; cf., S. Goldhill, "The Naïve and Knowing Eye: Ecphrasis and the Culture of Viewing in the Hellenistic World", in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 197-223.

٢. Cf., R.K.C. Forman. Mysticism, mind, consciousness. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999; W. Chittick. Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of imagination. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989; M. Heidegger. Phenomenology of the religious life. Trans. M. Fritsch and J.A. Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

٣. From a verse by Ahmad Ghazzali in 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani, Tamhidat, 4th ed., ed. 'Afif 'Usayran (Tehran: Manuchehri, 1991), sec. 366, 281–82, on the Hadith: "The believer is the mirror of the believer" from Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab al-Mufrad (no.239) from Abu Dawud, Eng. tr. (3/1270/no. 4900).

٤. Rida Quli Khan Hidayat, Tadhkarih-yi riyad al-'arifin (The Biography of the Gardens of Mystics), ed. Mullah 'Abd al-Hussayn and Mahmud Khawnsari (Tehran: Intisharat Kitabfurushi Wisal, n.d.), 109.

God has chosen the means of his presence to be realized through the Holy Spirit working in and through scripture so that, "those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance" (Qur'an, 42:32). This is nothing other than the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) by which believers enter into the presence (*hadrat*) of God, "tasting" (*dawq*) and "seeing" *(didar*) the spiritual things of God to the point of highest joy (*jazba*) in Him. As the believer comes to appreciate deeply the names (*asma*') and attributes (*sifat*) the personal sense of the Word (*logos*) of God, the heavenly or spiritual Qur'an (*lawh al mahfuz*) becomes the source of contemplation. The Spirit (*ruh*) or the Light of Muhammad' (*nur-e muhammadi*) provides a direct relational awareness and vision of God transcending the textual and the prophetic as they are perceived beyond the printed page as the true substance of this revelation[1]. By this means, contemporary speech, when so imbued by the spiritual Qur'an, can achieve consistency with the divine presence and will for creation. In this way both the literal prophetic revelation (*nabuwat*) and its true spiritual reality (*wilayat*) exhibit their spirit and light.

The influence of the Unseen Imam, although absent, deepens the experience of the Divine covenant with believers. Beginning with the forgotten covenant with Adam (Q 21:115) that included the knowledge of the appearing of Muhammad, Alı', Hasan, Husayn, and the imams among their descendants. This covenantal relationship is indestructible since it is the highest Creator / creature relation established by God. This is an ethical basis of feeling and action based upon the attraction to righteousness: "If God wishes good for His servant, he

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١. Cf., I.R. Netton Allah transcendent: Studies in the structure and semiotics of Islamic philosophy, theology and cosmology. New York: Routledge, 1989.

makes his body and his spirit (*ruh*) excellent, so that whatever good he hears he knows [to be good], and whatever bad (*munkar*) he hears, he rejects"[1] When we remember that faith (i'ma'n) is the fully internalized faith relation with Allah and that *Islam* ('submission') correlates with the externalities of formal religion, true believers (*mu'min*) are of the former, wherever they may be.

The continuing absence (*ghaybat*) of the Twelfth Imam and return as the Mahdi require in every generation a faith where outward practice is a given but the source of faith and endurance in love for God is the inward attachment to the imams and ultimately to the Spirit of God. Only by this inwardness of faith where its truths are in a kind of concealment (*kitman*), can the hidden reality of the Mahdi be known in the spiritual path of allegiance (*walayah*). This hidden (*bāṭin*), internalized faith and knowledge (*`erfan*) is also necessary in the face of changing signs of the possibility of the Return while it is experienced as a result of God's ability to alter his plans (*bada'*) the knowledge of which is virtually miraculous, by inspiration and angelic communication on a continuing basis in the occulted life of the Imam.

The internalization of faith in God is a massively fruitful approach to assist humanity in the struggle to know God. Such spiritual knowledge encourages an approach to others that is based upon tolerance (*tasahol va tasamoh*) so that enemies will become only rivals and rivals will become friends. The approaches of rejection and elimination (*tard va hazf*) must be replaced by 'kindness' of Allah in believers' imitation of him. By this means acts of ruling among human beings can allow for individual freedoms (*horriat-e*

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1. Kulaynı', Al-Ka'fı', vol. 3, p. 3. From the sixth imam; cited in, L. Clarke, "Faith and Unfaith in Pre-Occultation Shiism: a Study in Theology and Social History", Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, Vol. 15, No. 1, 109–123, January 2004, p. 111.

shakhsieh) in a common trust that is holy, amicable, of loyalty and devotion. Such a condition of tolerance and trust, based upon the condition of Absence and yet the imam's spiritual presence (*hurqalyā*), is one imbued by divine grace (*baraka*) gifting believers with every kind of humanitarian resource under Allah's provision. To consider the Appearing (Parousia) is to embark upon a program of transforming modernity into a deprivatized, post-secular world. One profound possibility is the manifestation of Usulism in order to create a global tradition of monotheism that can adapt to any social situation for the common good of humanity.

This leads us to a number of considerations.

Presence is defined by God's being and is known entirely by God's mercy, not by the will of the human being.

The Imam represents the establishment of a state of affairs that virtually perfects the human beings associated with him. This state of perfection has twelve virtues which reflect the Imam's characteristics:

He should by nature be fond of justice and of just people, and hate oppression and injustice and those who practice them, giving himself and others their due, and urging people to act justly and showing pity to those who are oppressed by injustice; he should lend his support to what he considers to be beautiful and noble and just; he should not be reluctant to give in nor should he be stubborn and obstinate if he is asked to do justice; but he should be reluctant to give in if he is asked to do injustice and evil altogether[١].

This well-known passage is not a final authority it does

١. Farabi, Abu Nasr. Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abu Nasr al-Farabi's Mabadi Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila: A Revised Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary. Trans., intro. notes, and commentary by Richard Walzer. Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 249; cf., Alireza Omid Bakhsh, The Virtuous City: The Iranian and Islamic Heritage of Utopianism Utopian Studies, Volume 24, Number 1, 2013, pp. 41-58.

communicate a condition requiring divine bestowal (*nass*). Nothing in this worldly human rule can compare with it, nothing even in our religion can compare unless an ultimate divine act of return bring about both the revelation of the man and of the state of Allah's perfect rule through him.

It is incomparably important to acknowledge that God's and the Imam's absence are vital to the necessity of growing by insight, acquiring those skills of the soul by which we transcend the bodily perceptions to know Allah[1].

This is not meant to be an apology for esotercism or even mysticism – though these have their place and role – particularly after the resurrection where those who prefer the delights of unbroken communion with God will have utterly no interest in the delights of paradise. What can achieve and sustain union with God in this life? This is the fundamental question of religious community. Under what conditions is such a union possible? What are the privileges and that limits of divine / human union in this life?

In order to answer these questions adequately – and because only "adequateness" of knowledge is really necessary, although there are superior knowledges as there are superior powers – and therefore with great liberty for the immense population of humanity and the uniqueness of each individual. But above all this is divine being and action. Indeed, because God is infinite in his livingness and fullness of goodness and love, God's being is ever in his act and in all of God's acting is his being. It is this eternally and infinitely living Being of God that has freely determined to bring being out of non-being; that which had not existed now exists by the sovereign act of God's will.

This is the nature of revelation that is first imparted through the created order, then through prophets and finally

١. Cf., Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Une absence remplie de pre´sences. Herme´neutiques de l'occultation chez les Shaykhiyya (Aspects de l'imamologie duode´cimaine VII)", Bulletin of SOAS, 64, 1 (2001), 1–18.

through the conjunction of the Last Day and the figuration of fulfillment in the One through whom final reconciliation comes; indeed, this is the Presence (**Parousia**) that can only be by divine initiative.

We know Mahdistically that God concentrates his divine mercy and salvation through the appearing of a mediator. Revelation is always an act of supreme condescension to the creature by the Creator. The human being is of course the supreme creature among creatures, but he is subject to all the conditions of creatureliness: finitude, ignorance, disease, conflict, unkindness and untruth. Because of this bad possibilities and realities in life, revelation comes by way of highly fallible means into the world. God's Word behind or within human words is of course perfect and incorruptible; the problem is with human words. Yet, because of almighty love, God can and wills to reveal himself not only by his unbounded power and skill but also in acts of pure goodness in creation and supremely in acts of loving-kindness and grace. God creates as he reveals; God reveals as he creates, all as manifestations of his grace. Until that initiative is realized in the achievement of the pacification of all Allah's enemies and contradictors, the world is defined by Absence. This should be obvious, since the Presence is an absolute corrective. The world with the Mahdi's presence is the only true triumph of righteousness, as anticipated by the holy Qur'an and all true scripture.

This Absence is not a mere absence, a lack of basic goods or of beauty or of truth, it is the unique Absence of that which is now hoped for and is the basis for ground-setting ethics. Faith must exercise the presence of absence. This presence and its characteristics (**enargeia**) are divinely orchestrated, connected with a special location of occultation, is enveloped in divine glory, focused in spiritual desire for God and his covenant, a pattern for true faith everywhere, a longing for God's reign, a strengthening of love, patience with the conditions of present time.

But there is a kind of suffering under God's test of humanity's faith by imposing this Absence upon them. Every kind of personal and communal malady can be addressed by faith in the mercy of Allah. The bringing to an end of suffering and injustice is something that is entirely conditioned upon the will and timing of Allah. Nothing that human beings do either in prayer, recitation, ritual or discipline can hasten the day of the Appearing. Thus, because in this most special of all cases Allah the prayers for the Appearing at any particular time of human requesting or observation are actually not in accordance with Allah's will. The Absence for however long with whatever conditions this absence imposes upon humanity and particularly upon believers is therefore not something bad, but a good.

So we must discover, what is the good in this Absence? This good is not a secondary matter but a primary one. And this goodness cannot be merely that to be tested by Allah is advantageous for demonstrating faithfulness. In the first instance, Allah tests only those who belong to him. To experience the testing of faith in Allah's anointed is a demonstration of relationship with Allah, since Allah does not test the faith of those who have no faith. It is extremely important that the prophethood of all believers and general quranic literacy and that of scientific education be advanced for the common good in all countries, beginning with the faithful. Confidence in the capacity of a learned populace to develop adequate decision-making while maintaining religious law in principle are key as well.

It is crucial that believing forms of order do not see those whose calling is instruction in scripture to be the control of vice or everyday behavior by the populace. Because the nobility of every human being is the responsibility of teaching in God's ways, participatory **shura** is necessary as a procedure for common life in the Absence. Because the human condition is not capable of receiving the marks of

perfection in its present state and must wait for the clothing with divine life that is the resurrection, multiple strategies for acquiring knowledge must be used. These are basic to all tafsir in the form of epistemologies that grasp, however partially, a real perception of reality. The more effective epistemological strategies one can learn and practice, the more one is able to get a kind of depth perception of the one reality from which and to which all creation is extended.

There is first of all the "everyday-ness" of perception; that tacit sense of knowing by moving and decision-making among objects and subjects. There is secondly the awareness of language and its metaphorical nature. The multiple signs and symbols in a sensible comment, shared in conversation with another, has a linguistic system at its disposal. There is utterly no organic connection between words and their objects, except the conventions of communication that bind them together. There is thirdly the communal function of understanding, witnessing how persons around us have behaved in certain situations of stress, each one of us begins to accept the bases of recognition within a community. There is fourthly the individual function of perception which is quintessentially the free exercise of personal judgment by which one is both accountable and courageously inventive. Fifthly, and finally there are those images of the mind by which we abstractly conceive of time, space and mass where we form one-for-one correspondences between what we see and what we think we see – and felt, etc, according to sensory and intuitional perspectives. In this final step, the radical heteronomy of externalities, including our embodied selves, has become, through introspection, to achieve a kind of radical homogeneity through the formation of an identity – where all things are mine and I am of them. This is the equilibrium in the one, where the unity of things in their origin becomes a radical singularity in consciousness and therefore in conscience as well.

Human knowledge of the Creator / creature relation is one of sense perception and intuition and correspond to two main hermeneutical 'axioms':

1) Reality is bifurcated into domains of the manifest/ exoteric and of the hidden/esoteric;

2) The universe is a macrocosm with the corresponding human being as microcosm.

Everything that is not God belongs to this created universe, along with everything that belongs to the human being's relationship with God. In order for Allah to reveal himself he had to create a capacity for any revelation at all to be comprehended by human beings – this is what it means to be "created in the image of God" (**imago Dei**). Where God is not revealing himself – beyond the "natural revelation" which is ignored due to pride and failure of gratitude – which can be very positive and in this case supremely so, where the fulfillment of the age with the Appearing is not yet. This is God's creative absence, where on account of the not yet arrived Mahdi, God instills in believers the necessity of preparedness and of anticipation of the already known virtues of the Mahdi's kingdom: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control – against which can no law ever be written.

…and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him). (Qur'an 3:3)

The prophetic expectation of the One to come, as known through the divinely inspired scripture, can now never be unknown; there is no possibility of unknowing now that this unique Absence of the yet to come Presence has been revealed. The world has been notified of the coming and this knowing cannot become un-known. This expectation is the ground of all believing ethics. The divine assurance provides believers with constant reassurance for the living of everyday in this Absence.

This is the living hope by which all humankind is to live, even if known to the faintest degree, yet known[1]. True expectation, living by this living hope, can take two ethical modes that are properly held together as the fundamental starting point and maintenance of ground-setting[2].

The first is a complete renunciation of efforts to bring about the Presence of the One, since this is the sole prerogative of God, who neither needs human assistance nor reveals his own counsel as to the perfect time of the appearing of this Presence. This renunciation is extremely important as vulnerability to false Mahdi's is a sign of vital belief regarding the true Mahdi. Not only is renunciation based upon the ontology of the Appearing – it is purely and utterly an act of Allah alone, but also, living with this renunciation makes believers far more alert to the reality of false-Mahdi's. The second is a complete engagement with the world, first among believers and then of all humankind and all creatures.

This is the role of the co-regency of believers with God who must imitate his present actions. These actions of Allah are entirely characterized by the divine forbearance, patience, mercy and loving care for all living things. The guiding principle in act believing action is imitation of divine action. Being created in the image of God, human beings are called to action in imitation of God. This must be encouraged, no matter how partial and faulty human responsiveness may be. The creation is a multi-religious world of varying degrees of truth and error. This mixture continues until the human is made right by the appearing of the Mahdi and the exchange of absence for presence of

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١. Cf., M. M. Dakake. The Charismatic Community: Shi'ite Identity in Early Islam. New York: State University of New York Press, 2007.

٢. Cf., J. Casanova. Public Religions in the Modern World. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994.

divine cosmic justice and love.

Give the human proclivities to error and pride, that any follow Allah is a miracle of the first order. We know that just a few devoted witnesses can change the world in already in terms of ground-setting for the Madi.

God makes the rain fall upon the just and the unjust, so as to induce, perhaps, a universal return in faith to the Creator. Whatever the outcome for the present, the believers who so think and act are performing the summit of human potential in the imitation of Allah, until the appearing of the Presence and the perpetual elimination of the Absence and the temporal necessity of ethical ground-setting.

No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things. (Qur'an 6:103)

Because the glory of God cannot be fully known by creatures, when the Absence is exchanged for Appearance, even then, God's greatness beyond all creation will be hidden; and this is to his greater glory: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (Qur'an 24:35). In the meantime, believers are to cultivate the inner vision in order to gain the insight (**basirat**) needed for genuine faith.

By way of conclusion, the ethical presence of the Absence, our covenantal relation with Allah includes any suffering that He is suffering in this relation. Everything else in divine mercy emanates from this Creator / creature reality. We are not God, no matter how close we get to Him; no matter how much we make His thoughts our thoughts, as the great prophet Elias surmised a little too much about himself. He like all of us have been and will be forgiven. And it is precisely this space and no other that the mercy flows from us, only creatures that we be, nevertheless, it is as deeply transformative as original creation. To be agents of the divine mercy is the supreme task of the human creature – we have been created as co-creators with Him – this is why the angelic hosts must bow, pure and simple (Q

2:30–34). Since it is to God that all glory must be given, to be a bearer of glory is glorious unto itself, having become part of its nature. To live to bring glory to God among men is part of salvation. Again, it is derivative, since we are ever His creatures; but it is, nevertheless His gift to and through us for the world. There will be different out-workings, different sharia on this; but above all, it will be an utterly internalized sharia; something that is akin to the glory that is not ours but is flowing through us. The threat of choice is utterly neutralized because it is always made within a realm of mercy.

This is the ethical man that we must become for the realization of that Day of Appearing, for which we hope and are already re-made by the possession of this hope. It is enough in this flesh if for a time and hopefully unto our death that we were occupied by this hope. It is not that we would have no joy upon that Day and forevermore. But hope produces its own all-encompassing yet finite joy that this body may enjoy. This joy is its own reward, perishable though it may be – it will be raised immortal. This hope in the immortal cannot in this condition fully know the immortal since it must be had by resurrection. So hope is a taste of immortality that together with scripture, or rather because of the Holy Spirit's guidance and in-filling through scripture, we receive new eyes, the eyes of the heart, by which we see everything in the world as objects of mercy. We understand them and love them while not disregarding their evils – which must be purged.

What is the benefit of this knowledge? It is that we can know that we are beloved; and this makes a new human being out of the old. We are the same person, but transformed by the hope that has been made possible by this knowledge of the beloved. The knowledge of love is the taste itself within this hope. What God is after is the formation of an ethical being through and through. Not that the human being is ever out of reach of temptation, but that

such people are already functioning in the mode of love. Some might claim that such an internalized sharia is nothing other than a privatization of religion but this is not the case. Instead, modern believing is characterized by the elevation of every human being that is living by faith. Privatization implies that relegation or isolation of faith to a realm quarantined from public life. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Instead, the internalized sharia is nothing more than the internalizing of scripture and therefore of God's Word. Such internalization empowers the devotee of the Word and makes him or her instrument and thereby becoming an instrument of elevating others by faith. Internalization renders institutionalization irrelevant at best and obstructionist at worst. Institutions and offices are invariably coercive –but there is no coercion in true religion. Most importantly, the Word of God is far more effectively disseminating to the mass of humanity– far more may benefit from its inspiration through such propagation.

Moral Virtues and Family Crisis

The application of moral virtues in the foundation of family

A comparative survey in the context of moral theology

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Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to determine the current family crisis, recognizing its inaugurations and instigates. This attempt directs the reader realizing some expositions of the problem and coming across a solution for the crisis within the context of moral theology. The family crisis, as we will observe, is on the loss of the moral functions of the family. The lack of moral virtues in family today is one of the greatest threats to the family and is actually weakening the foundation of family progressively. Following certain directions of religious teachings, observing moral obligations, and returning to spirituality are some of solutions examined and scholarly recommended in this research.

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Introduction

Whenever we pursue the problem of morality or ethics[1] we face the question of values and their application in human life. Likewise, in a religious context, the observation of values requires a specific consideration within which one may conceive and interpret them in the realm of moral theology. Now, the most important question is what is the relationship between religion and life values? Is there any specific moral system which is only based on religious values?

In the case of family[2] and the characterization of moral values in its foundation, the question today has received a more critical examination. Is there any room for morality in the foundation of family? To what extent do moral rules and virtues conflict or accommodate with legitimate rules and disciplines? If they are adjustable, how and by what criteria would the function of moral virtue(s) be evaluated? And if they are in a practical conflict, which of them has the priority for application? And finally, what is the role of religion[3] in all the above perspectives? These questions and some other related ones have urged modern thinkers (in

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١. Technical definition of the two terms: ethics and morality are very close. It is said that ethics is the explicit, philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices. The difference between ethics and morality is similar to the difference between musicology and music. Ethics is a conscious stepping back and reflecting on morality, just as musicology is a conscious reflection on music. Morality refers to the first-order beliefs and practices about good and evil by means of which we guide our behavior. Contrast with Ethics, which is the second-order, reflective consideration of our moral beliefs and practices.

٢. Later on I will have a more terminological approach to the notion of family.

٣. I mean by "religion" here a more general sense of theological rules and principles that might be found in most divine religions. In this paper when I use the term "religion" in a general sense I mean mostly the two Abrahamic Religions: Islam and Christianity. However, there are other approaches to the notion of religion, at least in the case of Islam, such as Rizvi's understanding when he says: '…religion in Islamic definition is a complete system of life." For more details, see S. M. Rizvi, Marriage and Morals in Islam (Toronto: IEIC, 1994), p. 1-3.

different fields such as Theology, Sociology, Political Sciences, and Social Sciences) to pay more attention to the function of "social ethics" in general, and to the application of morality and moral virtues in "the family" in particular.

It is obvious that the questions of morality and values dealing with the position of the family in the wider society, both traditional and modern, are fundamental in any discussion of family relationships. Moreover, in his discussion of family, one has to consider the connection between these values on the one side, and conduct between family members, their rights and their responsibilities, on the other. In this consideration, religion in general seems to play an important part, especially although not exclusively in the case of Islam and Christianity.

The family is a crucial focus for any divine religion and moral theology, not in the sense of being the "bedrock" of society, but because the kind and form of family understood and created by a divine religion is one of the most outstanding characters of the religion's social significance. On the other hand, one may not neglect and disregard the influence of religion and religious matters on family life and family values, even in the modern and post-modern societies.[١] These two remarks could be the reason why the relationship between religion and family in different fields, including morality and values, has received certain considerations and developments.[٢]

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١. It is held that this influence is by no means straightforward or predictable. This statement could be true in some cases such as Western or Christian societies. However, one may say that this is not generally applicable in every religious societies. See David H. G. Morgan, "Family," in Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society, edited by Paul Barry (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 371-374.

٢. For instance, see David H. G. Morgan, "Family," in Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society, edited by Paul Barry (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 371-374. Morgan argues that the relationships between religion and family are very complex.

Now it is the time for religion, or specifically moral theology, to first clarify the notion of family and, secondly, to particularize the role of moral elements in its foundation. If we accept that, for instance, the religious terminology of the family is understood as an intergenerational institution, it would contrast with the current understanding of the family as an interpersonal association between individuals. Consequently, we might face new approaches to the nature and significance of family which could effect the application of morality and moral virtues in the family.

Based on these introductory points, what I am pursuing in this paper is a comparative approach to the question: what does religion (mainly Islam and Christianity) offer as the moral basis for family and family relationship? In other words, in this comparative research, I am looking for those similar or different moral elements that have been propounded and advised by the two religions as the noble bedrock for the foundation of family. What would be the moral principles the members of a family have to observe and develop if they want to remain religious, and desire to keep and promote their family, as well as their society, in a religious context?

Methodologically speaking, I will employ a descriptive method by which I would be able to explain and characterize the conceptual aspect of the study. Mainly in my analysis and critical observation, I would prefer to rely on a set of methodological diversity, including some analytical and critical examinations. With regard to the sources and documents on which this study relies, I will refer to both classical and modern texts within the realm of ethical sciences and moral theology. To examine these two methodological approaches in the context of modern development, I will hopefully overlook some of the contemporary writings about the related issue.

I will organize the theme of my discussion in this research in the following order: First, I will examine the definition

and typology of "moral virtue," then I will approach the term "family" and its related points; thirdly, the notion of morality and family, as well as their relationship will be examined. Finally, in the conclusion, I will comment on some conclusive points, and raise some related questions for further developmental research in the area of moral theology.

I. Moral Virtues

The Concept of Moral Virtue[١]

According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, the origin of "virtue" comes from the Latin *virtus* (manliness), paralleling the Greek term *arete* (excellence). Recently, *virtue* and *vice* have been largely replaced: in the singular by "good" and "evil," "right" and "wrong;" and in the plural by "values" and "disvalues."[٢]

In a historical approach, the variety of linguistic observations of a single technical term has to be highly considered and well understood. For instance, the usage of ethical terms in general and the word `virtue` in particular has been developed within linguistic domain and cultural

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١. The author who has contributed most to this discussion of virtue is undoubtedly Alasdair MacIntyre in his three principal books: After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; second edition, 1984); Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1988); Three Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1990). The Italian edition of the last book, Encyclopedia, Genealogia e Tradizione (Milan, 1993), includes a special introduction on MacIntyre and a biography. I should also like to mention the article by Martha Nussbaum, "Virtue Revived," Times Literary Supplement 4657 (July 3, 1992): 9-11.

٢. W. L. Reese, ed., Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 613. The term "virtue" is usually defined as moral excellence, uprightness, and goodness. It is also identified as a particular moral excellence, chastity, good quality or influence, efficacy. Oxford Illustrated Dictionary, 1987.

context. In his *Preface to Logic*,[1] Cohen points out the danger of relying on the too easy equivalence of the Greek word *areté* with `virtue` in discussing Aristotle's view of the `virtuous` man. He remarks that the English word `virtue`, which is used almost exclusively as the equivalent of *areté*, is very misleading; *areté* would be more accurately rendered as `excellence`, the object of admiration.

A historical analyst has to keep in his mind that if the view of what it is `to do good` varies from society to society, from culture to culture, and from time to time, then the semantic structure of the word `good` itself must of necessity be different in each case.

It seems that for an accurate understanding of the technical term "virtue" one has to consider its historical development as well as the variety of observations which have been examined in different contexts.

The Historical Development of Moral Virtue

The notion of virtue has received a diversity of perspectives through the history of philosophy and ethics. For Plato (428-348 B.C.), there is a close relation between virtue and knowledge to the extent that "virtue is knowledge." Maintaining the four Greek cardinal virtues (i.e., wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice), Plato, in comparing virtue and vice, holds that "virtue is the health, and beauty, and well-being of the soul, and vice the disease, and weakness, and deformity, of the same."[2]

However, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) distinguishes between theoretical and practical reasoning and places morality under the category of practical reasoning. He describes virtue as "a state of character concerned with choice, lying

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١. Morris R. Cohen, A Preface to Logic (London, 1946), p. 16.

٢. Plato, The Republic, narrated from A. I. Melden, ed. Ethical theories (New Jersey: 1967), p. 61.

in a mean, i. e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it."[١] Elsewhere, according to Aristotle's definition: "moral virtue is a mean between two vices."[٢] A virtuous life means doing the right thing in the right way to the right person to the right degree; that is, it involves the ability to determine the golden mean, and this is the mean between extremes.[٣]

It is easy to observe that, in the Aristotelian language, virtue is classically called a *habitus*. Thus, it is by the repeated experience of good actions that we acquire the art of applying virtues in the moral order. Indeed, he stresses the importance of moral virtues; and finally, moral virtues, according to Aristotle, involves the rational control of human desires.[٤]

In medieval discussions, the particular virtues described by Aristotle and the ancient Greeks became known as the cardinal virtues. Medieval thinkers (mostly theologians) added to these the theological virtues which appear in the New Testament: faith, hope, and charity.[٥] Virtues were the mainstay of St. Thomas's moral teaching. For St. Thomas, as for the ancients, virtue was the noblest of human, moral qualities. The virtues, for St. Thomas, are multiple:

١. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, narrated from A. I. Melden, ed. Ethical theories (New Jersey: 1967), p. 106.

٢. Ibid., p. 109.

٣. W. L. Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 32.

٤. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

٥. "Cardinal virtues" is a term introduced by St. Ambrose. For the Greeks, and for Plato, there are four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Among the Scholastics the cardinal virtues were seven in number. They included three additional theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. See W. L. Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 80.

intellectual, moral, theological.[1] Following Aristotle's ethical theory, Aquinas holds that the virtues which one gains by an Aristotelian analysis must be complemented by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. [2]

So far, we have seen a variety of definition, content, and number for the notion of virtue, while one may argue that the above mentioned perspectives derived from the same origination. This general understanding of virtue, which is derived from its Greek origination, has had a great influence on both Islamic and Christian ethical system. However, with the waning of the Middle Ages and the rise of the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment thought, the influence of Aristotle's virtue ethics declined.

Now, by reviewing the historical development and observing the variety of examination of the term "virtue," it is the time to have a glance on the definition, scope, and content of the term in the religious context. Islam and Christianity, the two largest world religions, have their traditional and historical observation about the issue.

The issue of moral virtue could be examined in different areas (such as traditional, historical, theological, and philosophical) and from several perspectives within the realm of each religion. In a comparative survey, one may approach the notion of virtue in the tradition of two religions: Islam and Christianity.

Religious Approaches to the Notion of Moral Virtue

In Christian development of the notion of "virtue," one has to consider the fundamental ground of the moral theology from which the notion of virtue has been derived.

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١. See S. Pinckaers, The Sources of Christian Ethics (Washington, DC: 1995), p. 225.

٢. See W. L. Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 24.

It is traditionally clear that the foundation of ethics, in general, and moral virtue, in particular, is based on two elements: faith and love. In this regard St. Thomas says:

"Virtue consists in the following, or imitation, of God. Every virtue, like every other thing, has its type [exemplar] in God. Thus the Divine mind itself is the type of prudence; God using all things to minister to His glory is the type of temperance, by which man subjects his lower appetites to reason; justice is typified by God's application of the eternal law to all His works; Divine immutability is the type of fortitude. And, since it is man's nature to live in society, the four cardinal virtues are social [politicae] virtues, inasmuch as by them man rightly ordains his conduct in daily life. Man, however, must raise himself beyond his natural life unto a life Divine: `Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt., v, 48). It is, therefore, necessary to posit certain virtues midway between the social virtues, which are human, and the exemplary virtues, which are Divine. These intermediate virtues are of two degrees of perfection: the lesser in the soul still struggling upwards from a life of sin to a likeness with God -- these are called purifying virtues [virtutes purgatoriae]; the greater in the souls which have already attained to the Divine likeness -- these are called virtues of the purified soul [virtutes jam purgati animi]. In the lesser degree, prudence, moved by the contemplation of things Divine, despises all things earthly and directs all the soul's thought unto God alone; temperance relinquishes, as far as nature allows, the things required for bodily wants; fortitude removes the fear of departing this life and facing the life beyond; justice approves of the aforesaid dispositions. In the higher perfection of souls already purified and firmly united with God, prudence knows nothing but what it beholds in God; temperance ignores earthly desires; fortitude knows nothing of passions; justice is bound to the Divine mind by a perpetual compact to do as it does. This degree of perfection

belongs to the blessed in heaven or to a few of the most perfect in this life." (I-II:61:4)

Here, St. Thomas explains several kinds of virtue. He holds together with the four cardinal virtues the three theological virtues, especially with Divine charity, the virtue which informs, baptizes, and consecrates, as it were, all other virtues; which associates and unifies them into one powerful effort to participate in the Divine life.

As charity stands at the summit of all virtues, so faith stands at their foundation. For by faith God is first apprehended, and the soul lifted up to supernatural life. Faith is the secret of one's conscience; to the world it is made manifest by the good works in which it lives, "Faith without works is dead" (James, ii, 26). Such works are: the external profession of faith, strict observance of the Divine commands, prayer, filial devotion to the Church, the fear of God, the horror of sin, penance for sins committed, patience in adversity, etc.

In a traditional understanding of charity, one finds that charity inclines man to love God above all things with the love of friendship. The perfect friend of God says with St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal., ii, 19-20). For love means union. With the commandment to love God above all Jesus coupled another: "And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark, xii, 31).

Justice as a moral virtue accepted by Christian tradition, which gives every one his due, is the pivot on which turn the virtues of religion, piety, obedience, gratitude, truthfulness, friendship, and many more. Jesus sacrificing His life to give God His due, Abraham willing to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's will, these are acts of justice.

It is remarkable that almost every act of virtue proceeding from the Divine principle within us has in it the elements of all the virtues; only mental analysis views the same act

under various aspects.[1]

On the other side, we may mostly find the same elements and foundations of moral virtue in the Islamic tradition. Faith and love are two elements of moral virtue in Islam. However, in a traditional approach, we find two more fundamental elements for moral virtue: *`Ilm* (knowledge or learning) and *Taqwa* (piety or fear & love). These two elements are highly considered by the Holy Quran as a basis for moral relationship between man and God, man and man, man and himself. In this regard, a clear definition for righteousness is given by the Holy Quran:

"It is righteousness to believe in God and the last Day and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask; and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayers, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing." (2/177)

As we see here, righteousness and virtue is a mixture of both belief and practice. A virtuous man is he whose faith should be true and sincere, be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to his fellow-men, be good citizens, supporting social organization, and his own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances.

`Ilm[2] or knowledge plays the first role in Islamic moral

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١. In his book, Hauerwas has dedicated one chapter to the discussion of the virtues. Examining the past and current status of the virtues, he has fairly considered the relationship between the virtues and the human nature. For a full discussion, see S. Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 111-128.

٢. The Arabic word `ilm has received several meanings in technical dictionaries. It has been translated as knowledge, learning, and information. See A. A. Al-Nadwi, Vocabulary of the Holy Quran (Jaddah: Dar Al-Shurooq, 1983), p. 430.

system. Islam has followed such a way to make sound moral awareness for each behavior man practices in order that he may know its value, results, and reward. From the Islamic point of view, Mutahhary argues that it is possible to identify the truth and obtain *`ilm* (knowledge). Then, he explains the different sources of knowledge, including the world, man himself, and reason.[١] Human being has the mean to obtain this kind of knowledge, the Holy Quran says:

"By the soul and Him who perfected it and inspired it with the consciousness of what is wrong for it and what is right for it." Chapter Al-Shams, 91/7-8.

However, the most important part of knowledge here is one's awareness of his/her self and his/her nobility. It is quoted from Imam Ali (p.b.u.h.) that "whoever maintains his own respect in view, his desires appear light to him."[٢] He also says "Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth."[٣] Quoting these traditions, Amini argues that if man identified his true human personality, then good morals and ethics become alive and dominate over the moral vices.[٤] However, he did not clarify how this awareness helps man to establish the moral virtues and overcome the moral vices.

With regard to acquiring *`ilm* and knowledge, apart from the sense and the faculty of thinking the Holy Quran equally recognizes piety and purity of soul as the means of acquiring knowledge. This point has been mentioned in many verses implicitly or explicitly:

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١. M. Mutahhary, Man and Universe (Qum: Ansaryan Publication, 1997), p. 185.

٢. Imam Ali, Nahjul Balaghah, translated by S. A. Reza (Maryland: ABAA,1996), p. 323.

٣. Ibid., p. 69.

٤. I. Amini, Self Building (Qum: Ansaryan Publication, 1997), p. 34.

"O believers! If you fear Allah (God), He will give you power to distinguish between what is good and what is bad." Chapter Al-Anfal, 8/29.

Taqwa[1] or piety has also a main role in the Islamic moral system. Imam Ali says, "piety (fear of Allah) is the chief trait of human character."[2] The Holy Quran says, "*Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah is the best in conduct*." Chapter Al-Hujurat, 49/13. Piety is regarded as the source of all benevolence and goodness when Imam Ali (s.a.) declares, "I advise you, O' creatures of Allah, to have fear of Allah, for it is the rein and the mainstay (of religion). Hold fast to its salient points, keep hold of its realities. It will take you to abodes of ease, places of comfort, fortresses of safety and houses of honor."[3]

Furthermore, achieving the God's pleasure and satisfaction is considered as the aim of moral deeds and a high standard for moral evaluation in Islamic ethical system. To reach this aim and obtain the high moral standard, one has to observe the two fundamental elements of morality, that is *`Ilm* and *Taqwa*. The holy Quran says:

"The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the one who is most God-conscious." Chapter Al-Hujurat, 49/13.

Islam seeks to firmly implant in man's heart the conviction that his dealings are with God who sees him at all times and in all places; that he may hide himself from the whole world but not from Him; that he may deceive everyone but cannot

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١. The Arabic word taqwa is derived from the root waqaya which means protection and defense. Piety means self-restraint and self control. In the religious terminology, taqwa has been frequently translated as God-fearing. For more information about the term taqwa and its related issues, see Ibrahim Amini, Self Building (Qum: Ansaryan Publication, 1997), pp. 168-189.

٢. Imam Ali, Nahjul Balaghah, translated by S. A. Reza (Maryland: ABAA,1996), p. 318.

٣. Ibid., p. 169.

deceive God; that he can flee from the clutches of anyone else but not from God's. This is what comes through *`Ilm* and insight, and prepares the ground for fear and love (*Taqwa*).[١] It provides a sanction to morality in the love and fear of God, which will impel man to obey the moral law even without any external pressure. Through belief in God and the Day of Judgment it furnishes a force which enables a person to adopt the moral conduct with earnestness and sincerity, with all the devotion of heart and soul.

In a summary, one may present the Islamic view of moral virtue in a prophetic tradition where the holy Prophet says: "The Lord has recommended nine things to me: Sincerity, secretly and apparently; observing of justice and equity in contentment, consent and anger; acting moderately in poverty and wealthy conditions; forgiving the one who committed excess upon me; granting that person who deprived me; and to join and connect with the one who got separated and denounced relations with me; and meditating while silent; and remembrance of Allah while conferring; and taking lesson while seeing."[٢]

This tradition has been understood and interpreted by Muslim thinkers within the theory of virtue and moral behavior in the religious life. The good and acceptable life is obtained by the combination and interaction of both a virtuous individual and a virtuous society. A virtuous individual is the one who, as we have seen above, observes the required values, both in belief and in practice.

Following the brief comparative study we have done between the Christian understanding of moral virtue and the Islamic perspective, we may conclude that they are basically

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١. There is also a good relationship and interaction between `ilm and Taqwa. For a fair discussion in this regard, see Mehdi Golshani, The Holy Quran and The Sciences of Nature (Binghamton: IGCS, 1997), pp. 175-178.

٢. J. Iqbal, trans., Fascinating Discourses (Qum: Ansaryan Publication, 1994), p. 31.

alike in observing faith and love as the basis for moral theology. However, one may recognize some differences between the two religions in the foundation of moral theology as well as moral virtue.

In Christianity, love and faith are considered as the fundamental elements for shaping the legitimate moral behavior whereas, in Islam, *`Ilm* (knowledge) and *Taqwa* (love and fear) are those fundamental elements with which the foundation of Islamic moral system is formed and operated. Besides, in Islamic perspective, there is a centrality for God's pleasure and satisfaction with regard to all moral actions and behaviors while, on the contrary, one may not find this high consideration in the Christian moral system.

Bearing in mind this comparative survey, we attempt to now understand the application of moral virtue in the context of family. Before engaging in any discussion, let us have a look on the notion of family and its terminological development.

II. Family

The Notion of Family

The notion of family could be differently understood and defined with regard to the field and context in which its traditional and historical structure has been observed. It is not easy to pursue a single definition by which one may semantically understand its full meaning and be able to elaborate the family's foundation.

The term "family" derived from the Latin, *famulus*, servant, and *familia*, household servants, or the household. In the classical Roman period the *familia* rarely included the parents or the children. In former times, the English term was frequently used to describe all the persons of the domestic circle, parents, children, and servants. In modern usage, however, the term excludes servants, and restricts to

that fundamental social group formed by the more or less permanent union of one man with one woman, or of one or more men with one or more women, and their children. If the heads of the group comprise only one man and one woman we have the monogamous family, as distinguished from those domestic societies which live in conditions of polygamy, polyandry, or promiscuity.[١]

In a legal context, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops teaches that family "is an intimate community of persons bound together by blood, marriage or adoption for the whole of life."[٢] In this definition, family is not merely a collection of individuals who have desired to live together; yet family is based on blood and/or law. On the contrary, the majority of American population, in a recent study of family in 1989, prefers a definition based on love, care, and nurture. In their opinion, family is "a group of people who love and care for each other."[٣] On this sense, there is no need to have a blood or legal relationship between the members of a family. Just being together as a group, loving one another and caring for each other is enough to form the foundation of family. In spite of its bright and attractive atomic words, this sort of expansive definition leads us to a kind of complexity and ambiguity which may not be appropriate to give us a specific definition.

According to the last understanding, the notion of family embraces two-parent families, blended families of remarriages, single-parent families, and groups of unmarried people who have adopted one another in the sense that they

١. C. G. Herbermann, The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1913), v. 5 , p. 782.

٢. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Family Perspective in Church and Society (Washington: USCC, 1988), p. 8.

٣. "MassMutual American Family Values Study," 1989, p. 1, narrated from Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), p. 16.

have chosen to live together to love and care for each other, whether their adoption has been legally sanctioned or not. The term family includes all such groups shaped on the basis of love, care, and nurture.

Based on a traditional sense which could be found in different cultures and societies, family initially consists of parents (both father and mother/ husband and wife) and children. In this kind of families, the father earns the family living and the mother stays home to nurture children and family.[١] This traditional definition and understanding of family has been more or less accepted by religious cultures and societies.

Relying on a traditional observation of family, Amini defines the term "family" in the following way: "It is a number of individuals related to each other by blood, or by marriage between a man and a woman, pledged under marriage covenant, living together in the same household and assisting each other in management of the house."[٢] It seems that Amini's definition here includes some obligations and duties of the family members that may not be considered as a part of definition. However, I agree with him in other parts of his definition.

Based on what we have had so far, one may hold that the most clear and acceptable model for the term family is a group of people which includes wife, husband, and children. The term family, however, is not restricted to this pattern. In some cases it is defined in a broader meaning and includes not only the two spouses and their children, but also parents,

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١. "That gender-roles paradigm now represents no more than 18 percent of the total family population." By asserting this, professor Lawler elaborated a full survey about the different family paradigms in the American society. See Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), pp. 17-18.

٢. I. Amini, "Marriage, from the viewpoint of Islam" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1996), p. 4.

grandparents, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, paternal and maternal aunts, uncles, and their children. This extensive meaning of family along with the traditional and modern observation of family will be kept in mind in the following chapter when we will discuss the issue of morality in the structure of family.

Religion and Family

The study of family in the context of religion deserves our close attention for the specific understanding of family which religion gives us and the variety of collective and individual values that moral theology provides and recommends for religious families. The relationships between religion and the family have received a close attention from both theological examination and social studies. In addition, religion and family are considered as two important bases for individual identification.[1]

Methodologically, when we approach the issue of family in the context of religious tradition, we have to examine a language by which we would be able to learn and understand the contextual definition of family. This language will help us to first clarify the experience of the family and the loyalties it represents. Furthermore, such a language will determine how we understand ourselves and our society, since the family is integral to the entire culture. Such a language should denote how our moral lives are based in particular loyalties and relations.

It is obvious from both religions Islam and Christianity that the moral authority, as well as the sources of moral values, is neither in society itself nor in the individual; it is

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1. By insisting on this statement, Morgan argues that the relationships between religion and the family have been, and continue to be, very complex. See David H. G. Morgan, "Family," in Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society, edited by Paul Barry (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 372.

in God.[١] When we approach the problem of family, particularly in the field of ethics, with respect to its religious context, we have to recognize this divine authority and theological framework from which the moral values are derived and by which the ethical system is shaped.

In Christianity, the term family has received certain cognition and definition within traditional and modern development. The family is holy inasmuch as it is to co-operate with God by procreating children who are destined to be the adopted children of God, and by instructing them for His kingdom. The union between husband and wife is to last until death.[٢]

There is a historical and traditional effort to designate a semantic link between the notion of family and the doctrine of church. The description of family as domestic church is the general demand made of all Christians specified to Christian spouses and their families.[٣] The end and the ideal of the Christian family are likewise supernatural, namely, the salvation of parents and children, and the union between Christ and His Church. In this regard, St. Paul says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it," says St. Paul (Eph., v, 25).[٤]

However, Lawler believes that traditional, nuclear family is neither natural nor biblical.[٥] He indicates that there is a

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١. In spite of this traditional understanding of religious authority, the Enlightenment assumption of the autonomy of man has increasingly become the more prominent. In a modern and postmodern sense of human authority one may see less room for a divine partnership to shape an authentic system of social values.

٢. For a survey of the Scripture, see Matt., xix, 6 sq.; Luke, xvi, 18; Mark, x, 11.

٣. Stating this point, Lawler remarks two problems, both are problems of definition, first of church, second of family, both biblical and contemporary. For details, see Michael G. Lawler, “Christian Family in History” (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), pp. 2-16.

٤. The Catholic Encyclopedia, v. 5 p. 783.

٥. See Michael G. Lawler, Family: American and Christian, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1997.

difference between marriage and family in the Bible and in the contemporary Western cultures. For him, marriage and family in their traditional and biblical sense used to be shaped by blood relationship whereas in their contemporary American are formed by a romantic feeling which create between the family members a legal not a blood relationship.[1] The main question now is what does the Bible[2] actually tell us about family?

The Old Testament story of Israel's families is a story of taken-for-granted polygamy. There are certain stories in the Bible (Gen., 29; Judge, viii, 30; xii, 14; 1 Chron, iii, 1-9; 1 Kings, xi, 3) in which the traditional extended families include husband, wife/wives and children. In the New Testament, the notion of family is occasionally used to show a nuclear family which includes wife, husband (parents) and children. First of all, speaking of the Holy Family, Joseph, Mary and Jesus, is traditional among Catholic Christians.[3] From several statements such as Luke, ix, 57-62 we understand a basic meaning for the notion of family which indicates the nuclear, traditional family. However, in some cases like Mark, iii, 31-3 and Luke, xiv, 26, the members of a family are not only spouse and children, rather the family members include parents, sisters and brothers.

Moreover, the notion of family in Christianity, according to the New Testament, is not restricted to the extended

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١. Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), pp. 7-9.

٢. However, for someone "the Bible itself is not a list of abstract, timeless formulas. It simply provides no detailed guidance or techniques, for all times and places, on disciplining children or seeking a mate or determining whether a wife should or should not work outside the home. Rather, the Bible is centrally and first of all the story of Israel and Jesus." Rodney Clapp, Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 15.

٣. See Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), p. 12.

biological or blood family. Created by belief in Jesus and loyalty to God, family transcends the biological structure and includes those who follow Jesus. The believers and followers are his real family, sisters, brothers and mother:

"Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? (Looking around at those who were sitting in the circle about him, he said) Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother." Mark, iii, 31-33.

What we understand from these verses is the Jesus' demand for a radical extension of the notion of family from an exclusive to an inclusive group, from a biological structure to a divine, spiritual construction.

In Islam, there is a diversity of semantic usage for the notion of family. In some cases, family is a group of people which includes wife, husband and children. The usual word for this traditional sense is *Ahl* which frankly means family including wife and children.[۱] However, the same term *Ahl*, in some uses, is carrying a broader meaning than the traditional one.[۲] Accordingly, the notion of family in Islamic terminology carries a broader meaning which includes not only the parents of both sides and their children, but also their paternal and maternal aunts and uncles, as well as their children. In his essay on family, Ahmadi has presented family in two categories: 1. Two spouses, parents, ancestors, children and grandchildren; 2. Sisters, brothers, paternal and maternal aunts, uncles and their children.[۳] Nowadays, these two categories of family, which is more or less based on

۱. In the Holy Quran, the term Ahl is used more than 30 times in the traditional meaning of family which includes wife, husband and children.

۲. For Example in Chapter 4/verse 35, and Chapter 12/verses 65, 88, 93, the term Ahl has a broader meaning than the traditional one.

۳. For a full argumentation, see A. Ahmadi, "Family in Islam," (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997).

traditional understanding, have been mostly accepted by the Muslim societies.

Besides *Ahl,* there are several words in Islamic terminology, particularly in its legal usage, that show this broad meaning of family: *Qurba, Aqraboon, Ashirah, Aal, Ahlulbayt* and *Arham.*[1] These words are used in several places to show a group of people who have a kind of relationship together and accordingly have to observe some legal and moral obligations.

The following verses from the Holy Quran are some examples for the extensive meaning of family:

"And give to me a helper from my family: Haroun my brother." TaHa 20/29-30

In this verse, Musa (Moses) is asking Allah (God) to give him a helper. Then he is naming his brother Haroun (Aaron), as a member of his family, to be his aid. So, family here includes brother too.

"And if you fear a breach between the two (wife and husband), then appoint a judge from his family and a judge from her family; if they both desire agreement, Allah will effect harmony between them; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware." Chapter Al-Nisa 4/35.

Here again the notion of *Ahl* (here means family) is used broadly. It includes both paternal and maternal relatives from both sides. Following the same argumentation, Amini maintains that *Ahl* means "the nearest relatives living together in the same household and work and cooperate

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1. In the Holy Quran, the term Qurba is used 16 times to show the vast meaning of family: Chapter 2/verses 83, 177; Chapter 4/verses 8, 36; 5/106; 6/152; 8/41; 9/113; 16/90; 17/26; 24/22; 30/38; 35/18; 42/23; 59/7. The term Aqraboon is used 7 times: Chapter 2/ verses 180, 215; 4/7, 33, 135; 26/214. The term Ashirah is used 3 times: Chapter 9/verse 24; 26/214; 58/22. The term Aal is used more than 20 times mostly in the vast meaning of family: for example Chapter 2/verse 248; 3/33; 4/54; 15/59; 19/6. The term Ahlulbayt is used two times: Chapter 11/verse 73; 32/33. The term Arham is used 4 times: Chapter 8/verse 75; 33/6; 47/22; 60/3.

with each other."[1]

At this point we are able to conclude that the Islamic and Christian terminology gives us a broad meaning for "family" to the extent that it includes not only wife, husband and children, but also parents, brothers and sisters. In the other words, family is the people who are relatives in the sense that they are bloodly related to each other and shared in certain aspects of life. Moreover, we can find a broader usage for the term family in the religious language (namely traditional and textual sense) which transcends the biological sense and indicates all spiritual and faithful members.

III. Morality and Family

Religious Foundation of Family

Both religions, Islam and Christianity, have traditionally and historically determined certain moral grounds for individual behavior, family formation, and social construction. For both religions, virtue is the central concept for moral reflection and ethical system.[2] It is traditionally and theoretically accepted that the consideration of morality begins with descriptions of the virtuous life. So when we are going to talk about the moral foundations we have to bear in mind the centrality of moral virtue and virtuous regulations. Now we may ask what is a true Christian family? What is a true Muslim family?

Love and grace are two fundamental characteristics for

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١. I. Amini, "Marriage, from the viewpoint of Islam" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1996), p. 4.

٢. For Islamic side, see M. Rizvi, Marriage and Morals in Islam (Toronto: IEIC, 1994); for Christian side, see David Morgan, "Family," in Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society, edited by Paul Barry (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 371-374.

Christian family.[1] Moreover, we probably can best appreciate the characteristics of a genuine God-fearing family by picturing it in operation in a representative home. As Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston has inspiringly described it: "The worthy Christian home finds a true Christian family abiding therein and growing in love and care for one another. This home is not constructed in prefabricated fashion in a few weeks or a few years--for it is not purely material. Indeed its true character is achieved not through plaster and paint and sanitary plumbing, but through love and sweat and tears. It is a framework trimmed with remembered moments of joy; cemented by hours of suffering. It is a reflection of the personalities of those who dwell therein, an expression of their likes and dislikes. The true Christian home is an altar of sacrifice and a theater of comedies and drama; it is a place of work and a haven of rest."[2]

Based on the Christian perspective, family and particularly marriage is grounded on and derived from grace. The family works with Christ for the redemption of its members and the world. For when the Lord made marriage a sacrament, He established the family as a basic means through which His grace could be given to men. The husband and wife channel grace to each other and to their children and vice versa. If these graces do not come to us in this way (through another member of the Mystical Body), they do not come at all. Therefore, it is most important that parents and children live in the state of grace, and that the

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١. For a full discussion on the issue of love and grace in the foundation of Christian family, see T. G. Wayne, Morals and Marriage: The Catholic Background to Sex (Longmans: Green and Co., 1936), chapter ix.

٢. See George A. Kelly, The Catholic Family Handbook (New York: Random House,1959).

Holy Spirit continually dwell in their souls.[١]

Love and justice are the moral elements that the Christian family is to be formed on and to work hard to achieve them in its entire life. The whole family is to provide "active hospitality" and to "promote justice."[٢] The Christian family is to manifest Christ's presence in the world "by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all the members of the family work together."[٣] It is obvious that the sweet fruit of this love is a mutual understanding, mutual care, and mutual respect among the members of the family.

In almost the same recognition, but with different terminology, Islam insists on the moral virtues as the fundamental elements for the Muslim family. The spiritual and religious foundation of family in Islam is based on three elements: *mawaddah* (love), *rahmah*[٤](mercy, blessing), and *Taqwa* (piety). The result of this establishment would be a spiritual and physical rest and tranquility. The Holy Quran says:

"And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who

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١. Ibid.

٢. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 11, narrated from Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), p. 18.

٣. Second Vatican Council, The Church in the Modern World, 48, quoted from Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), p. 19.

٤. The Arabic term rahmah is translated as mercy. There are two well-known divine attributes derived from this root: Rahman (compassionate) and Rahim (merciful). See A. A. Al-Nadwi, Vocabulary of the Holy Quran (Jaddah: Dar Al-Shurooq, 1983), pp. 216-217.

reflect." Chapter Rum 30/21.

Referring to this verse, Damad holds that the family is based on three principles: tranquility, passion, and mercy. He adds that the social relations within the family have been pointed out by this statement. Damad argues that on the basis of such relations, friendship, mutual understanding, and cooperation mingle with love.[١] It is practically true that when love and passion combine with mutual respect and mutual recognition, the result would be rest and tranquility.

Rest and tranquility are found in the normal relations of a father and mother dwelling together and bringing up a family. This normal relationship could be, in the Quranic teachings, achieved only through the observation of the moral virtues, namely love and mercy. Muslim scholars have mostly interpreted this verse in the sense that these two elements are considered as the two moral bases for the family life and values.[٢]

With regard to the third element *taqwa*, when Allah (God) is talking in the Holy Quran about the formation of family, He starts and ends with the notion of *Taqwa* (piety):

"O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surly Allah ever watches over you." Chapter Nisa 4/1.

Basically in this verse, the Creator is giving us the idea of the formation of family and informing us the criteria and manner by and through which one has to look on and evaluate the rights and values in the family. Indeed this

١. See M. Damad, "The family and its principles from Islamic perspectives," (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1996), p. 1-2.

٢. See M. Rizvi, Marriage and Morals in Islam (Toronto: IEIC, 1994).

criteria is *taqwa* (piety). Here, Dr. Hashim explains that Islam views a person of *taqwa* as one for integrity, honor, decency, and propriety. *Taqwa*, for him, is the foundation upon which rests the family structure.[١] It seems that the same understanding and interpretation could be found in other Muslim scholars in terms of understanding the above recited verse.

Now, by understanding the main moral elements for the foundation of family in both religions, Islam and Christianity, we come to this question of what would be the main duty and responsibility for the members of a religious family?

Duties and Responsibility

Holding the idea that man is a political animal; and virtue must be exercised as a citizen, Aristotle regarded the family as the basis unit of the state.[٢] This actually leads him to stress the importance of the family in his elaboration of the political doctrine. It is also understood from his political philosophy that, for the sake of social and political discipline, man has to observe rules and obligations through which he has to carry some duties and responsibilities.

These rules and duties have been divided into two major sets, legal and moral. It is beyond the scope of this paper to thoroughly discuss and investigate the traditional, historical, and philosophical development of each of them.[٣] However, my aim in this research is a comparative glance on the moral elements, within religious context, which form and strengthen the foundation of family, particularly religious family.

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١. Dr. A. Hashim, Marriage and Family (Maryland: Quranic A., 1997), p. 3.

٢. W. L. Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 32.

٣. For more details in this regard, see A. O. Rorty, ed., Essays on Aristotle's Ethics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

The family, rather than the individual, is the social unit and the basis of civil society in the sense that the State is formally concerned with the family as such, and not merely with the individual. The family is the basis of civil society, inasmuch as the greater majority of persons ought to spend practically all their lives in its circle, either as subjects or as heads. Only in the family can the individual be properly reared, educated, and given that formation of character which will make him a good man and a good citizen. Hence, there are some legal and moral obligations that should be observed by the family members to achieve the formation of characters. Now, we may ask what are the major duties and responsibilities for the family members in order to elaborate the moral characters?

The ethical perspective of human relationship, particularly in family context, has had its difficulties in both secular and religious societies. In a comparative approach between the contemporary, secular sense of family and the traditional, religious understanding of it, one might witness that religious generations may have been able to approach those difficulties with more settled moral assumptions. In this research, I have attempted to identify those moral elements that have been recommended by religion as the bases of family. Then, it would be the task of individuals, as well as the community, to observe and develop them to the extent that they may overcome the family crisis.

The notion of marriage, the feeling of having children, the sense of one's relation to others within the family, and the duties and responsibilities one has to recognize and respect with regard to the whole family, are from those items that have been defined and understood differently in the two approaches. For instance, in a religious context, marriage is morally understood to be a lifelong commitment between a woman and a man. Sexual intercourse is to be restricted to marriage. Children are to be welcomed into the family and cared for, educated, and disciplined until the age of

emancipation. Whereas these moral assumptions are relatively stable in religious families, they are no longer observed and respected in some modern societies.[1]

What modernization has brought for family life, as Shorter expresses, is "a soaring divorce rate." [2] Among certain reasons, he argues that this new instability is the result of replacing property first with sentiment and then with sex as the bond between man and wife.

It is obvious that the family life requires a certain kinds of moral assumptions in order to exist that seem lacking in our society. According to the modern definition of freedom, to be free means to have no ties. The free person is not and should not be dependent on the past or upon others.[3] In human relationships, we have duties to one another as strangers rather than as friends or kin. In fact, all family relations, such as husband-wife, parent-child, or brother-sister, are seen as ethically anomalous. It is noted that "the family, in spite of all the attempts to make it one, is not a contractual social unit."[4] Hauerwas argues that the family in our society appears morally irrational. It is simply part of the necessities of our life, he adds, that the free person should learn to outgrow.

There are some changes in the goals and characters of the

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١. In this regard, Wogaman compares the earlier generations with the modern time and examines moral difficulties. See J. Philip Wogaman, Christian Moral Judgment (Louisville: 1989), pp. 154-6.

٢. E. Shorter, The Making of The Modern Family (New York: Basic Books, 1975). P. 7. He adds that "one in every four marriages now being constituted in North America will end in divorce, a likelihood that contrasts with a virtually non-existent divorce rate in traditional society."

٣. For a modern definition of freedom, see Charles Taylor, The Ethics of Authenticity (Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 27. His explanation of freedom is that "it is the idea that I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences."

٤. See S. Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 171.

family we see in our daily life. Many modern wives have forgotten, or do not want to know, that their first purpose is motherhood and that making a home is their most worth-while career. They have emancipated themselves from serious self-sacrifice on behalf of their husband or family. Many husbands, too, have mentally divorced themselves from their high calling as teacher and ruler of their young ones; as a result, their homes are in a state of anarchy or matriarchy. Thus the marriage bond in many instances has ceased to be moral and spiritual. Instead it has become sensual, social and esthetic.[١]

Now, I don't want to blame any of these new approaches to the family, neither do I judge any of these characters as a disease for the modern families. However, I would like to remark the reason by which the families have been led to the current situation.

In spite of various positive opportunities created and developed by modernization, one may hold that the secularism and non-religious and non-spiritual culture are certain characters of the modern and post-modern civilization. The blame for those blights on modern happiness can be laid squarely on the secular culture which equates happiness with the pursuit of private pleasure and denies the existence of spiritual goals and values. The lack of religion, the encouraged agnosticism of public institutions, particularly the schools, and the denial of the authority and rights of parents are all related to secularism.[٢]

Now we reflect on a specific moral duty which has been recommended to the members of a religious family in both religions, Islam and Christianity. First of all it should be noted that the family we are talking about is assumed to be

١. George A. Kelly, The Catholic Family Handbook (New York: Random House,1959).

٢. Ibid.

formed and founded on the above mentioned moral elements such as love, trust and grace in the Christian sense, and *ilm* (insight), *taqwa* (piety), and *rahmah* (blessing) in the Islamic recognition.

Education is and should be the first duty and responsibility for the entire members of a religious family. This education has different manifestations and might be elaborated in several perspectives. Nevertheless, in the training of children for effective religious living, none can fully take the place of parents. If the home fails to measure up to divine ideals, the Mosque/Church and school labor with impaired fruitfulness. Considering as a moral responsibility, parents must have the competency to render their children capable of fulfilling their responsibilities. Hence, Muslim/Catholic parents should deem it a sacred duty to prepare themselves properly for the arduous work of educating the new generation. We learn this moral obligation from both traditions. It is obvious from both textual traditions that all members of the family should first educate themselves and educate the others inside and outside the family.

Furthermore, one of the most important responsibilities that man has to elaborate toward his family is religious guidance and educational treatment. Although this kind of guidance is an obligatory at the level of education which is a legal responsibility, however it is a moral obligation when it deals with religious tasks. Since man is free to chose any religion that convinces him, the educator should morally show him the way(s) of good and evil, and guide him towards the truth. In the Holy Quran we recite:

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones." Chapter Al-Tahrim 66/6.

"And admonish your nearest kinsmen." Chapter Al-Shuara 26/214.

There is a great responsibility to start education from the

home and to admonish the nearest kinsmen. Everybody is in charge of salvation, that is to save himself or herself, and to save others including his/her family. We have to avoid evil and wrong deeds, and educate our family to understand good and evil, distinguish between them and finally observe the good and avoid the evil. We have to pray for that and ask God's help:

"O my Lord! Deliver me and my family from such things as they do! So We delivered him and his family-all." Chapter Al-Shuaraa 26/169-70.

Yes, it is true to hold that, as the Second Vatican Council reintroduced the metaphor of domestic church,[1] home and family is a little mosque/church. This is the reason that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and his successors used to emphasize on the education as a moral responsibility within the family. In this regard, Imam Sajjad (pbuh) says:

"The right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and will be ascribed to you, through both his good and his evil, in the immediate affairs of this world. You are responsible for what has been entrusted to you, such as educating him in good conduct, pointing him in the direction of his Lord, and helping him to obey Him, so act toward him with the action of one who knows that he will be rewarded for good doing toward him and punished for evildoing."[2]

At this point, we reach the highest level of moral treatment, the level of action. In education and moral training, the most powerful part of the process is how and to what extent you act according to your words. You have to show the stability and truthfulness of your words by your action, for your words to your child, as well as to the other

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١. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Church, 11, quoted from Michael G. Lawler, "Christian Family in History" (Presented in a Trilateral Symposium, CUA, November 1997), p. 1.

٢. Imam Sajjad, "Risalatul Huquq (the treatise on rights)", in William C. Chittick, trans., The Psalms of Islam (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1988), p. 288.

members of your family, are meaningless unless your own actions confirm them. The Holy Quran strongly warns and says, "O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do." Chapter Al-Saff, 61/2-3.

IV. Conclusion

What is the crisis of family? What is actually weakening the foundation of family? Above all social, political, and economical problems, I believe that the crisis of family today is on the loss of the moral functions of the family. The lack of moral virtues in family today could be one of the greatest threats to the family. Indeed, this threat may destroy the foundation and solidarity of family and finally devastate the order and fraternity of the society.

To solve the family crisis and overcome the threat which leads to social diseases, one may follow certain directions and recommend several resolutions. One of the best solutions, in my opinion, is returning to religion and moral obligations which is derived from and based on it. These obligations have been clearly described and examined throughout the history of religions, particularly Abrahamic religions such as Islam and Christianity.

We have, so far, understood in this research that the foundation of a healthy family, as a basic part of society, has to be firmly established on moral virtues and spiritual elements. We have seen that moral virtues such as love, trust and grace in Christianity, and *`ilm* (insight), *taqwa* (piety), and *rahmah* (blessing) in Islam brightly illuminate the path of success and prosperity.

If the religious family (either Muslim or Christian) was founded on the above mentioned elements, it would hopefully overcome the family crises. Moreover, if the family examines the spiritual development which is also derived from and based on religion, it would be expected to cure the family diseases and observe a hale and healthy family which leads us to a safe and sound society.

Furthermore, it is the task of family members to strengthen and develop the moral elements on which they have established their small religious society (namely family). The way of practical observation of the moral elements and the method of fulfilling the above mentioned task is out of the scope of this paper and deserves a scholarly study and research. However, the clarification of moral elements in the family that has been presented by this comparative research could be assumed as a start point for any new attempt to re-establish and/or develop the fundamental moral virtues in family and family life.

Finally I would like to close my paper with a very beautiful statement of Imam Ali, the Prophet's son in law, (peace be upon them):

"Certainly piety is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolidation for the fear of your heart, and the brightness for the gloom for your ignorance." Nahjul Balaghah, sermon 198.

Economic Impact of Religious and Ethical Education in Mahdism Perspective

Syed Ali Abidi[1]

Abstract

Religious and ethical education is as important as scientific, secular or technical education. The socio-economic impact of religious and ethical education is multidimensional. However, the study of the religious and ethical behaviors and their implicit as well as explicit impact on the human behavior is mostly hidden in latent variables i.e. which economists cannot observe or estimate directly. For measuring these latent or unobserved variables, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique is applied to the Divine Capital Model 2012. This study is an innovative start on the subject of Mahdism Ethics and lifestyles to explore the hidden or unobserved socio-economic impact of ethics and religion on life style of individuals. The study shall use survey data to estimate the relationships between ethics, religiosity, education and lifestyles in sampled population. The study shall provide the basis for the future research on the relationship between the

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economic performance and ethical and religious education which shall provide pragmatic support to do extensive theoretical as well as empirical studies in this new and emerging field of research. Based on the findings about the nature, direction and magnitude of the socio-economic relationships with ethical and religious education, the study proposes to invest for high morals in the society so that a highly civilized lifestyle may come into being which shall be required for the early reappearance of The Holy Imam of the time [Ajj].

Introduction

Islamic education is as important as general or technical education in perspective of ground setting for appearance of Imam of the time. Because technical and general education prepare the humans to learn skills for livelihood and Islamic education provides the framework of life, its principles and the manners to purify the life. Since for ground setting it a prerequisite to prepare at least some people on earth who would be welcoming the Imam (Ajj.) and who will understand and implement his guidelines for a global revolution. A hadith indicate the number of such people [NASERAAN] as 313, 10,000 or more. This manpower for the support [NUSRAT] can be prepared only if people are provided religious education along with the general or technical education. This highlights the importance of Islamic education for all especially Muslim. The people who will welcome Imam of Time are not ordinary people. They are best in their morals, in their prayers, in their spirituality, in their religiosity. They are best in their actions. These people are highly skilled and professionals. The education therefore is vital for training oneself to be best in skills and religiosity. As technical education gives man skills to earn a livelihood similarly Islamic education give a way of conduct to earn the livelihood for the life in world and the hereafter.

Although when there was Islamic system all over and Quran was the book to be studied and explored the hidden treasures in this world. As Allah Almighty said, "There is nothing green or withered, but is recorded in a clear Book"[1]. Gradually with the passage of time scientific evolution and technological improvements has made this world very fast. Islamic teachings have great impact on a person's life, precisely talking about students studying subjects other than religion should have findings and knowledge about what is in The World Holy Book about its related subject. ITSC 1992 mentions that Islam is perfect and revolutionary Divine message that transformed the Arabian society in a short span of time-from unjust tribal clan to a highly civilized society capable of rapid expansion in all spheres of life. It was in fact the message of Islam that helped in the emergence of an educational and scientific network, which in turn produces scholars and scientists now credited with so many discoveries and invention.

Knowledge in Islam does not mean only Islamic knowledge. It includes both the revealed and the acquired knowledge. There are two ways of acquiring knowledge, one is through faith and other is through planned and organized study. Islamic approach towards education is integrated and holistic and the curriculum is presented as unified whole aiming at simultaneous development of pupils' moral, social, cultural, Islamic and intellectual personality.

Ethical theories have been very important in many of the famous economic theories. Bradley (1980) discussed the economic ideas of Henry George (1980) and their ethical implications. As he writes, "Religion is seen as inseparable from life, and basic for economics. Religion has also influence the importance of universal values (ethics) as it

١. Surah al-Hadid, 57:22

plays various roles in virtue ethics, deontological and teleological or consequentialist moral theories. Islam has a clear code of conduct for humans and its all dimensions including society, universe, ethics, politics, economics, arts, legislation etc. it encourages physical training, hygiene, healthy habits, struggle and preparedness etc [Hamdani 2012].

The ethical dimensions are very important in our educational system. The education of pupils and to the teacher the ethics is regarded as important for professional performance. Take, for instance, the Education Act, where the ethical issues, associated with social, spiritual, moral and civic values are implicit as both organizational principles and objects of elementary and secondary education. But practically this type of education is not prevailing in the society.

Objective

To study the role of ethical religious education in Madhism perspective.

To provide a ground for future research on the relationship between religion and economic growth.

To suggest approaches for the promotion of Mahdism life style through religious and ethical education.

Organization of Study

The study has been organized in four sections. Section 1 includes an introduction, a background history and objectives of the study. Section 2 provides review of main articles on Islamic and conventional education impacts and also highlights features of Islamic education and Religious Education Impact and Prospects for Stability under Mahdism. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 gives concluding results remarks and policy recommendations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

A classic study was provided by Mincer (1974). He looked at individual earnings as a function of years of modern education and also other factors such as age and experience. He found that for white males not working on farms, an extra year of education raised the earnings of an individual by about 7%. Earnings appeared to be an increasing linear and decreasing quadratic function of years of work. When allowance was made for this, the return to a year's schooling increased to 10.1%. However Mincer did not include the impact of religious education on individual earnings. Iannaccone (1998) empirically observes that the individual's time allocation behavior seems to be affected by religious human capital, that is, person's accumulated stock of religious knowledge, affection, skills, experiences, and sensitivities.

This study explores what sort of Education affects growth. The same was also analyzed by Wolff & Gittleman (1993). They estimated regression and concluded primary, secondary and tertiary education and attainment rates are important determinants. Our third question therefore, is whether Islamic education does also affect when measured as the degrees like Aamma, Khassah, Aalia and Aalemah levels etc. The study analyses that education helps in the use the best-practice technology and those having inadequate education are using technology inefficiently.

Abramson (2010) paper lends greater depth to those studies by providing a grounded assessment of the consequences of Central Asians' religious knowledge acquisition abroad. He analyzes the results of interviews with current and former students, religious leaders, scholars of Islam, and government officials conducted during 2008–9. Furthermore, the paper examines who is going to which countries to study Islam, why, and how education acquired

abroad influences returnees' attitudes about religion and Islamic practice. It also examines the strengths and weaknesses of state policies and religious activity in each of the three countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), especially concerning Islamic study abroad and the integration of this training into society.

Abidi (2012) has analyzed that ethics is one of the determinant of teacher's productivity. The paper provides empirical evidence which confirms the relationship that exists between ethics and performance. The study concludes that the teacher whose ethical index is higher is more productive than those whose ethical index is less. "Ethics plays an important role in shaping human behavior and attitude. If a teacher possesses and practice high ethical attributes than his pupil are more likely to groom in a more ethical manner".

Carr (1994, 1996) has attempted to show that there are distinctive religious and spiritual truths. He gave few examples of what is mentioned in the Bible to show the different character of this types of truth: 'Man does not live by bread alone', No man can serve two masters', 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world ad lose his soul?' etc. Mackenzie (1998) critically reviewed and has stated that these examples are not distinctive truths rather they belong to social scientific, logical and moral knowledge [Baqari 2001].

Islamic ethical education is therefore plays an important role is shaping human behavior and attitude. Empirical studies have clearly shown that there exist a relation between education (either modern or Islamic) and performance of the workers. Different studies on the subject have lead to greater attention for the studies to be performed under religious perspective. This study is start on the subject under Mahdism perspective.

Aims of Education in Religious Perspective

The aims of education are exactly the same as of the existing education systems. It has distinct foundation, inputs, processes and learning outcomes. The promised era of Imam Mahdi (Ajj.) shall demonstrate education system based on Islamic foundations. Khosrow Baqari (2001) in his book "Islamic Education" presents the following pillars of Islamic education;

PILLARS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION [BAQRI 2001]

Growth and guidance (Rushd)	By growth we do not mean the physical growth or development. Rather it is the same meaning of the guidance towards the God as stated in the Holy Quran "And for those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; Allah is most surely with the doers of good".[١]
Purification and good life	The two attribute purity and uncleanness used in relation to things that indicate preference or antipathy to them. These kinds of attributes have been known to all people in their dealing with different things due to their natural tendency. In Islamic perspective all the Islamic teaching, moral principles and behavioral education has discussed in terms of purity and uncleanness. "That is why the belief in God is known as the great purity[٢] and the belief in polytheism[٣]". Now this purity is seen in all dimensions of life namely physical, intellectual, moral, social, economic and political ones. Therefore purity and good life is the aim of education that includes all dimensions of human life.
Piety (Taqwa)	Piety in its real essence is that one should restrict himself from doing wrong deeds or evils deeds. In other words, the person is concerned about the quality of his or her actions and tries to examine and re-examine them to be sure that they are done solely for God's sake. It is stated in the Holy Quran, "O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah, and everyone should consider what one has sent on for the morrow and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do"[٤].
Nearness to God (Qurb)	"… and We are nearer to him than his life-vein" [Qaf:16]
Worship (Ibadah)	The Holy Quran states that the worship is the final aim in the creation of man[٥]. So this specifies that it could be considered as the final aim for the education. How the worship is considered as the final aim for education as Holy Quran stated the real essence of the worship is called UBUDIYYAH means one takes God as one's Lord. Taking God as the Lord, as a final aim of

١. Ankabut:69

٢. See Tabatabi, M Hossain Al-Meezan fi tafsir al Quran, vol.2 p210

٣. Al –Baraat:28; "O you who believe! The idolaters are nothing but unclean"

٤. Hashr:18

٥. Zariat:56

	education, should direct the human's activities in different dimensions of life.

Source: Baqari, Khosrow (2001) Islamic Education.

The Foundations & Principles of Education

In the same book by Baqari (2001) he has stated the foundation principles and methods of education. Principles and methods can be same to some extent with modern education but the foundation is different at all. A tabulated view of the whole discussion by Baqari is only presented here

Sr. #	Foundations	Principles
1	Influence of the appearance on the inner self	Changing the appearance
2	Influence of the inner self on the appearance	Changing the inside
3	The steady foundation of character	Continuity & care about action
4	Influence of circumstances on human	Improving circumstances
5	Resistance and influence on circumstances	Responsibility
6	The attraction of favor	Grace
7	Development of human capacity	Justice
8	Honor	Esteem
9	Thinking	Unfolding wisdom
10	Weakness	Tolerance

Source: Baqari (2001) Islamic Education

2.1 Impact of Islamic Education in Islamic Seminaries

According to all Islamic beliefs Imam Al-Mahdi and Jesus Christ will reappear and in the pre-appearance era there will be complex problems and disasters in the world. There is nothing noteworthy taught in the universities schools colleges and the Islamic seminaries about this important futuristic revolutionary change. Education in madrisah is quite different from education in school, college and university. Subjects like Fiqah, Tareekh (history), courses like Alam fazil and other respective courses are taught in this institution. Moreover, these seminaries have matriculates and somehow private graduates. Data analyzing the impact of religious education in Islamic seminaries is not available. Students from these seminaries often considered as less educated than those of students studied in private or government educational institution studying modern education.

2.2 Impact of Islamic Education in School, College and University

Hamdani (2012) writes, "Islamic education develops peoples' on ethical foundations to achieve the following goals; 1. Making people dutiful 2. Conscious and nearness to God 3. Building a balanced personality and promoting harmonious relationship among all concerned including the universe 4. To differentiate between good and evil 5. Evolving a process of thought and actions according to Islamic teachings and so on". Religious education in school and colleges is only confined to specific field of study. Literature from Islamic history has taught in these institutions which reflect as a general knowledge about Islam. Although the university of an Islamic state should have a separate discipline for Islamic studies. For example a student of Master in Economics studies 23 courses during the whole degree program, out of those 23 only 2 or 3 courses are offered in Islamic perspective namely Islamic Economics I-II, remaining 21 are from conventional economics or developed by west. Moreover, textbooks, curriculum, economic models are based on western concept of Economics. Studying west concept of economics rather than Islamic approach, professors, educationalists, and curriculum writers or policy makers are not able to develop a true Islamic economic model for their countries (Muslim Countries). So this type of education curriculum offering only 2 Islamic courses out of 23 is only taken as a formality to study religion but not the true spirit of Islam. This will result in secular mind set, provisionalism, and provoking ethnicity. "If education and the sources of education are not according to Islam, then the society cannot be transformed into the Islamic teachings and practices" [Hamdani 2012].[1]

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1. "There is no proper belief without deeds and belief cannot be firm unless coupled with practice."[al-Hurai-Amili.Wsa'il al Shi'ah, Vol.6 Chap.4 p.127]

2.3 Features of Islamic Education

Education is a process of grooming and reforming people through proper direction and guidance throughout their lives and fields. Therefore, education in this context means a process of building and guiding human intellect in order to attain maturity and an ideal stage. For this purpose, Heavenly Messages and Laws and successive Messengers and Prophets (peace be upon them) were sent. They came to educate mankind in a balanced systematic way, covering all human aspects such as spiritual, conceptual, behavioral and physical.

The main pillars of Islamic Education are as follows

1. Islamic education code recognizes the fact that people possess pure natural instincts, and has equal response to good and evil. This reality is revealed in the following verse of the holy Qur'an:

"By the soul, and that which shaped it and inspired it to understand sin and piety? (Indeed) successful is he who keeps it pure and ruined is he who corrupts it." Holy Qur'an (91:7-10).

The Holy Quran mentioned that the Prophets' duties were both purifying and teaching.

This verse tells us that the success or the real source of utility is not only the X and Y commodities but consumption of goods and services with piety and without being sinful.

Imam Ali (A.S.) says in this regard:

"Certainly the heart of a youngster is similar to an empty land it accepts (makes grow) whatever is strewn on it". So education is important to shape the heart and character of the man power that is the source of economic growth.[1]

The Prophet (SAAW) pointing out the role of genes in the formation of human characters said: "Be careful when

1. Nahijul-Balagha-Imam All's (A.S.), letter No. 31.

choosing a wife, for (maternal) uncles have bearing on babies' characteristics." This hadiths tells that one should selective when choosing a marriage partner to ensure that future manpower should remain pious and desirable.

3. Basic motives and instincts exist within all people, but have different magnitudes with respect to strength or weakness. Hence, it is acknowledged that people possess various potentialities such as intelligence, noble characters etc. Islam takes this fact into consideration in its education process and observes this reality when shouldering people with responsibilities and duties.

4. Since every human being possesses the will and choice of selection, he or she would be held responsible for his/her actions. "and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways" Holy Qur'an (90:10).

"Nay, man is evidence against himself, even though he puts, forth his excuses". Holy Qur'an (75:14, 15)

5. Education is a process of refining human character and building a pleasing personality. Knowledge is a guiding light in life to do constructive work and in turn educate others, while seeking knowledge solely for the purpose of its possession is not encouraged by Islam. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (A.S.) says:

"Knowledge is akin to practice, whoever learns would work and whoever works get learned; Knowledge calls for work, otherwise it goes away."[1]

6. Furnishing a model practical code of Islamic values and ethics is an important part of constructive Islamic education.

7. Learning lessons from other people's mistakes: Allah, the Highest says:

"Have they not journeyed in the land and seen how was the end of those before them?" Holy Qur'an (12:109)

"Have they not journeyed in the land and seen how was

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١. aI-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. I. Chapt. 3, p.44

the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in might and they dug up the earth and built upon it more than these have built and there came to them their apostles with clear signs; and (surely) Allah never wronged them, but they wronged themselves." Holy Qur'an (30:9)

Imam Ali (A.S.) says in this regard to one of His son (A.S):

"So, I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened up and your mind became preoccupied, so that you might be ready to accept through your intelligence the result of the experience of others and be saved from going through these (bitter) experiences yourself Now you can very easily make use of all the knowledge which men have to acquire with great care, trouble and patience. Things which were hidden from them and which any experiments, experiences and sufferings could bring to light are now made very conveniently and easily available to you (through these advices)."

8. Education is generally a personal and social responsibility:

"0 you who believe guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is people and stones..." Holy Qur'an (66:6)

(1) Nahjul-Balagha: Letter 31, Imam Ali (A.S.) advice to one of his Sons (Muhammad Hanafiya)

"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and these it is that shall be successful". Holy Qur'an (3-104)

The above review of Islamic education indicates that the type of education and system has effects on human life as reveled in Holy Quran or guided by Holy Infallibles.

The Characteristics of Muslim, or Mo'min and the Mahdivi Attributes

A person who claims to be a Muslim becomes Muslim or mo'min when he fulfills certain criteria and possesses some

essential characteristics. Such characteristics have been elaborated in the Holy Qur'an, Hadith and other Islamic literature as Tabqaat-ul Ebaad or 'Sifaat-e-Mo'min. The true characteristics of Mo'min are in other words the Mahdavi attributes which must be prevalent among those who wish to be considered as 'Muntazir' and 'Nasir' of Imam Al Mahdi (Ajj.). Since economic behavior of humans is strongly affected by the attributes they posses, therefore, one has to accept the proposition presented by Hamdani (2012) that;

Proposition1: "Other things held constant, the response to economic and non-economic factors of an individual possessing higher level of Mahdavi attributes shall be systematically different from that of an individual possessing lower level of Mahdavi attributes"

A few examples of such attributes are mentioned here. It is reported from the Prophet (s) that he said:

"I was sent to complete the best of morals."

Allah, the Almighty, has given man intellect and made him a creature that thinks and differentiates between good and evil. He shows him what is the best and what is the worst and what is the most desirable and what is the most disliked among deeds.

But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these and they that exceed the limits. And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, and those who keep a guard on their prayers, these are they who are the heirs, who shall inherit paradise; therein they shall dwell forever."[١]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) quotes the Messenger of Allah (s) as having said:

"Indeed the most perfect among the believers is of the best of morals."[٢]

In the sermon, Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) praises

١. Holy Qur'an (23:1-11)

٢. Kulaini, Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, p.99.

faithful men who are simple-hearted, i.e. he who bears no evil in his heart towards anyone nor is hypocritical, hasty or deceitful, but whose heart is pure and his self is cleansed against any filth or evil.

The believer of whom the Messenger (s) praises his character and attributes is also the one who spends whatever he can out of his own wealth in charitable & benevolent programs and deeds seeking Allah's pleasure.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) quoted the Messenger of Allah (s) as saying:

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should keep their promise when they make it."[١]

The Messenger of Allah (s) says: "Whoever deceives another Muslim or harms him or even dislikes him is not one of us."[٢]

The Holy Quran stated; *"God commands justice and doing of good"* (XVI : 19). There is no doubt that Imam Mahdi (Ajj.) will reappear to restore justice and equality throughout the earth.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH & His Progeny) said,

"*If a person is able to know about the high value of ethics (Hussn-e-Khulq), then* he would also know that he is dependent of ethics" Zadi (2009, pp 293, *Pillars of Humanity*).

The Ethical Principles

From religious and other literature it may be deduced that the most commonly recognized ethical principles under the Mahdism would include:

Minimizing others' Harm	Respecting Autonomy
Protecting Privacy	Justice
Treating People Equitably	Faithful to Promise
Spending for the welfare of others	Truthfulness
Benevolence	Generousity

١. Bihbodi, Sahih al Kafi, vol.1, p.117.

٢. Harrani; Tuhaf al-Uqul an aal al-Rasul, Prophet's Sermons.

The first five principles are also discussed by Hammersley et al (2012). This list is not exhaustive.

This discussion highlights the general as well as importance of religious and ethical education which can be delivered only when it is planned this way and also the necessary resources are allocated in this direction at state level.

2.4 Religious Education Impact and Prospects for Stability

Abramson (2010) paper lends greater depth to those studies by providing a grounded assessment of the consequences of Central Asians' religious knowledge acquisition abroad. He analyzes the results of interviews with current and former students, religious leaders, scholars of Islam, and government officials conducted during 2008–9. Furthermore, the paper examines who is going to which countries to study Islam, why, and how education acquired abroad influences returnees' attitudes about religion and Islamic practice. It also examines the strengths and weaknesses of state policies and religious activity in each of the three countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), especially concerning Islamic study abroad and the integration of this training into society.

The key findings of the above study (Abramson, 2010) are given below

Central Asians after studying in formal Islamic institutions are not contributing much to their religion in their home countries.

The Central Asian governments are not making use of the expertise of returning students with religious training, but their policies are effectively alienating large numbers of them.

Central Asian states' hyper-politicization of religious education undermines attempts at fruitful dialogue and efforts to improve religious education.

Domestic religious education in Central Asia is weak and

fails to equip graduates with the necessary tools for countering and minimizing extremist and intolerant forms of Islam.

Central Asians who have studied Islam in formal institutions abroad are not likely in the near term to welcome foreign militants in their countries in the same way as the Taliban have welcomed Al Qaeda and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan fighters in Afghanistan.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Framework

The present study is an innovative start on the subject on Mahdism doctrine. An overview of religious and ethical education is presented here to promote an understanding among general people. The two core variables of present study are economic performance and religion and it investigates whether or not there is a relationship between the two. There are different types and categories of variables i.e. exogenous, endogenous, discrete, continuous, latent and observed variables. In our study we have latent variable case i.e. religion. It cannot be observed directly however it can be observed qualitatively and can be quantified using different proxies & indicators and conducting survey. "A latent variable is an underlying construct not directly tapped by any one set of measures, although the typical process is to capture the construct by measuring it with multiple items (Duncan, 1975). For example, consider sensation- seeking. It is a latent construct and we choose to capture its meaning by measuring it with a 4-item scale (Stephenson, Hoyle, Slater, & Palmgreen, 2003)". Similarly the present study account different indicators for determining the relationship between economics and religion. One of the key characteristics of the Mahdism era is global economic prosperity. The current study attempts to model how economic performance can be enhanced (for the ultimate

goal of global economic prosperity) through effectively channelizing religion and ethics.

Proposition2: "Seemingly Unobservable Ethical Attributes do also affect Economic Performance"

Deriving the inspiration for further exploration from Proposition-1, the present study shall empirically test the Proposition - 2 by using the following methods and techniques.

3.2 Data

Sources of data: Although secondary source data is also used but the main source of data for this study is primary.

The Questionnaire: We have developed a questionnaire according to the study objectives (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was pilot tested and refined before final survey. The survey was conducted during November 2013 in Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad and University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (UAJK.AK).

3.3 Model

The Model underlying this study takes the following form;

$$EP = \beta_0+\beta_1CRE+\beta_2RRE+\beta_3MES+\beta_4LE+\beta_5STME+\beta_6PIRE+\beta_7REP+\beta_8MT+\beta_9PNI+e$$

Where the abbreviated (observed) variables are defined as under;

EP	Economic performance (dependent variable)
CRE	Compulsory religious education
RRE	Regular religious education
MES	Madrisah education standard
LGE	Legitimate earnings
STME	Science & technology with madrisah education
PIRE	Private institutions regular religious education to integrate faith based decision making
REP	Religious education before developing economic plans
MT	Madrisah teachers untrained
PNI	Privileges or unwilling students no interest in secular education

3.4 Estimation Procedure

For estimating a latent-observed variable case we use structural equation modeling technique (SEM). This is very flexible technique and used to test relationship between these variables. One big advantage of SEM is that it allows for using latent variables. Estimation of multiple and interrelated dependence relationships and the ability to represent "unobserved" concepts into these relationships. SEM helps researcher to extract the measurement error. "Once measurement error has been extracted from the latent variables that have a specified relationship in a model, only the systematic relationship between these latent variables remains (Cudeck et al., 2001; Jöreskog, 1973)". The model consists of latent variables and measured variables and their error terms and also the relationship between these two. The error terms for measured variables estimate the unreliability (measurement error) that exists between the measured and latent variables. "The disturbance term for the latent variable represents the variance unaccounted for in the latent variable by the measured variables. In this way, uniqueness and random error are divorced from commonality in such a way that the reliability…is in effect 1.0 (Hoyle & Kenny, 1999)". In SEM the parameter between latent variable and measured variables depicts true relationship of measurement corrected for unreliability (Bollen, 1989).

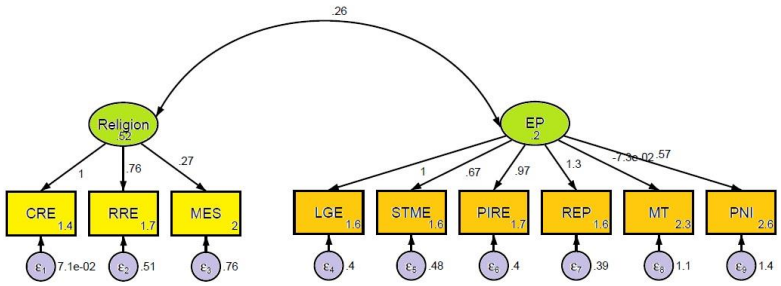
Results

4.1 Path Analysis -SEM Path Diagram

In our analysis we have come up with the acceptation of our hypothesis that ethics improves performance. In vast religious literature it has be mentioned that best in humans is one who is best in morals. The Imam (Ajj) of the time is best in morals so educating pupil teacher researcher for making them excellent in morals is likely to set such environment which is required so that the Holy Imam

reappear. The moral attributes play important role in shaping human behavior. The analysis below confirms that a relationship exist between universal/religious variables i.e. justice commitment etc and economics performance of individuals.

The below is the SEM [sequential equations modeling] graphical representation of the model estimated for looking at the proposed interrelationship empirically. This has been extracted by using the statistical software STATA [which is mostly used in studies of social sciences]. The oval shape circles shows latent variables as explained above in section No. 3.2. The boxes show the observed variables on which the data is collected using questionnaire so they are observed this way (section 3.2). The arrow with double sides show relation of latent variables and the arrow from these latent circles to the boxes show that the latent variable is further explained by the boxed observed variables. The value 0.26 is a coefficient of EP with respect to its covariance with religion. Greater value of covariance shows strong relationship between the variables which is further explained by significant probability value (P>|z|) 0.000. The small circles $\epsilon_1, \epsilon_2 \ldots \epsilon_9$ are known as error terms. The model residual information is explained by these error terms.



Model Summary

Covariance Religion	Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
EP	.2581939	.0644501	4.01	0.000	.1318739	.3845138

LR test of model vs. saturated: chi2(26) =25.44 Prob > chi2 = 0.4943

Our empirical findings revealed that religious education have a significant impact on economic performance (economic growth). Table 4.2 presents p-chi square value is 0.5 which is greater than 0.05 alpha for us to declare the model is good fit. However chi square value makes clear the relation between the two variables. The covariance between religion and EP is 26 percent. The larger the covariance the stronger will be the relationship. The observed variable for example LGE value 1 shows that it has strongly explains economic performance. Legitimate earning (LGE) is one of the most important features of the Mahdivi society. Educating the concept of earning legitimate will result in prosperity of the society. PIRE value .97 highlights the importance of religious education for faith based decision making. The decisions of an individual based on faith and Mahdivi attributes (i.e. justice) affluence the society.

In a nut shell, educating an individual in such a way will lead to a better lifestyle. This type of lifestyle is benefited for both the individual and the whole society. Thus formation of the society having these characteristics and features will serve as a ground setting in early appearance of Imam Ajj. The evidence of the present study shall provide a way for future research on the relationship between religion and global economic prosperity under the Mahdism and in general.

Conclusion, Strategies and Suggestions

The empirical analysis on religion and economic performance has highlighted that the ethical religious education has important role for achieving the objective of global economic prosperity and making a way which could

result in appearance of the savior of mankind. According to our results we conclude that there is a positive relation between religious education and performance. Our study let us conclude that there is an urge among people to receive education degrees with Islamic background.

This is may be due to the people's realizing that religious education should be reformed and enhanced in schools, colleges and Universities as a part of educational stream. The analysis also points to the direction that religious education is as important as general education. It also suggests that Islamic education might have the same impact on economy as the general education because both affect the human thinking, practices, psychological behaviors and response at work. It can be explored that each year of Islamic education may either increase or decrease the earning power of the labor force. Moreover religious education promotes the concept of legitimate [Halaal] earning which induces prosperity in society.

Accepting as a reality that without education we cannot be the best humans and without religiosity we cannot be best Muslims. This study guides us to adopt the following five strategies in view of ground setting for the early appearance of Imam Mahdi (Ajj.).

1) Economics of religion should be studied and promoted in universities as well as in religious seminaries so that an understanding may be developed about the systematically different economic behaviors among peoples of faith and others;

2) Empirical studies should be conducted and facilitated about the interrelationships among religious and ethical education, economic behaviors and the corresponding life outcomes

3) The scheme of studies of Islamic seminaries as well as general education should be reformed by introducing the courses on Divine Economics which is the study of economics and religion in each other's perspective;

4) Special training courses, workshops, seminars should be arranged relating to the above mentioned strategies; and

5) Short visits of scholars, researchers, sociologists and economists should be arranged to the communities where Mahdavi attributes have been transformed into lifestyle [such as in Iran], so that such personal observation of a Mahdavi society may convert the well-wishers or thinkers of Mahdism doctrine to implementers of Mahdism lifestyles in order to achieve nobility at global level.

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Imamate Principle from Mulla Sadra's Point of View

Mindaugas Peleckis

One of the main and necessary principles in Islam is Imamate, which was widely discussed by famous philosopher Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Din Shirazi). My article is connected with my PhD thesis which is about Mulla Sadra's philosophy. In it I discuss his transcendental theosophy al hikma al muta'aliya and also ethical and moral values which are the most important principles of religion. The leading axis around which the entire Shi'ia doctrine evolves is the figure of Imam – both his metaphysical aspect and his place of manifestation in history.

Mulla Sadra wrote about Imamate quite a lot, especially in his Treatise on the Imamate (Risalah fi al-imamah). As Sayeh Meisami ("Mulla Sadra", Oneworld Publications, 2013) put it, "it is a historical fact that many Shi'i ulama of Sadra's day were not happy with the esoteric side of his philosophy due to the general distrustful attitude to Sufism under the Safavids. His belief in the unity of Being (wahdat al-wujud), his reliance on interpretation beyond the surface

of religious texts (ta'wil), and particularly the unveiling of hidden meanings in the Shi'i texts, made him the target of attacks. Nevertheless, he himself was a champion of Shi'i thought, and he identified the central Shi'i doctrine of imamate with the Sufi sainthood or Friendship of God (wilaya)."

For Sadra, the Friend of God, whom he also calls the Perfect Human (al-insan al-kamil), borrowing the concept from Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240), is the ultimate purpose of creation. He considers the Twelve Imams as the most perfect instances of wilaya.

If we exclude the Akhbari (literalist and anti-rationalist) tradition which gathered force during the Safavid period and reduced Shi'i faith to a mere surface reading of religious texts, and the anti-Sufi campaign of the Safavid regime, Shi'ism has for the most part been compatible with both philosophical rationalism and Sufi spiritualism. It cannot be a coincidence that the first systematic treatise on Shi'i theology, al-Tajrid fi'l-i'tiqad, was written by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and based on Ibn Sina's philosophy. It was also he who took up the task of defending Ibn Sina against attacks by Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 606/1209). Moreover, Shi'i theology tends for the most part toward Mutazilite ideas and methodology. Mutazilite theology, with its emphasis on logic and rationalism, is the closest to philosophy among the theological schools. From al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) to Hilli (d. 726/1325), the tendency toward Mutazilite rationalism opened the path for more sophisticated philosophical theology among Twelver Shi'is (Leaman and Rizvi 2008, 92–93).

As for the affinities between Shi'ism and Sufism, the path taken by Ghazzali to reconcile Sunni doctrines with Sufism became the model for some major Safavid scholars. Despite the fact that Sufism was a Sunni movement in its historical origins, the closeness between the Shi'i doctrine of imamate and the Sufi wilaya became a source of spiritual confluence

between them. For example, almost all Sufi orders regarded Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Shi‘i Imam, as their first master and spiritual pole (Qutb). There is also evidence that the Shi‘i Imam and the spiritual pole were simply identified. For example, we read in a Hadith attributed to the sixth Imam Jafar Sadiq that: “God has made of our wilaya, we the People of the House (ahl-al-bayt) the axis (qutb) around which the Qur’an gravitates” (Amir-Moezzi 2011, 241).

The adaptation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s doctrine of wilaya into Shi‘ism, which had started with Sayyid Haydar Amuli (d. 787/1385) was completed by Mulla Sadra. In the last section of Divine Proofs (al-Shawahid al-rububbiyya) he quotes Ibn ‘Arabi on the continuation of divine guardianship after the death of the Prophet, without mentioning his source, and inserts terms such as “the Infallible Imams” and “People of the House” which refer to the Twelve Shi‘i Imams (al-Shawahid al-rububiyya, 509–511).

Though Sadra seems to be more at home in the Shi‘a world, he has also attracted many scholars from Sunni circles. His disciples in Mughal India, who became interested in his work shortly after his death, were mostly Sunnis. So too were scholars from Pakistan such as Mohammad Iqbal (d. 1938), Mawdudi (d. 1979), and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), and the same is true of some of the contemporary writers who specialize in his philosophy.

What makes Mulla Sadra so interesting to such a variety of thinkers is the inclusiveness of his system. His works bring to life the whole heritage of Islamic thought, from the different schools of philosophy to mysticism, Qur’anic hermeneutics (tafsir), and Hadith, and deals with issues which divided the rational and the revealed domains of Islamic traditions. As we shall see, building his philosophical system on the uniqueness of being or existence as a dynamic whole of different degrees, he created a more flexible and conciliatory approach to the problems which seemed to dissociate reason from faith,

including those regarding the beginning and the end of the world and bodily resurrection. Moreover, his vast knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith reinforced his conciliatory enterprise. He developed an organic system in which rational, gnostic, and religious elements naturally merged and helped the growth of the whole. It is only after we read Sadra that we can figure out why Islamic philosophy and theology never drifted apart with the advent of modernity, contrary to the fate of Christian theology in the modern West. Islamic philosophy had never been the "handmaiden of theology" as it was in the medieval West; but in order to sustain its intellectual position amid accusations of dubious beliefs by certain theologians, it could choose either to claim a truth of its own or else to take a new path of reconciliation. Philosophers in the eastern Muslim world chose the second way and built a system where the truth of faith cannot be separated from the findings of reason. Mulla Sadra's work is important as the champion of this cause. He not only saved Islamic philosophy from being crushed by dogmatic attacks but also represented the culmination of philosophical debates over theological issues." (https://www.oneworld-publications.com/sites/default/files/books/extracts/mulla-sadra-9781851684298.pdf).

Shiʿite doctrine is usually considered to be based on five principles. The first three, called "the principles of religion" (oṣul al-din; a somewhat ambiguous ascription which may also mean "theology"), are fully shared with Sunnism: belief in the unity of God (tawḥid); in the mission of the prophets and especially that of the last among them Moḥammad (nobowwa); belief in the existence of reward and punishment in the hereafter (maʿād). The last two, known as "principles of the School" (oṣul al-maḏhab, i.e., Imamism) are belief in divine justice (ʿadl) and in the sacred nature and mission of the imams (imāma).

In reality, Shiʿite doctrine is much more complex than that

of the five principles. The axis around which the entire Shiʿite doctrine revolves is the figure of the imam. By summarizing to a great extent, one might even say that Shiʿism is fundamentally an imamology. Indeed from theology to ethics, from Koranic exegesis to canonical law, from cosmology to ritual and to eschatology, all doctrinal aspects, all the chapters of faith are determined and find ultimate meaning by a special conception of the figure of the Guide. One could say that Shiʿism developed around a two-fold vision of the world (weltanshauung).

Imam, in his different dimensions, is omnipresent and acts as a veritable centre of gravity.

(1) Dual vision. All reality possesses at least two levels: one manifest, apparent, exoteric (ẓāher), and another non-manifest/inner, secret, esoteric (bāṭen), hidden beneath the apparent level and able to consist of other levels still further hidden (bāṭen al-bāṭen). This dialectic of the apparent and the hidden, the exoteric and esoteric, distinct but nonetheless interdependent, constitutes a fundamental, omnipresent credo. It is at work in the different spheres of faith (Amir-Moezzi, 1997).

First in theology: God Himself comprises two ontological levels: first, of the Essence (ḏāt). This is said to be forever inconceivable, unimaginable, above all thought, beyond all knowledge. It can only be described by God through revelations and can only be apprehended by a negative apophatic theology. This recalls the Deus absconditus, the unknowable that forms the hidden, esoteric level of God, the level of the absolute abscondity of God.

However, if things were to remain so, no relation would be possible between the Creator and His creatures. Thus God, in his infinite grace, lets blossom in his own being another level: of Names and Attributes (asmāʾ wa ṣefāt) by which He reveals himself and makes himself known. This revealed level, recalling the Deus revelatus of Christian theology, is no longer God the Unknowable, but God the

Unknown who aspires to be known. It is the exoteric, manifest, revealed level of God that can be known in Him.

The Names and Attributes act in creation by means of vehicles, "Divine Organs," which are just as much locations for the manifestation of God (maẓhar, majlā), as they are theophanies. The theophany par excellence, the most exalted place of revelation for the Divine Names, i.e., of that which can be known of God, is the Imam in his cosmic dimension, a metaphysical being that comprises all divine Organs. It is the Imam in an ontological sense–archetypal, universa.

The cosmic Imam possesses an apparent level and a hidden dimension. His esoteric, unrevealed aspect, is his metaphysical aspect, cosmic, "in the sky".

His exoteric, his apparent level, his place of manifestation - these are the historical imams of the different cycles in sacred History.

Indeed for Shiʿites, each great prophet, each messenger of God, is accompanied in his mission by one or many imams: from Adam, the First Man and prophet, to Moḥammad, "the seal of legislative prophethood," having followed Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Solomon, Moses and Jesus among others. Moreover, these different cycles, these great messengers and their imams are interlinked by an uninterrupted chain of minor prophets, imams and "saints" that together constitute the great family of the "Friends of God" (wali, pl. awliyāʾ Allāh), those who bear and transmit Divine Friendship or Alliance (walāya).

In Imami Shiʿism, the awliyā par excellence are the group of the Fourteen Impeccable Ones: Moḥammad, his daughter Fāṭema and the twelve imams. Thus, thanks to a theology of successive "cascading" theopanies, knowledge of what is knowable in God, the ultimate mystery of being, begins by knowledge of the man of God. In this manner, a theology of theophany (tajalli) seeks to avoid both taʾṭil (agnosticism, a theological conception maintaining effective knowledge of God to be impossible) as well as tašbih (associationism

/assimilationism), a conception that establishes creaturehood as the epistemological basis for knowledge of the divine (Corbin 1971-2, index s.v.)

What do the Friends of God accomplish? They enable the word of God to reach man. At specific moments, this is revealed by the Holy Books, sacred scriptures brought by important legislating prophets that the Koran calls "those endowed with firm resolution"(ulu'l-ʿazm). Now, this Revelation too possesses an exoteric, apparent aspect, and an esoteric secret dimension, a "letter" beneath which a "spirit" is hidden, to use the Pauline analogy. The prophet-messenger is surely privy to both levels, however, his mission consists of presenting the letter of the Revelation, its exoteric level, "that which has descended (tanzil), to a majority of people (akṯar), to the mass of believers (ʿāmma) from his community. As just mentioned, he is accompanied in his mission by one or more imams. It is evident that the sources do not all agree on the names. For example, the most recurrent list names Seth as imam of Adam, Sem as imam of Noah, Ishmael as that of Abraham, Aaron or Joshua for Moses, Simon, John and all the disciples for Jesus, obviously ʿAli and his descendants for Moḥammad.

The mission of the imams is precisely to teach the spirit of the Book, its esoteric level revealing the secret of its origin (taʾwil), not to all, but to a minority of initiated (aqall) that constitute the elite (ḵāṣṣa) of the community. The Shiʿites thus claim their minority status to be a sign of privilege (Amir-Moezzi, 1998, pp. 196). Without initiatory teaching by the imam, the text of revelation does not reveal its depth, like a barren letter whose spirit were to remain unknown; this explains why the Koran is called the silent book or imam (ketāb/emām ṣāmet) whereas the imam is said to be the eloquent/speaking Koran (Qorʾān nāṭeq) (Ayoub, passim; Bar-Asher, pp. 141sqq.). Thus the prophet-messenger (nabi, rasul) is said to be the messenger of the exoteric of religion or of the exoteric religion that Shiʿite

vocabulary calls eslām, literally, "the submission", that is to say submission to the letter of Revelation thus making the mass of believers Moslem, the "submitted" or "muslims." In parallel terms, the imam (emām, wali) is the messenger of the esoteric of Revelation, the initiator into spiritual religion–concealed beneath the letter–technically called imān, literally "faith." The people of faith, the faithful believers (moʾmenun), are therefore, according to technical vocabulary, those initiated into the secrets of religion, the people of spiritual hermeneutics, adepts of the imam, "Shiʿites," a mass of "people of the exoteric" (ahl al-ẓāher), unable to fathom depth and an elite consisting of "people of the esoteric" (ahl al-bāṭen), initiated into spiritual levels of the faith.

The historical Shiʿites, those of historical Islam, thus form the last link in a long initiatory chain that traverses history, going back to Adam and the initiated "Shiʿites" of his imam Seth. However, a distinction is made between those satisfied with exoteric aspects of their imams' teaching and those that seek to grasp secret dimensions of the latter, superficial Shiʿites and authentic Shiʿites respectively. Thus, there exist exoteric Shiʿites and esoteric Shiʿites (Noʿmāni, pp. 300-302; Eskāfi, pp. 37-43).

(2) Dualistic Vision. Concurrent with this dual vision, Shiʿite doctrine is based upon another fundamental belief: a dualistic vision of the world. According to this, the history of creation is a story of a cosmic battle between the forces of Good and Evil, between light and darkness. Given the vital role of initiation and knowledge, as we have just seen, one might say that Good is knowledge and Evil is ignorance. The battle between these respective forces, of these universal antagonistic powers, is woven into the fabric of existence.

According to cosmogonic traditions, what marks creation ever since its origin, is the battle between the armies of cosmic Intelligence (al-ʿaql) and those of cosmic Ignorance

(al-jahl), respectively symbols of the Imam and his adepts on the one hand, and the Enemy of the Imam and his supporters on the other.

This primordial battle has repercussions from one age to another, opposing the Friends of God and their faithful adepts to forces of Ignorance in each period. Using Koranic expressions, Shiʿite texts speak of the permanent battle between the people of the right/benediction (aṣḥāb al-yamin/maymana) and those of the left/malediction (aṣḥāb al-šemāl/mašʾama) (Qomi, II, pp. 357-61 and 453; Forāt, pp. 465, 513-14).

According to theories of cycles, which are far from being clear, ever since creation, the world has known two kinds of government (dawla): of God in which prophets and imams, as guides of light and justice, are able to openly teach esoteric truths, and that of Satan in which these truths can only be transmitted and practiced secretly, as the world in this case is under the influence of the guides of darkness and injustice. Satan having been the adversary (żedd) of Adam, the history of adamic humanity is marked by adversity and violence by demonic forces of Ignorance; during the adamic cycle, these forces will remain dominant–a majority driving the minority of persecuted initiates towards marginality and isolation. Thus it will be until the End of Time and the advent of the Mahdi, the eschatological savior, who will definitively conquer the forces of Evil (Amir-Moezzi, 2000a).

With the advent of each religion, due to usurpation of power by the "guides of injustice," within the community there takes shape a majority, all the while subject to the letter of this religion, that refuses to believe in the existence of a hidden spirit beneath the letter and thus challenges the existence of the imam as master of hermeneutics. Manipulated by its guides of ignorance, this majority thus deprives religion of its most profound element, condemning itself to decadence and violence. The Adversaries (żedd, pl.

ażdād), Enemy of the Imam and his supporters, are therefore not necessarily pagans or adepts of another religion. The Israelites that betray Moses by worshipping the golden calf and Moḥammad's Companions who reject ʿAli's election are not non-Jews or non-Muslims, but those who deny the esoteric dimension of religion (the term applied here again is walāya) by rejecting the authority of the initiated Guide. They are the ones that the Shiʿites term "people of the exoteric, appearances, superficiality" (ahl al-ẓāher, according to different meanings of the word ẓāher), those subject to literal religion or rather Muslims gone astray (moslemżāll) (Kohlberg, 1980, pp. 45-46; Amir-Moezzi, 1998, passim). Thus in strictly doctrinal terms (though in reality history proves to be much more complex in terms of actual conduct) an initiated Shiʿite will feel closer to a Jewish or Christian "Shiʿite" i.e., one who is initiated into the esoterism of Judaism and Christianity, than a Muslim Sunni exoterist, considered from the outset as an adversary. Moreover, it is true that most early Shiʿite texts sing the praises of the Shiʿites as a whole (e.g. Ebn Bābawayh, 1963-64) but other texts make a clear distinction between "true Shiʿites," i.e., those truly initiated into the imam's teachings, and "superficial Shiʿites," or the mass of believers who only have a shallow understanding of the doctrine and can quite easily be led astray.

In the historical context of the fierce conflict between Sunnis and Shiʿites, given this dualistic vision of the world, two factors become critical.

First, discretion: Indeed, in order to protect one's own life and security, and those of one's imam and his companions, as well as the integrity of his doctrine, "secrecy" designated by terms such as taqiyya, ketmān and k̲abʾ is a canonical obligation for the Shiʿite. Under the rule of Satan, which is the case for humanity today, revealing secret teachings not only arouses disbelief but invites mockery, creates incomprehension, begets curses and provokes violence

(Kohlberg, 1975, 1995).

Secondly, in the realm of feelings and sentiments, there is emphasis on, sincerity of intention, whose necessity is underlined by unrelenting repetition in the sources: the faithful Shiʿite is constantly called upon to cultivate unconditional love, loyalty at all costs and willful submission towards the imam the attributes required from a disciple with respect to his master. The term used to designate this intense feeling is again one frequently mentioned above, namely, walāya. However, the believer is simultaneously called upon to dissociate from enemies of the imam, to practice barāʾa (Kohlberg, 1986, passim). In a universe, governed by war and its constraints, sacred alliance (walāya) with the initiating guide and the knowledge he dispenses cannot be complete unless accompanied with sacred dissociation (barāʾa) from those who seek only to destroy true knowledge and its bearers (Amir-Moezzi, 2002, passim).

The specifically Shiʿite faith seems to be characterized by this double vision of the world. The dual conception of reality, illustrated by "complementary pairs," can be represented by a vertical axis of Initiation, since the transition from manifest to hidden, from exoteric to esoteric, occurs thanks to the sacred teaching of the imams, proximity to the divine and understanding of the mysteries of being. Similarly, one might apply the symbol of the horizontal axis of Battle to the dualistic vision of the world, illustrated by the "pair of opposites," universal and perpetual battle between forces of knowledge and those of ignorance. Initiation and battle: the entire historical destiny of Shiʿism can be considered as a tension between these two constants which are its very own, since it considers that the first determines spirituality of humanity and the second its history, since the believer is constantly called upon to keep himself in balance at the point of intersection of these axes (Amir-Moezzi, 1992, pp. 308-10; 2004, pp. 38-40).

Designating not only the nature, status and function of the imam but also the believer's attitude towards him, the term has become almost synonymous with Shiʿism since the Shiʿites very often call themselves "people of walāya" (ahl al-walāya)."

What is the definition of the imam? What are his special features? How does the corpus of sacred texts of Shiʿism, i.e., Hadith going back to the Impeccable Ones, represent him in the religious conscience of believers? Three definitions seem discernable here, reflecting the different levels of reality that incarnate the figure of the imam, illustrating the famous words attributed to imam Jaʿfar-al-Ṣādeq according to which Shiʿite doctrine consists of three levels: exoteric, esoteric, esoteric of esoteric (Saffār, p. 29; for the rectification of this text, Amir-Moezzi, 1997, p. 40, note 8).

(1) Imam as religious scholar. At one level, the imam is the uncontestable master in religious matters in the strict sense of the term. He teaches exoteric aspects of law, exegesis, theology, cosmology and other disciplines to an audience comprised of all kinds of students: Shi ʿites–initiated and uninitiated–but also to non-Shiʿites (a large section of the Hadith corpus corresponding to these disciplines and the chains of transmission readily attest to this; see also Amir-Moezzi, 1997, p. 61). In addition to the fact that they are descendants of the Prophet, it is especially as religious scholars–more specifically, as jurists and traditionalists–that some imams are highly respected in the Sunni tradition. Justifiably so: exoteric teaching of an imam does not contain any particularly Shiʿite traits and can therefore be heard and understood by non-Shiʿites, without shocking them.

(2) Imam as initiatory guide and thaumaturge. In this case, it is the figure of the imam as revealed by teaching destined only for Shiʿites. The esoteric aspects of doctrinal matters, as well as technical terminology lead to a conception of the

figure of the imam that by far exceeds the limits imposed by what is to become Sunni "orthodoxy." It is at this level that the texts relate that the conception and birth of the imam are miraculous, that he possesses a number of supernatural abilities since childhood, and especially that he is imam because he fulfils two important functions: he is the initiatory guide and thaumaturge par excellence. In other words, he possesses initiatory knowledge (ʿelm) as well as the fruit of this wisdom–supranormal powers (qodra, aʿājeb; Amir-Moezzi, 1992, chap. 3, III-2, III-4). The sources of the imam's sacred knowledge regarding the mysteries of God, man and the universe are many. First, celestial sources: just like the prophets, the imam receives inspiration thanks to celestial beings, whence his appellation muḥaddaṯ "one who speaks to angels" (Kohlberg, 1979, passim). He is also capable of celestial ascension to renew and increase his knowledge (Amir-Moezzi, 1996b). Initiatory science also has occult sources: supernatural forces that "leave a mark on the heart" or "pierce the eardrum" and "the column of light" in which the imam can contemplate answers to his questions. Then there are written sources: the holy books of previous religions, the Koran–all in their complete versions, not falsified–as well as a certain number of secret texts containing extraordinary knowledge transmitted from imam to imam, such as the Book of ʿAli, Fāṭema's Collection, the All-Encompassing Page (al-ṣaḥifat al-jāmeʿa), the book of Jafr, etc. (Amir-Moezzi, 1992, pp. 185-227; Kohlberg, 1993, passim). Finally, oral sources, that is to say teaching received directly by one or more of the previous Guides.

The miraculous powers of the imam flow mainly from his knowledge. Most among them are moreover presented as sciences: knowledge of the past, present and future; of events in heaven and on earth; of consciences, of souls, languages, reading minds, occult sciences etc. The imams can resuscitate the dead, cure illnesses, rejuvenate the old, travel and transport others supernaturally etc. Finally, they

possess a number of "objects of power" such as the magical formula representing the great Name of God and relics with miraculous powers inherited from prophets such as Adam's tunic, Solomon's seal, Moses ark or the invincible weapon belonging to Moḥammad (Amir-Moezzi, 2000b; Loebenstein, 2003).

(3) Imam as Revealed Face of God. This aspect of imamology forms the most esoteric chapter of theology and seems to constitute the ultimate secret of Shiʿite doctrine. Destined only for initiated Shiʿites, this teaching defines the terrestrial imam as the sense-perceptible manifestation of the cosmic Imam, who in turn is the place of revelation for what God reveals of Himself. This definition clearly establishes the basis—considered highly subversive—of divinization of the Friend of God. Thus by a theology of successive theophanies, the terrestrial imam is said to reveal God. A limited number of sayings going back to the imams, recalling the "paradoxical speech" (šaṭaḥāt) of mystics, and disseminated here and there shrouded in the mass of traditions, audaciously evokes the identity of the imam in his ultimate ontological reality with God revealed through his Organs and his Names and Attributes (e.g. Furāt, pp. 178, 371; ʿAyyāši, II, pp. 17-18; Ebn Bābawayh, 1978, pp. 117, 151-52; Amir-Moezzi, 2002, pp. 730-32).

In this respect, the most significant texts are certain sermons attributed to ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb, imam par excellence, in which, by virtue of a long succession of affirmations, he boldly declares his divinity: "I am the treasurer of knowledge; I am the secret of the invisible; I am the secret of secrets, I am the Face of God; I am the First; I am the Last; I am the Hidden; I am the Manifest; I am the created; I am the Creator; I am the Supreme Judge; I possess the incisive Word; I have penetrating insight into the path of the Book; I am the Compassionate; I am the Merciful . ." (the words in italics are part of the Koranic Names of God) (Amir-Moezzi, 1996a, passim).

All these definitions of the figure of the imam form an integral part of walāya–already encountered on many occasions. Shiʿism defines itself as based upon the concept of divine Alliance or Friendship. Presented as the esoteric dimension of prophethood (al-walāya bāṭen al-nobowwa), the religion of the imams, in its esoteric aspect is defined as being the very secret of Moḥammad's religion (Kolayni, 1969, II, p. 14). The terrestrial imam is the guardian and transmitter of this secret whereas the cosmic Imam is its content. As the absolute model for initiated believers, the imam as the Divine Guide, presents the divinization of the man of God as the final horizon of the doctrine.

The dual and dualistic visions of the world as well as the omnipresent figure of the imam as bearer of walāya constitutes the core of Shiʿite doctrine upon which many religious beliefs and practices are grafted. They characterize what one is able to know of Shiʿism from its earliest sources and seem to distinguish the original esoteric and non-rational tradition that predominated until the Buyid period.

The philosopher Sadr al- Din Shirazi discussed the argument for bodily resurrection in his two book al-Asfar and al-Mabba wa'l-ma'ad He also discussed the subject in his book Sharh al-hidayyah, with a slight variation in argument. However, he too eventually resorted to acknowledged traditional evidence produced by the Islamic religion. To this effect he wrote, "The truth upheld by us is that the crux of the matter pertaining to the acknowledged of and belief in the question of resurrection is that which has been proved by the holy Book, and the Sunnah, and all that which is reached at in the body of religious teaching. It is true in the full sense of the literal meaning" (1976:407).

Mulla Sadra was determined to construct a spacious house of "transcendental philosophy" that could accommodate the apparently conflicting paths in Islamic history towards the ultimate wisdom. He was also heir to a long tradition of philosophy in Persia which had adopted the methodology of

Greek philosophy and interpreted it not only in accordance with the Islamic faith, but also implicitly and partly in continuation of the antique Persian traditions. Similar to his past philosophical masters Ibn Sina (d. 1037) and Suhrawardi (d. 1191), but unaware of Ibn Rushd's (d.1198) criticism of Neoplatonism in Islamic philosophy, Mulla Sadra relied on Neoplatonic precepts which had been taken for Aristotelian ideas by preceding philosophers. In particular, he followed Suhrawardi by adopting a holistic method of philosophy in which reason is accompanied by intuition, and intellection is the realization of the quintessence of the human soul, with prophecy (nubuwwa) and sainthood (wilaya) as the noblest manifestations of it. It is based on this holistic attitude that on the one hand, Mulla Sadra synthesizes the two main schools of Islamic philosophy, namely, the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools, and on the other hand, bridges the gaps between philosophy, theology, and mysticism. While Mulla Sadra's philosophical methodology is rational in the sense of building his arguments on premises that consist in evident propositional beliefs, he does not reduce philosophical process to mere abstract logical reasoning. The pivotal place of intuition in his philosophical methodology is especially reflected by the influence of Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) throughout his works and by the fact that he regarded Ibn Arabi's writings as having a philosophical character with a "demonstrative force" (al-Asfar I 315).

Whether we understand Mulla Sadra's use of intuition as "a higher form of reason" in the Platonic sense (Rahman 1975, 6), or as a prophetic experience that turns philosophy into "theosophy" (Nasr 1997, 57), in reality there is no actual separation between reason and intuition in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Rather than considering ratiocination (that is, the process of exact thinking) and intuition as independent ways leading to different visions of the truth, for him they merge into one path complementing and

completing each other.

_ Although no Islamic philosopher had ever announced reason and revelation, philosophy and prophecy in conflict with each other, in practice, several philosophical doctrines were regarded by theologians as blasphemous due to contradiction with the theological formulations of Quranic teachings. By synthesizing the findings of his predecessors and relying on his holistic methodology, Mulla Sadra addressed several controversial issues that had opened a wide gap between philosophy and theology, reason and faith. His conciliatory attitude is manifest in his writings that are replete with scriptural and theological references alongside and in harmony with the teachings of Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi, and other Muslim thinkers.

The Principles and Goals of Islamic Morality/Ethics with a Focus on Imamate

Elizabeth Younes

In one of the traditions the Prophet (S.W.A) declared: "Stars are the security for the dwellers of the heaves. If they get destroyed so will the dwellers of the heavens. My family members are the security for the dwellers of the earth. Hence, if they do not exist, the dwellers of the earth will also be destroyed".

Allah who brought prophethood to an end with Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W.), decreed that he should be followed by his vicegerents who would carry out the task of leadership and succesion after the termination of Prophethood. These are the tweleve Imams, whose number was textually fixed by the Messenger of Allah in a number of authentic traditions* which are unanimously accepted by the Muslims.

The knowledge (given by God) has led them to the true insight and they have attained the spirit of certainty through it. That which baffles the lovers of wealth and makes it inconceivable for them appears easy and readily accessible to these proofs of God. That which frightens the ignorant, the proofs of God are intimate with it. Their connection to this material world is because of their physical body whose

spirits are connected with the highly exalted places. They are God's caliphs and His callers to faith on earth.

Allah who brought prophethood to an end with Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W.), decreed that he should be followed by his vicegerents who would carry out the task of leadership and succesion after the termination of Prophethood.

These are the twelve Imams, whose number was textually fixed by the Messenger of Allah in a number of authentic traditions* which are unanimously accepted by the Muslims.

It appears to be quite natural that we should, with earnest spirit and clear thinking, try to deepen our spiritual relation with the leaders of the mission of Islam and make studies in order to discover more and more about these illustrious leaders of history. With a view to illuminate our way to development we must acquire light from the brilliant history of this great House.

It is for the above reason that we take this opportunity to give some brief account of the life of the imams of the Shiah (i.e.May peace be upon them).

As within the limited space available to us it is not possible to give an account of the life, the movement and the program of each imam separately. We propose to draw the attention of our readers only to the salient features common to the life of all the Imams.

Accordingly in the forthcoming account we shall discuss the general march of events and only those aspects of the movement of the Imams in which all of them took part. Instead of giving the details of the life of each of the Imams, a study will be made of their general attitude and the impression which their lives give on the whole.

This discussion has been so arranged that the life of the imams may be observed and studied as a composite and coherent phenomenon. We are going to discuss the characteristics of this phenomenon in order to find out its common aims and its true nature and to understand the

circumstances in which it worked. Lastly, we will give a brief account of the main features of the movement of the Imams and the role they played in human society.

Of course, this does not mean that we think it improper to study the life of each Imam separately. In fact the independant study of the distinguishing features of each Imam is as necessary as to acquire an overall knowledge of the life of each individual Imam and learn the distinctive features of his aims and activities so that this knowledge may become a prelude to the study at which we are aiming at present. We should make an independant study of the life of each Imam to prepare our way to an overall and proper study of the life of all the Imams as a coherent and composite phenomena.

On the basis of rational and textual evidence one can surmise that as long as human beings live on the earth, there must exist a perfect and divinely protected person among them who could personify all the perfect qualities that the human being can possibly attain. Moreover, such an individual must be responsible, both theoretically and practically, to guide humanity. This person is the Imam, the leader of humanki9nd. Having himself ascended on this sacred path of human perfection he takes it upon himself to call others onto those stages and stations. Hence, he becomes the mediator between the hidden world of the spirit and the human world. The bounties of the hidden world descend upon him first, and through him reach other human beings. It is obvious that the non-existence of such a person among people it would be inevitably lead to the absence of any goal for humankind. Such an absence would necessarily lead to the perdition of human society. In the final analysis, regardless of any other proof, this rational and textual evidence confirms that there is no period in history, including our own age, without an Imam. Since there is no manifest Imam at this time, we can say that the Imam is in occultation and lives a concealed life.

The reality of human life today reveals a diversity of

opinions, beliefs, and religions. It also reveals the factor which breed differences among human beings in everything you can imagine. With the existence of a plurality of every sort, how can we imagine that the entire humanity will come under one government and one power when the earth is directed by de government of the Mahdi?

When we undertake the study of the Imams' life at these two levels, in the first instance we notice that apparently there is a wide difference in the ways how they conducted themselves in various situations. Imam Hassan (A.S) concluded a peace treaty with Mu'awiya. Whereas Imam Hussain (A.S) rose to fight a battle against Yazid and laid down his life. We find that Imam Sajjad (A.S.) passed his life introverted in prayer and adoration, whereas Imam Baqir(A.S) devoted all his time to the dissemination of the knowledge of prophetic traditions and theology.

But if we look at the life of the Imams and its characteristics in a co-ordinated manner, we will find that their life consisted in one single movement, which preserving their history and had no contradiction or inconsistency. A study such as we are going to undertake reveals one single truth, though its various aspects are capable of being described differently and hence may give divergent impressions.

The reason why apparently there exists so much difference in the actions of various Imams is attributable to the difference of time, the social conditions and the difficulties which each Imam had to face. Each Imam during his time was continued with the problems and the difficulties entirely different from those with which other Imams were faced.

But if we take a general and total view of the life of our Imams, we may draw results far more outstanding than the effects which may be produced by the study of the individual life of each Imam, for in the course of this general study we will find a deep harmony between all the

actions of the Imams. To elucidate this point we give an example:

We see that the `Commander of the Faithful', Imam Ali (A.S.) during his outward caliphate assemble the companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and asked them to give evidence as to what they had heard the Prophet say on Imamate. A large number of them said:

"Yes, we heard the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) say expressly that you were the Imam".

Again we read in the life account of Imam Hussain (A.S) that once on the day of pilgrimage he gathered together the surviving sahabah (Companions) of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) along with a large number of the tabi'in (followers) and asked them to narrate what they had heard the Prophet (S.A.W.) say about Ali (A.S.) and the Holy Family.

Again we see that Imam Baqir (A.S) also repeated this action, and asked the tabi'in and tabi'in al-tabi'in (followers of the followers) to give evidence as to what the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) had said concerning the Imamate of Ali (A.S.) and his descendants.

When we study the life of the Imams and co-ordinate their actions. We observe this kind of activity throughout. These three actions taken consectively by three generations represents a pre-calculated and coherent plan, and are complementary of each other. The idea of this consecutive actions was to admonish various generations and at the same time to preserve a tradition from oblivion and alteration.

To our belief the existence of a common policy pursued by our Imams is not a hypothetical question. Therefore it is not neccesary to try to look for its reason or to discuss as to what historical events led the Imams to pursue such a common policy. Their common role is the natural consequence of the very belief in their Imamate, which is an assignment common to all of them.

Its responsibilities and conditions being the same, the natural consequnence of this common assignment should be coherent movement, each part of which in the course of history should complement its other parts. It is only because of the difference of time that the actions taken by the various Imams appear to be different.

The most important element in the unfortunate situation of the downtrodden people's id the serf-cultivated sense of helplessness and weakness. Since they regard themselves weak and the tyrants strong and powerful, they unconsciously become the vehicle of domination, obeyin orders and acquiescing to all sorts of humiliation and deprivation, without feeling the courage to confront their oppressors

The only way for the downtrodden to salvage themselves from this miserable condition is to engage in self-realization. This requires a revolution in thought and attitude to overcome many years of brainwashing carried out by de oppressive regimes and their supporters. It takes a revolution to free them from the shackles of unjust domination.

Such an universal revolution to free human being from the shackles of tyrants and wicked powers will be launched by the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi. His companions, followers, and supporters will become the inheritors, and promised in the above passage.

There will surely be a recognition that human society, in order to become spiritually and morally sound and prosperous, is in need of two things: one, a clear and perfect blueprint from God that would set forth a program for reform and revival: and two, a divinely protected (ma'sum) leader who can execute the divine blue print without any error of omission or commission. God in His Divine Wisdom, has prepared the Mahdi for such a highly sensitive time as that so that he can implement the program that Islam came to the under the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).

Ground-setting Education, Strategy and Approaches as Reflected in madressa.net Weekend Madrasah Syllabus

Dr. Mansoor L. Limba[1]

Abstract:

In countries where Muslims are in minority, Sunday school or weekend madrasah is a significant training ground and educational facility for Muslim children to preserve their Islamic identity and know their religious responsibilities. One such madrasah is the London-based Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa (SIM) whose syllabus which is constantly being revised and updated has been adopted by other madrasahs across the globe. Since its inception in 1985, its teaching methods have been introduced and for the new millennium, SIM (www.madressa.net) has branched out onto the Internet, thereby giving students worldwide free access to the teaching material and manuals (e.g. Course Notes 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012). Complete with 11 Course Notes for students from age four to 16 (pre-school to high school), the madrasah offers four subjects, viz. Akhlaq (ethics), Fiqh (jurisprudence), Tarikh (history), and Qur'an.

This paper attempts to examine the educational strategy and approaches adopted by SIM for setting the ground for the Mahdi's advent (zuhur). Aimed at molding

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students and producing graduates with a Qur'anic worldview as its target profile, SIM syllabus includes lessons which introduce the Mahdi's blessed personality, lofty station and reformative mission in the future as well as the believers' responsibility toward him and his movement, in three subjects, viz. Akhlaq, Fiqh and Tarikh in all age levels (from 4 to 16).

These lessons about the Mahdi wholly or partly are guided by the following conceptual frameworks: "self-development and societal wellbeing" as inspired by the Prophet's dictum, "obedience to Allah and service to mankind" (tā'at al-khāliq wa khidmat al-makhlūq), for Akhlaq; the risālah of marji' al-taqlīd as inspired by the Qur'anic verse "Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he (or she) be faithful—We shall revive him with a good life" (Sūrat al-Nahl 16:97), for Fiqh; and the establishment of a just and an equitable society, as is so eloquently stated in the Qur'an, thus: "Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice" (Sūrat al-Hadīd 57:25), for Tarikh.

Introduction

This paper attempts to examine the educational strategy and approaches adopted by Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa (SIM) for setting the ground for the Mahdi's advent (*zuhur*).

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

Before presenting the conceptual framework of this study, some concepts used in this paper must be clarified.

Mahdawiyyah

Mahdawiyyah is the Islamic eschatological belief in the coming of a global savior or redeemer, called the Mahdi, in the future. In a Prophetic tradition (*hadith*) upon whose authenticity Muslim schools of thought agree, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

> 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.[١]

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'[٢] 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

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١. 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), p. 8; Najmuddin Tabasi, An Overview of the Mahdi's Government, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly, 2009), pp. 117-118.

٢. Quoted in Harun Yahya, The End Times and the Mahdi (Maryland: Khatoons, 2003), p. 53.

could come back to life.'[1]

Ground-setting Education

Ground-setting education refers to a type of training and education that attempts to mold a society prepared for the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (*'a*). In order words, it is the same Islamic education which emphasizes the centrality of the Imam's personality and universal mission.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the ground-setting weekend *madrasah* education can be clarified by attempting to define our target profile. In other words, what kind of product is to be produced? What kind of graduate we want to have? The simple answer is to produce a graduate with a Qur'anic worldview.

According to Murtada Mutahhari, the great contemporary Iranian teacher and thinker,

> "'Worldview' means a kind of understanding, an interpretation and a kind of analysis that a person has about existence and the universe as well as man, society and history… Worldview informs us of what exists and what does not exist; what law governs the universe and man; what law governs society; which movements and motions lead to which direction; how nature moves; and what is the very thing called 'existence'."[2]

Based on this definition of "worldview", it can be understood that "Qur'anic worldview" is the worldview in which the ultimate source and authority of all knowledge is the Qur'an which is expected to provide a natural basis for the integration of all courses taught in the Islamic institution of learning.

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١. Ibid., p. 54.

٢. Murtadā Mutahharī, The Theory of Knowledge, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2011), pp. 12-13.

In this Regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

> "We did not send any apostle before you but We revealed to him that 'There is no god except Me; so worship Me."[١]

Tawhīd or the Islamic system of belief in the Oneness of Allah is, thus, the all-encompassing reality that constitutes the overarching theme of the Qur'anic worldview.

Guided by this Qur'anic/*tawhid*ic worldview, the conceptual frameworks of *aqā'id* (Islamic beliefs) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) courses are *usūl al-dīn* and the *risālah* of *marji' al-taqlīd*, respectively, as inspired by the following Qur'anic verses, among others:

> "Should anyone renounce his faith, his work shall fail and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter."[٢]

> "Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he (or she) be faithful—We shall revive him with a good life."[٣]

Meanwhile, "self-development and societal wellbeing" serves as the conceptual framework of *akhlāq* (ethics) course as inspired by the Prophet's dictum, *tā'at al-khāliq wa khidmat al-makhlūq* or obedience to Allah and service to mankind.

The framework for *tārīkh* is rooted in the ultimate goal that Islam cherished for human society, i.e. the establishment of a just and an equitable society, as is so eloquently stated in the Qur'an, thus:

> "Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so

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١. Sūrat al-Anbiyā' 21:25. Translation of Qur'anic passages are adapted from Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (London: ICAS Press, 2004).

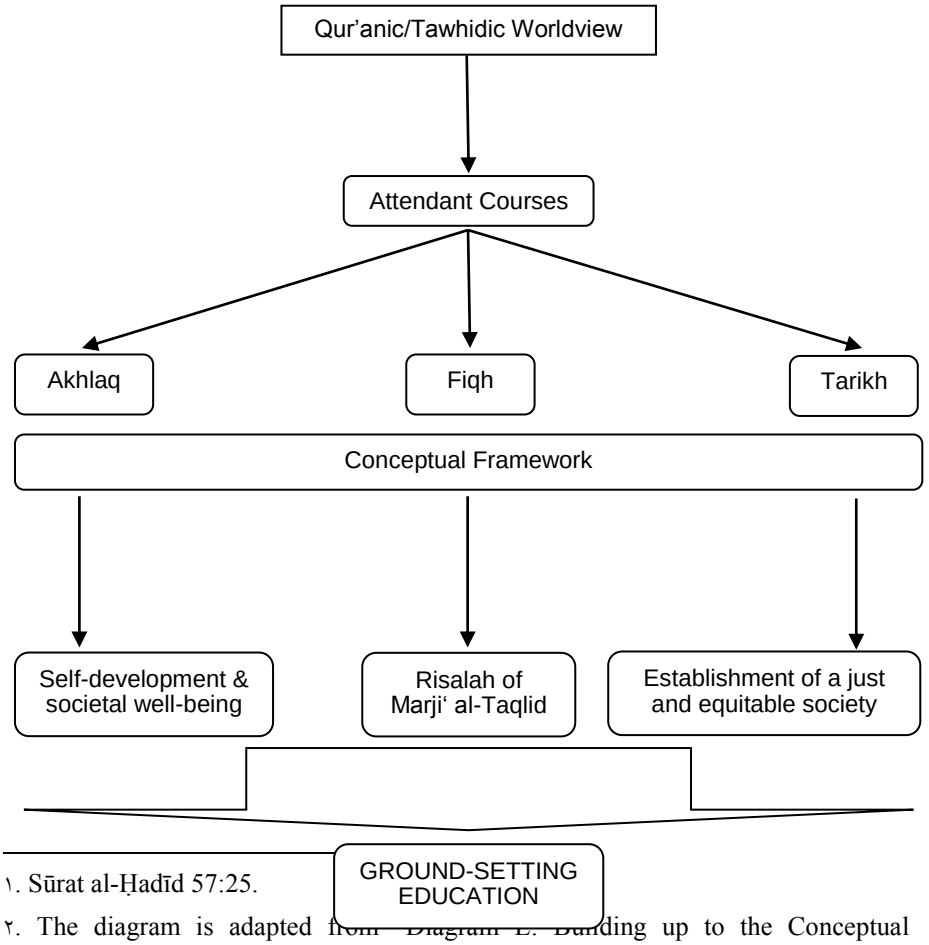
٢. Sūrat al-Mā'idah 5:5.

٣. Sūrat al-Naḥl 16:97.

that mankind may maintain justice."[1]

Justice implies enactment of law based not on the interests of individuals or a class, but based on human wisdom guided by divine revelation. Equity signifies treatment of individuals based solely on their ethical behavior without regard to their social class or position in society.

In sum, the conceptual framework of this study can be represented by the diagram below:[2]



١. Sūrat al-Ḥadīd 57:25.

٢. The diagram is adapted from "Diagram E: Building up to the Conceptual Frameworks for Madrasah's Core Courses," available at http://www.naieb.org/ieb/posters/Diag%20E%20Conceptual%20Framework.pdf a few years ago.

Weekend Madrasah Education

In countries where Muslims are in minority, Sunday school or weekend *madrasah* is a significant training ground and educational facility for Muslim children to preserve their Islamic identity and know their religious responsibilities. Besides completing the national schools, the majority of Singaporean Muslim children, for example, gain their Islamic religious knowledge and moral values through the part-time structured education or usually called "weekend *madrasah*" or Sunday Islamic school. As such, weekend *madrasah*s in Singapore have gained popularity among Muslim parents.[١]

madressa.net

One such *madrasah* is the Stanmore-based Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa (SIM) which was founded by the London Shi'ah community (*jama'ah*) in January 1985. Mainly aimed at meeting the growing religious needs of the children of the community, the Sunday classes were held at the then newly-acquired Huseini Shia Islamic Center in Stanmore, and consisted of only five classes and 60 students learning an elementary syllabus. After less than a month, the number of students exceeded a hundred, and within a year SIM registered 15 classes and 262 students and came up with a syllabus.[٢]

In 1987, according to its website, the *madrasah* began

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١. Nora Rustham, et al. "Teaching Methodologies in a Weekend Madrasah: A Study at Jamiyah Education Centre, Singapore," International Journal of Arts and Commerce, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 150.

٢. "Our History," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://www.madressa.net/sim/history, accessed: April 29, 2013.

computerization of its administrative data and turned into a financially self-sustaining body by introducing a voluntary tuition fee. The syllabi of its core subjects, viz. *Tarikh* (history), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Akhlaq* (ethics) and *Qur'an*, were also comprehensively revised. By 1988, SIM moved to larger premises at Park High School in Harrow and had 380 registered students which increased to over 500 students the next few years.[۱]

The 1990s witnessed the *madrasah*'s progress in the educational structure and extracurricular activities with the introduction of teacher training workshops and awareness seminars to improve teaching and communication skills, as well as the promotion annual sports days, summer camps, and annual activity trips. In 1998, the then newly renovated Husseini Islamic Center in Stanmore has become SIM's site once again.[۲]

Currently with over 100 teachers and volunteers for 750 students and 25 classes, the *madrasah* has a syllabus which is constantly being revised and updated and has been adopted by other *madrasah*s across the globe.[۳]

madressa.net Course Notes

Since its inception in 1985, its teaching methods have been introduced and for the new millennium, SIM has branched out onto the Internet (http://www.madressa.net), thereby giving students worldwide free access to the teaching material and manuals. Its syllabus in four subjects or Course Notes have been undergoing revisions every two years since 2004 (i.e. Course Notes 2004, 2006, 2008,

۱. Ibid.

۲. Ibid.

۳. Ibid.

2010,[1] and 2012).[2] Complete with 11 Course Notes for students from age four to 16 (pre-school to high school), the *madrasah* offers these four subjects, viz. *Akhlaq* (ethics), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Tarikh* (history), and Qur'an.

Ground-setting Education and Strategies in the Course Notes

These lessons about the Mahdi wholly or partly are guided by the following conceptual frameworks: "self-development and societal wellbeing" as inspired by the Prophet's dictum, "obedience to Allah and service to mankind" (*tā'at al-khāliq wa khidmat al-makhlūq*), for *Akhlaq*; the *risālah* of *marji' al-taqlīd* as inspired by the Qur'anic verse *"Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he (or she) be faithful—We shall revive him with a good life"* (*Sūrat al-Naḥ*l 16:97), for *Fiqh*; and the establishment of a just and an equitable society, as is so eloquently stated in the Qur'an, thus: *"Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice"* (*Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* 57:25).

Course Note 1

In Course Note 1 for four years old students, there is one lesson in *Fiqh* and another in *Tarikh* which deal with Imam al-Mahdi (*'atfs*). In Topic 11 about *Salawat* of *Fiqh*, four years students are taught thus,

> "Whenever you hear the name of our Holy Prophet (s) or his family, you should recite Salawat. Our last Imam is Imam is Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a). Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a) is still alive and is the Imam of our time. When we hear or say the name of our 12th Imam

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١. The author of this paper had personal copies of the previous Course Notes (2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010) which were downloaded from SIM website.

٢. "Madressa Course Notes 2012," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://www.madressa.net/sim/history, accessed: April 29, 2013.

(‘a) we should put our right hand on our head, bow down, and recite Salawat.”[1]

Topic 11 in *Tarikh* is no less than the Twelfth Imam (*‘a*). It is thus inculcated to the students:

> “Our 12th Imam is Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a). He is the Imam of our time. As he is still alive, when we say his name we should stand up, bow our heads, and recite Salawat to show our respect for him. Allah has promised all Muslims that He would never leave them without a teacher and for us it is our 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a). Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a) is in Ghaybat.”[2]

Ghaybat is explained in the lesson in this way: “*Ghaybat* [means that] he is hidden from us and we cannot see him. But he can see us and he knows when we need his help and he comes to help us.”[3]

Furthermore, the Imam’s (*‘a*) advent in the future is explained, thus:

> “When you want something you should ask Allah through the 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a) because he is closer to Allah than we are, and insha’ Allah, Allah will make your wish come true. Remember, if your wish does not come true it is not because Allah is not listening but because Allah only does what is good for you and it may not have been good for you to have what you wished for. There will come a time when our 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a) will no longer be in Ghaybat. Only Allah knows when this time will be. He will come and fight all the bad people in this world and only the

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١. “Fiqh Syllabus – Class 1 (4 Years Old),” Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/01_F_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٢. “Tarikh Syllabus – Class 1 (4 Years Old),” Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/01_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٣. Ibid.

good people will be left on the earth."[1]

Finally, the following moral lesson is highlighted: "You should make sure that you are good so that you can fight on the side of the 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (*'a*) and not against him."[2]

Course Note 2

In Course Note 2 for five years old students, the previous *Fiqh* lesson on *Salawat* is repeated as a lesson in *Akhlaq* in a more concise manner.[3] As Topic 11 in *Akhlaq*, the following manners of waking up are taught: "You should remember to do the following when you wake up in the morning: remember Allah first, say *salam* to our 12th Imam (*'a*) and greet, hug and kiss your parents."[4]

As Topic 9 in *Tarikh*, the Twelfth Imam (*'a*) is introduced in this manner:

> "One day, a good man called Sayyid Muhammad 'Amili was travelling through the desert with a group of people, when he got lost. Sayyid 'Amili searched and searched for his group but could not find them. It soon became dark. He was tired, hungry, frightened and alone in the hot desert. He was preparing to die when suddenly he saw some water. He went to the water, drank some and then did Wudu' (ablution) and prayed his Salat. After his Salat he felt very weak, and just lay there. All of a sudden he saw a person riding a horse getting closer and closer to him. When the rider reached Sayyid 'Amili, he greeted him and asked him what the matter was. Sayyid 'Amili explained that he was lost and hungry. On hearing this, the rider asked why Sayyid 'Amili had not eaten the melons

١. Ibid.

٢. Ibid.

٣. "Akhlaq Syllabus – Class 2 (5 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/02_A_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013.

٤. Ibid.

> that were behind him. Sayyid ‘Amili turned around, and was surprised to find some melons. The rider then told him to eat one melon and take the rest with him and pointed out the direction he was to go in to find his group. Then the rider disappeared. Sayyid ‘Amili then realized that it was our 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a), who had helped him. Sayyid ‘Amili reached his group safely.”[۱]

As moral lesson of the story, it is pointed out that “Although we cannot see our 12th Imam, he can see us and he knows when we need his help, and he comes to help us.”[۲]

As part of our duties during the *Ghaybah* (occultation) of Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (*‘atfs*), these points are mentioned:

> “15th of Sha‘ban is a very special day in the Islamic Lunar Calendar, because it is the birth date of our 12th Imam (‘a), our living Hujjah (proof), Imam al-Mahdi (‘a). While we wait eagerly for Imam al-Zaman (‘a), a title our 12th Imam (‘a) is known as, to come back, there are we should recite the Du‘a’ (supplication) for his safety, as well as other supplications like Du‘a’ al-Nudbah which our Imam (‘a) himself says is very good for us to recite. We must also try and do only good deeds so we can get closer to Allah and then also try and guide others to the right path so that when our Imam (‘a) returns he has lots and lots of helpers.”[۳]

Course Note 3

In Course Note 3 for six years old students, three lessons are partly or wholly about the Twelfth Imam (*‘a*). His name is mentioned in Topic 2 (Names of *A’immah*) and Topic 7

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۱. “Tarikh Syllabus – Class 2 (5 Years Old),” Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/02_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

۲. Ibid.

۳. Ibid.

(*Ma'sumeen*).[1] Topic 6 is a partial account of the birth of the Imam (*'a*):

> "As soon as our 12th Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a) was born, he did Sajdah. Soon after his birth one of the maids went to see Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a), who was lying in his cradle. The maid said 'Salam' to the Imam ('a) and the Imam ('a) answered her salam. The maid was surprised. The maid then sneezed and Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a) said from the cradle: 'Yarhamukallah,' it is a blessing from Allah and you can be sure to live for the next 3 days."[2]

The following points are enumerated are the story's moral lessons:

> "When anyone says Salam to you it is Wajib on you to answer and you should try to answer more than what was said to you. When anyone else sneezes you should say Yarhamukallah; when you yourself sneeze you should say Al-hamdulillah."[3]

There is also a supplementary story about "The Hidden Imam." In the end, this point is stressed:

> "Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) said that in Ghaybah, our Imam al-Zaman ('a) is like a sun hidden behind the clouds. So, even though we do not see Imam al-Mahdi ('a), he is near us all the time and will help us whenever we ask him. Sometimes when we are lost or frightened somewhere, he helps us even if we don't ask."

Course Note 4

In Course Note 4 for seven years old students, the Twelfth Imam (*'a*) is an integral part of two *Akhlaq* lessons. In Topic 1 on "Necessity of Good *Akhlaq*," the students are told:

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١. "Tarikh Syllabus – Class 3 (6 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/03_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٢. Ibid.

٣. Ibid.

"During the *Ghaybah* of our 12th Imam, we all have to take care of Islam!"[١] In the lesson (Topic 4) on "Manners of Talking," the students are thus urged: "Think before you speak, and imagine if our 12th Imam (*'a*) is standing next to you, would you still say what you are going to say?"[٢]

In *Fiqh* subject, apart from mentioning the name of the Awaited Imam (*'a*) in a poem entitled "Learning the Names of Our 12 Imams" (page 18),[٣] in Topic 8 (Imamat) of *Fiqh*, the students are admonished, thus:

> "Our last Imam ('a), Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a) is alive and is with us all the time. He guides us but it is up to us to remember him and make him happy. At the end of every week what we have done during the week is checked by our Imam ('a). All our good deeds make him happy but all our bad deeds make him sad. So we have to be careful not to make him unhappy. Also, remember that when we hear his name we should stand up, put our right hand on our head, and bow our head down, to show our respect for him."[٤]

In *Tarikh* subject, in addition to mentioning his name in Topic 2 (The *Ahlul Bayt* Titles),[٥] the Twelfth Imam (*'a*) is also highlighted in Topic 14 (Prophet 'Isa (*'a*)), hence: "When our 12th Imam (*'a*) reappears, Prophet 'Isa (*'a*) will

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١. "Akhlaq Syllabus – Class 4 (7 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/04AB_A_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٢. Ibid.

٣. "Fiqh Syllabus – Class 4 (7 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/04B_F_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٤. Ibid.

٥. "Tarikh Syllabus – Class 4 (7 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/04AB_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

come down from the heavens and pray behind him."[1]

Course Note 5

In Course Note 5 for eight years old students, the Imam of the Age (*'a*) is mentioned as the Last Imam in a lesson of Imamate (Topic 12 for Girls).[2] The Imam is also mentioned in relation to *Khums* (Islamic tax) as part of *Furu' al-Din* (branches of religion): "Everyone has to pay fifth of their year's savings. The money is divided between *Sadat* (descendants of the Prophet (*s*) and our 12th Imam (*'a*); during his *Ghaybah* it is given to the *Mujtahid*."[3]

Course Note 6

In Course Note 6 for nine years old students, the Imam of the Time (*'a*) is mentioned thus in a *Fiqh* lesson on Imamate (Topic 11):

> "Our last Imam is Imam is Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a). Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ('a) is still alive and is the Imam of our time. When we hear or say the name of our 12th Imam ('a) we should put our right hand on our head, bow down, and recite Salawat."[4]

In *Tarikh* lesson (Topic 14 for Girls) on *Dhu'l 'Ashirah* (first public Prophetic invitation of the Prophet (*s*) in Makkah three years after his prophethood), this question is included in the 'Moral Box': "When the 12th Imam (*'a*) comes and asks us to join him, will our responses be like

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١. Ibid.

٢. "Fiqh Syllabus – Class 5 (8 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/05A_F_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013. It is Topic 19 in the syllabus for boys, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/05B_F_2012.pdf.

٣. Ibid. It is Topics 21-23 in the syllabus for boys.

٤. "Fiqh Syllabus – Class 6 (9 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/06A_F_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification. It is Topic 19 in the syllabus for boys.

that of Imam ʻAli (*ʻa*) or Abu Lahab?"[١]

Course Note 7

In Course Note 7 for ten years old students, this admonition is included in the 'Moral Box' in relation to a lesson (Topic 20) on the Prophet's conquest of Makkah eight years after the Hijrah: "We must prepare for the time when our 12th Imam reappears so that we are on the side of truth and not on the side of falsehood."[٢]

Course Note 8

In Course Note 8 for eleven years old students, the Awaited Imam's (*ʻa*) name is mentioned in a review lesson (Topic 19) on *Fiqh*.[٣]

Course Note 9

In Course Note 9 for twelve years old students, four *Tarikh* lessons are wholly devoted to the Awaited Imam (*ʻa*). Topic 7 which is about his birth is summarized as follows:

> "The mother of Imam al-Mahdi (ʻa), Bibi Narjis Khatun's arrival into Samarra was quite strange. Bashir ibn Sulayman has narrated this. The 10th Imam (ʻa) asked Bashir to purchase a female slave from Umar ibn Yazid. The female slave would be speaking in the Roman language and he gave Bashir a letter to hand over to the female slave. The lady was bought for 120 Dinars and

١. "Tarikh Syllabus – Class 6 (9 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/06AB_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٢. "Tarikh Syllabus – Class 7 (10 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/07AB_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013.

٣. "Fiqh Syllabus – Class 8 (11 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/08A_F_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013. It is Topic 23 in the syllabus for boys.

> brought to Samarra to Imam ʻAli al-Naqi (ʻa) who welcomed her and handed her into the care of his sister Halimah Khatun. This lady was none other than Bibi Narjis Khatun (ʻa), the granddaughter of Kaiser, the king of Rome. She had seen a dream in which the Holy Prophet (s) had asked for her hand in marriage to our 11th Imam (ʻa) from Prophet ʻIsa (ʻa). Imam Hasan al-ʻAskari (ʻa) was married to Bibi Narjis Khatun. Imam al-Mahdi (ʻa) was born in Samarra at dawn on Friday, the 15th of Shaʻban 255 AH in the house of his father. Immediately upon his birth, he first prostrated in Sajdah and raised his right index finger towards the sky and recited the Kalimah. This was the practice of all our Imams (ʻa)."[١]

The lesson is interspersed with this question: "Most of the signs of the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (*ʻa*) have already come about, are we ready and prepared to help him?"[٢]

Dealing with the political circumstances of the Imam's (*ʻa*) birth, Topic 8 is summed up as follows:

> "The ʻAbbasid Caliph Muʻtamad had tried to prevent Imam's (ʻa) birth but had been unsuccessful. The Imam (ʻa), like the Prophets ʻIsa (ʻa) and Yahya (John the Baptist) (ʻa), had the ability to speak in infancy and used to recite verses of the Holy Qur'an from the cradle. Imam Hasan al-ʻAskari (ʻa) only let a few trusted companions into the secret of his son and advised them that he would be his successor. At the time of his death, his brother Jaʻfar was preparing to lead the funeral prayers when the Imam (ʻa) told his uncle to move aside because only an Imam (ʻa) could lead the funeral prayers for another Imam (ʻa). He was only 5 years old and most people had never seen him. When Muʻtamad heard that the prayers had been led by a young boy, he knew that he had failed in his plan. He increased his efforts in locating and killing the Imam (ʻa) before any harm came to himself. Again he was unsuccessful because Allah protected His Hujjah, who had

١. "Tarikh Syllabus – Class 9 (12 Years Old)," Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/09AB_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٢. Ibid.

> to serve mankind till the last days. The Holy Prophet (s) has said that if one dies without knowing the Imam of his time, his death is that of an unbeliever. There have been two periods of Ghaybah. The first was Ghaybat al-Sughra (260 AH to 328 AH). During that time his followers could not see him, but they could communicate with him through his special deputies. They were ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id, Muhammad ibn ‘Uthman, Husayn ibn Rawh, and ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Samri. After the last deputy of the Imam (‘a), Ghaybat al-Sughra came to an end and Ghaybat al-Kubra (Major Concealment) began. This is the period we are living in today. The two main signs of the Imam’s (‘a) reappearance are the rising of the Sufyani army from Syria, and a loud voice will be heard from the sky announcing the presence of the Imam (‘a) and will be understood by every person on earth.”[1]

The lesson is interspersed with these questions: “Our Imam (*‘a*) has been waiting since he became Imam (at the age of 5) to bring justice in the world. How old is he now and are we still not ready for him? What are our duties to our Imam (*‘a*)? Do we mean it from our heart when we call him to come out of his *Ghaybah*? What are the other signs indicating the reappearance of our Imam (*‘a*)?”[2]

Topic 9 which is about the Imam’s Major Occultation (*ghaybat al-kubra*) is summarized as follows:

> “The period of Ghaybat al-Kubra (Major Concealment) began in the year 328 AH. Since then, the Imam (‘a) has been concealed from us. Nobody can claim to be his deputy and there is no direct way of communication with him. In place of the special deputies, our Mujtahids are regarded as representatives of the Holy Imam (‘a). We all benefit from the Holy Imam (‘a) while he is concealed, just as the earth benefits from the light and heat of the sun even when it is temporarily hidden behind a cloud. Following are examples where the Imam (‘a) has guided his followers: Once ‘Allamah al-Hilli (r) advised that a pregnant lady be buried in the same condition. As the

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١. Ibid.

٢. Ibid.

> people were about to bury her, a horseman came saying that the ‘Allamah had ordered that the child be now removed. This was done. A few years later, the ‘Allamah was visited by the same child who had been removed from his mother. The ‘Allamah immediately realized that it was the Holy Imam (‘a) who had come to his aid, otherwise he would have been guilty of burying a living child. One day a Sunni minister who was an enemy of the Shi‘ah brought a pomegranate to the governor with the names of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and Imam ‘Ali (‘a) on it. The minister claimed that this was a sign from Allah that the Shi‘ah belief was incorrect and that the Shi‘ah should not be regarded as Muslims. Again, our Imam (‘a) came to help, and told Shi‘ah scholars of the minister’s tricks. When the governor found out about the minister’s treachery, he was executed, while the Shi‘ah scholars left with honor and dignity.”[١]

The lesson is interspersed with these questions: “What is the role of a *Mujtahid*, and which *Mujtahid* are you and your family following at the moment? Our Imam (*‘a*) is always there to help us in times of need. What are we doing to prepare ourselves to help him?”[٢]

Finally, the lesson is concluded with ‘Moral Box’ which contains these points: “Even though we may not be able to see our Imam (*‘a*), he is always there to help. We need to prepare ourselves, so that we may be ready when he calls us to him.”[٣]

Dealing with our duties during the period of *Ghaybat al-Kubra*, Topic 10 is encapsulated in this way:

> “The Imam (‘a) is aware of our prayers, deeds, actions and troubles. Any believer who sincerely seeks help from him receives his assistance. It is the duty of every believer to remember the Holy Imam (‘a) and pray for his safety and well-being, and give charity in his name. One can write a

١. Ibid.

٢. Ibid.

٣. Ibid.

> petition (‘aridah) to the Imam (‘a) stating their needs, and deposit it into a well or river at any time. Provided the person practices Islam, prays, fasts and restrains himself from committing sin, the Imam (‘a) will come to his aid. It is important to constantly remember our Holy Imam (‘a) and make preparations for his appearance. There are some definite signs before the Holy Imam (‘a) will appear. Some of these are: Dajal will emerge; there will be two eclipses in the holy month of Ramadan; the sun will rise from the west; an image of a man will appear in the sky opposite the sun; a loud voice will be heard from the sky announcing that the Mahdi has come; and Sufyani will rise with his army and will wage a fierce war in his attempt to destroy the Holy Imam (‘a). The Imam (‘a) will appear in Makkah near the Holy Ka‘bah. Three hundred thirteen Muslims will go to Makkah to swear the oath of allegiance to him. Later, more Muslims will follow.”[1]

The lesson is interspersed with these questions: “Our Imam (*‘a*) is aware of our deeds. Are our deeds pleasing or upsetting for him to see? Would we consider ourselves being one of the believers the Holy Prophet (S) has described in the tradition [which says, ‘Although these Muslims will have never seen me or their Imam, they will remain true to their faith despite being surrounded by calamities and hostilities caused by their enemies’]?”[2]

Finally, the lesson is concluded with ‘Moral Box’ which contains these points: “We should constantly ask Allah to hasten the re-appearance of the Holy Imam (*‘a*). Our actions should be such that when the Imam (*‘a*) sees them, he is pleased with them and not upset by them.”[3]

The syllabus on *Tarikh* also mentions Imam al-Mahdi (*‘a*) in lessons about Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (*‘a*) (Topic 6) and

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١. Ibid.

٢. Ibid.

٣. Ibid.

Prophet ‘Isa (*‘a*) (Topic 16).[1]

Course Note 10

In Course Note 10 for 14 years old students, the Twelfth Imam (*‘a*) is mentioned in a lesson on life after death, particularly on the concept of *Raj‘ah* (Return) or *Qiyamat al-Sughra* (Minor Resurrection):

> “Prior to the total resurrection, the Final Day of Judgment or Reckoning, there will be a period of Raj‘ah or Qiyamat al-Sughra, i.e. Partial Resurrection wherein the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), a group of people perfect in faith and belief, and a group of extremely wicked people will be brought to life again. This will take place during the period when the expected and the awaited Imam al-Mahdi (‘a), the twelfth and the last successor of the Holy Prophet (s) will appear on this earth.”[2]

In the lesson on *Qiyamah* (resurrection), particularly on *Hisab* (reckoning), the Imam’s advent is also identified as one of the signs prior to the Day of Judgment:

> “There will be many signs before the Day of Judgment. One of these signs is the re-appearance of the 12th Imam (‘a). He will reappear when the world will become full of injustice. Hadrat ‘Isa (‘a) will come down to help him in spreading the true faith and Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) will rule the whole world.”[3]

Course Note 11

In Course Note 11 for 15-16 years old students, the Awaited Savior (*‘a*) is mentioned in *Akhlaq* lessons on backbiting (*ghibah*) and slander (*tuhmah*):

> “…Ghibah weakens and breaks up a whole community.

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١. Ibid.

٢. “Fiqh Syllabus – Class 10 (13-14 Years Old),” Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/10AB_T_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

٣. Ibid.

> This allows those who want to see Islam diminished enter the cracks and cause them to split. Slowly damaging and destroying the community as we spend time fighting and arguing amongst ourselves. In doing so, we lose sight of the priority, which is to improve ourselves and our communities for the advent of the 12th Holy Imam (‘a).”[1]

In a nutshell, the lessons which partly or wholly deal with Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (*‘a*) in the *madrasah* syllabus are shown in the following table:

Course Note	Subject		
	Akhlaq	Fiqh	Tarikh
1		11 – Salawat	10 – Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘atfs)
2	7 – Salawat		9 – Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘atfs)
	11 – Manners of Waking up		
3			2 – Names of A’immah 6 – Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘atfs) * Hidden Imam: Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi 7 – Ma’sumeen (‘a)
4	1 – Necessity of Good Akhlaq 4 – Manners of Talking	8 – Imamat Poem: Learning the Names of Our 12 Imams (‘a)	2 – The Ahlul Bayt (‘a) Titles 14 – Prophet ‘Isa (‘a)
		8 – Imamat	
5 Girls		12 – Imamat 13 – Furu‘ al-Din	
5 Boys		19 – Imamat 21-23 – Furu‘ al-Din 1	
6 Girls		11 - Imamat	14 – the Invitation of Dhul ‘Ashirat
6 Boys		19 - Imamat	
7 Boys			20 – The Conquest of Makkah - 2
8 Girls		19 – Terminology	
8 Boys		23 – Terminology	
9			7-10 – Imam Muhammad Mahdi (‘atfs)
			6 – Imam Hasan al-

1. “Akhlaq Syllabus – Class 11 (15-16 Years Old),” Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa, http://cdn.madressa.net/public/notes_2012/11AB_A_2012.pdf, accessed: April 29, 2013, with slight modification.

			‘Askari (‘a)
			16 – Prophet ‘Isa (‘a)
10 Girls		Life after Death – Raj‘at: Qiyamat al-Sughra	
		Qiyamah - Hisab	
11	7 – Backbiting and Slandering		

Conclusion

From above table, the following conclusions can be:

1. The pertinent lessons are not limited to a single subject, say *Tarikh*, but to all subjects, viz. *Akhlaq*, *Fiqh* and *Tarikh*.

2. The ground-setting instructions contained in the lessons are not confined to a particular age bracket but available in all age groups, i.e. from aged 4 to aged 16.

3. These lessons introduce the Mahdi’s blessed personality, lofty station and reformative mission in the future as well as the believers’ responsibility toward him and his movement.

4. These lessons about the Mahdi wholly or partly do not digress from their respective conceptual frameworks: “self-development and societal wellbeing” for *Akhlaq*; the *risālah* of *marji‘ al-taqlīd* for *Fiqh*; and the establishment of a just and an equitable society for *Tarikh*.

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Christian Zionist Messianism: How It Views Islam and Muslims

Dr. Yoginder Sikand

Represented by literally hundreds of small denominations and churches today, particularly in America, evangelical Christian Zionist messianism is today a formidable force and a major actor in global politics. It exercises an enormous clout in the current Bush administration in America. George Bush, too, himself can be characterized as an arch upholder of this ideology, and his policies in the Middle East and elsewhere clearly reflect or tally with the Christian Zionist messianic agenda. Firmly supportive of Zionism, Israel and Israeli expansionism, Christian Zionist messianism is today one of the principal fountainheads of Islamophobia on the global scene.

This paper provides a general overview of the ideology of Christian Zionist messianism, focusing, in particular, on the way Islam and Muslims are depicted as an integral part—in the role of the antagonistic 'Other—of this ideology. It shows how Christian Zionist messianic expectations generate enormously destructive imperialistic and militaristic tendencies that threaten to drown the world in an unprecedented global war, with Muslims being projected as the principal 'enemy'. The implications of this dangerous

ideology, a combination of centuries of white racism and Islamophobia, Zionist claims to supremacy and aims at global domination and the machinations of the present global capitalistic order, for Muslims, and for the world at large, are then sought to be outlined. This it does by looking specifically at the writings and activities of one of the leading American Christian Zionist ideologues of today, John Hagee, senior pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonia in Texas, in America's notorious 'Bible-belt', which is also the bastion of white racism and supremacy in America.

Introduction

Approximately a tenth of the American population is today a devoted member of the cult of Christian Zionist messianism, writes the noted scholar-activist Dan Cohn-Sherbook, himself a Jew and Profesor of Judaism at the University of Wales in a recently published book, *The Politics of Apocalypse—The History and Influence of* Christian Zionism. 'It is the fastest growing religious movement in Christianity today', he writes.[١] Many followers of the cult are from the middle and upper-middle classes, followers of televangelists who wield enormous political and economic clout.

Christian Zionist messianists are impelled by an imperialistic vision, of Jesus' impending arrival on earth as the Messiah, when he shall, so they believe, wipe out all his enemies (all non-Christians, presumably) and establish his global dominion, with his capital at Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Christian Zionists believe that they, as allegedly God's chosen people, will be spared the horrors of the global war that shall precede Jesus' advent, and will be miraculously

١. Dan Cohn-Sherbook, *The Politics of Apocalypse—The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oneworld Books, 2006, p. xi.

wafted up to heaven, where they shall watch the final destruction of the world.

Christian Zionists believe that Jesus can only return the world once the Jews colonise Palestine. This belief is based on the contentious claim that God had granted this land to the progeny of Abraham, through Isaac, that is the Jews, for eternity. This land is not restricted to the present borders of the state of Israel. Instead, Zionists, both Jewish and Christian, believe that a vast swathe of land, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates, today inhabited by millions of Arab Muslims and Christians, belongs rightfully to the Jews, and so must be ethnically 'cleansed' of non-Jewish presence. Hence the justification they offer for their genocidal project aimed at the Arabs. Hence, too, their consistent backing to Israel, their generous funding of Jewish settlements in Palestine, and their enormous pressure on successive American governments to adopt rigorously pro-Israel and anti Palestinian policies.

Cohn-Sherbook traces the origins of Christian Zionism to the changing attitude of Christian groups towards the Jews following the Protestant Revolution. The early Catholic Church justified the witch-hunt of the Jews, labeling them as alleged Christ-killers. However, numerous Protestant sects, while equally vehemently anti-Jewish, believed that the Jews needed to colonise Palestine before Jesus would re-appear in the world to save it. This was, and still is, by no means a generous acceptance of the Jews. Rather, they believed, as Christian Zionists today do, that only those Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah would be saved. The rest would ally themselves with the Anti-Christ and would be defeated by Jesus and his forces and, consequently, would be sent off to eternal damnation in the fires of hell.

From the seventeenth century onwards, Cohn-Sherbook shows, numerous European, and, later American, Protestant churches began evolving schemes to settle the Jews in

Palestine. This was also seen as a convenient way of getting rid of the Jewish presence in Europe. They petitioned various European powers to back this scheme. By the early nineteenth century, numerous British administrators had been won round to this idea, impelled, no doubt, also by a motive to undermine the Ottoman Empire, which at that time controlled Palestine, and by a deep-rooted aversion to Islam.

Increasingly, Christian Zionists began to join hands with secular Jewish Zionists, whose plans to settling Jews in Israel had nothing to do with any messianic hopes, but, rather, arose as a response to the centuries'-old persecution of Jews by European Christians. (In contrast, Cohn-Sherbook rightly notes, 'In Arab lands, Jews had flourished for centuries […] [while] in European countries Jewry had been subject to oppression and persecution.'[1]

Ties between secular Jewish Zionists and Christian Zionists to pursue the common project of Jewish colonization of Palestine were strengthened by the support given to Theodore Herzl (b.1860), the Hungarian Jew who is regarded as the father of modern-day Zionism. Cohn-Sherbook traces in considerable detail the course of this close collaboration down to the present-day, describing the strong political and financial links between Christian and Israeli/Jewish Zionists and also the enormous clout of the Zionist lobby in American political circles.

Christian Zionism, based on a virulently anti-Islamic agenda, is a major hurdle to peace not just in West Asia but globally, too. Indeed, some Christian Zionists even ardently wish (and work for) a final global war or Armageddon, in the belief that this would accelerate their hoped-for wafting up to heaven and the subsequent arrival of Jesus. Christian Zionist messianism is a call for global war. The belief that

1. Ibid., p.44.

Christianity is the sole truth, that all other faiths are 'Satanic' or 'false', that the Jews must all gather in Palestine to fulfill so-called Biblical prophecies, and that a grand global war will soon erupt leading to the massacre of hundreds of millions and heralding the 'second coming' of Jesus, who will establish his Christian kingdom extending till the four corners of the world, clearly indicate the hate-driven, global expansionist project of Christian Zionism.

In his remarkable book, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Rise of American Evangelism and the Future of Muslims*, Muhammad Arif Zakaullah brings out in considerable detail how Christian Zionist messianists have specifically framed and targeted Muslims as allegedly being in league with the Anti-Christ and against whom Jesus and the Christians must fight in a bloody war of unprecedented dimensions in the last days.[١] This explains, Zakaullah writes, their unstinting support to Israel and its brutal suppression of the Palestinians, and their fervent backing of America's invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and its so-called 'war on terror'. Zakaullah quotes several leading American Christian messianic evangelists as describing Islam and Muslims in lurid colours and branding it as irredeemably 'anti-Christian'. Not surprisingly, he writes, they have been among the most fierce backers of America's imperialist misadventures that many Muslims see as directed against them. American imperialism is thus sought to be given a suitable 'Christian' sanction, and is presented as working to usher in Jesus' triumphant return to the world. War and bloodshed on an unimaginable scale, mainly against Muslims, and not peace and reconciliation, American Christian fundamentalists seem to believe, will herald the

١. Muhammad Arif Zakaullah, The Cross and the Crescent: The Rise of American Evangelism and the Future of Muslims, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2004.

eventual establishment of the Kingdom of God, the rule of supposedly pious Christians all over the globe.

John Hagee: Ideologue of Christian Zionist Messianic Imperialism and Advocate of Cosmic War against Islam and Muslims

John Hagee is today recognized the world over as one of the leading ideologues of contemporary Christian Zionist messianism. He is the founder and pastor of the Cornerstone Church, in Texas, USA, which claims some 18,000 active members. As with numerous other similar American Christian fundamentalist preachers, his church is richly endowed and media savvy. Hagee is the president of the 'Global Evangelism' media company that broadcasts his daily programmes on television and radio throughout the USA and around the world. He is the author of numerous books on Christian Zionism, some of which have been reprinted by Christian fundamentalist publishers abroad as well.

Final Dawn over Jerusalem is one of Hagee's major writings on Christian Zionism that well exemplifies the imperialist agenda that lies at its very core.[1] The aim of the book is to defend the Israeli occupation of Palestine, to denounce those who seek to protest Israeli atrocities, and to advocate the cause of 'Greater Israel', all this in the name of Christianity and premised on the notion of the Jews as being allegedly God's 'Chosen People'.

Racism is integral to the Christian Zionist message, as Hagee makes amply clear. The Bible, Hagee, says, describes the Jews as 'the apple of God's eye' [Zech 2:8]. He quotes the Bible as addressing the Jews and declaring, 'For you are a holy people to the LORD your God' and 'the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure

1. John Hagee, *Final Dawn over Jerusalem*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth' [Deut.14:2]. This means, so Hagee argues, that those who harm the Jews or the state of Israel or stand in the way of the design of 'Greater Israel' will 'experience the instant wrath of God'. To those who dare to challenge the oppressive Zionist state, Hagee announces, 'The man or nation that lifts a voice or hand against Israel invites the wrath of God'. Such people will, Hagee insists, be 'cursed' by God.

Hagee's notion of God thus appears to be that of a tribal Jewish deity, who functions as a willing tool in the pursuit of Jewish expansionism. The Bible was written by Jewish hands, and given that, as many liberal Christians would themselves concede, much of it is a human product, numerous Biblical verses were written in order to legitimise the interests of the community from which its writers were drawn. This would seem obvious to any discerning layman, but Biblical literalists like Hagee vehemently disagree. For them every word of the Bible is sacrosanct and divine. Biblical literalism is pressed into the service of the Christian Zionist messianic imperialist and racist agenda. Drawing upon numerous verses of the Bible, Hagee argues, 'God watches over Israel as a protective parent hovers over an only child'. 'The nation of Israel', he makes so bold as to declare, 'was created by a sovereign act of God. All other nations were created by an act of war or a declaration of men, but Israel was intentionally created by God so that He would have a physical place of inheritance on the earth'. Accordingly, Hagee would have us believe that for this god, who is seen as in need of a 'physical place' for himself, non-Jews or Gentiles, are second-rate human beings or less, and so can easily be dispensed with if they are seen as coming in the way of Jewish imperialism.

The tribal Jewish version of God that Hagee presents appears entirely unjust and arbitrary, far from being impartial in the way he deals with His creation. Given the

fact that the God of the Biblical literalist imagination is a Jewish deity, and not the universal God who looks upon His entire creation impartially, he is seen as blessing Jewish conquests of territories of their enemies. Thus, quoting the Bible, Hagee writes that God gave the land of 'Greater Israel', a vast swathe of land stretching from Egypt all the way till Iraq, to the Jews, descendants of Isaac, forever. That being the case, Hagee suggests that people living in those territories, millions of Arabs, both Muslims and Christians, have no right to live there or else must accept to live under Jewish rule. Although Hagee does not say this explicitly, what this means is that those who refuse to accept Jewish rule must, therefore, be either killed or expelled.

The god of Hagee's imagination appears as an entirely whimsical real estate agent. 'God established Israel's national geographic boundaries', Hagee writes. 'The exact borders of Israel are detailed in Scripture just as our heavenly Father dictated them', he goes on, adding, 'The divine Surveyor drove the original stakes into Judean soil and decreed that no one should ever change these property lines. The real estate contract and lands covenants were signed in blood and stand to this very hour'. Hence, he argues, 'Jews have the absolute right as mandated by God to the land of Israel and, more specifically, to the city of Jerusalem'. Hence, he suggests, Palestinians have no claim to their own historical land, and must make way for Jewish occupiers.

Hagee's defence of Zionist imperialism goes to ridiculous lengths. Laughable as this may sound, he argues, 'Israel has a Spy in the sky'—God Himself. God, he claims, provides Israel, the Jewish people and the state of Israel, with special protection. 'No nation in the world can match the defensive force guarding the State of Israel. The archangel Michael has a special assignment to guard Israel'. And those who, for any reason oppose Israel, and this includes Palestinians fighting Israeli occupation and oppression, are said to incur

God's wrath. 'The Lord stands watch in the darkest night with an eye trained on the nation of Israel and, more specifically, Jerusalem. Those who fight with Israel fight with Him', Hagee asserts.

So central is Israel to Hagee's tribalistic version of God that he goes to the extent of arguing that the fate of each and every person on the face of the planet depends essentially on his or her attitude to the Jews. 'Prosperity or punishment depends on how we treat Israel', he alleges, because, he claims, the Jews, as descendants of Abraham 'enjoy heavenly favour'. To back his claim he quotes the Bible as saying that when God entered into a covenant with Abra¬ham, He gave him an 'awesome promise', saying, 'I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' [Gen. 12:3]. Hence, Hagee insists, the United States, and, indeed, anyone else who wishes to please God, must consistently engage in 'compassionate support of the State of Israel', adding that, 'The quickest and most effective way to be on God's side is to stand with the State of Israel and the Jewish people in their hour of need'. By doing this, he claims, one can win God's favour, because, 'God blesses the man or nation that blesses Israel or the Jewish people'.

At no time before, Hagee firmly believes, has support for Israel and Zionist imperialism, been more crucial than today. This is because, he claims, Jesus is returning to the world soon, and Israel must be protected in order to welcome the Messiah. Hagee's image of Jesus in his 'second coming' bears no resemblance to the familiar notion of the suffering, loving Christ. Rather, in his description Jesus appears as a fierce warrior, rallying Christians to arms and heralding the final, global war, ironically in the name of the 'Prince of Peace'. In the doomsday scenario that Hagee outlines, what he calls 'fanatical attacks' by Arabs on Israel, particularly Jerusalem, would mount. In response,

Christians the world over, he says, must rally behind Israel. At this hour, he insists, 'we must let the world know that if a line has to be drawn, it will be drawn around Christians as well as Jews. We are united and indivisible'.

The city of Jersualem, Hagee believes, is the crux of the final battle before Jesus' 'second coming'. This city, considered sacred by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, has been ordained, so Hagee argues, by God to be 'under the exclusive control of the Jewish people' until Jesus arrives again. The final battle of Armageddon will, he writes, be centred on this city, with Arabs or Muslims seeking to wrest control of it from the Jews. In this regard, Hagee says, Christians, for their part, must staunchly defend Israel and must refuse any peace offers, such as allowing for a shared Jerusalem or joint control of the town by Jews and Arabs. In particular, he appeals to the United States to do everything in its power to back Israel and to crush its opponents, claiming this is the only way to win God's favour. If America fails to do this, so he warns, it would be crushed by God Himself!

Quoting various verses of the Bible, Hagee describes what he sees as the unfolding of events of cosmic proportions, ushering in a global war the like of which has never been witnessed hitherto and heralding the 'second coming of Jesus'. In this global war, he says, Muslims, whom he regards as followers of a 'false' religion, would ally with the Russians to fight against Israel. This would lead to a global nuclear war, with hundreds of millions being killed. At this point, the 'Anti-Christ' will appear, attack Jerusalem and will take over the reigns of the world, falsely claiming to usher in peace. But, this grand deception will not last long, and, instead, will only lead to even more devastating wars. At this time, Hagee says, Christians must defend, by every means possible, the Jews and Israel, and wage war against the armies of those opposed to God's 'Chosen Race', the Jews. Only then can they be saved, he

insists.

After years of global war and terrible destruction, Hagee writes, Jesus will be sent by God to deliver the world. Mounted on a white horse, he will arrive at the battlefield at Armageddon. Defeating the 'Anti-Christ' and his army, he will establish his global kingdom with his capital in Jerusalem, there to 'rule and reign forever'. Hagee's description of Jesus' future global kingdom offers little cause to cheer for non-Christians, including, ironically, even the Jews whom he so ardently defends. It would, as he himself makes clear, be nothing short of a global Christian empire, and an antiquated one at that, with kings and queens and presidents still in place! How they would continue to be around when Jesus rules the whole world is a mystery that Hagee leaves unsolved.

Ruled by Jesus, Hagee writes, 'Jerusalem, the apple of God's eye, will become the joy of the world. The city will become the international worship center, and people from all over the world will make pilgrimages to worship in the holy temple. Kings, queens, princes and presidents shall come to the Holy City' to adore Jesus. Presumably, these all will be Christians themselves, for Hagee quotes the Bible as predicting that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow […] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.

In a more recent book on the same subject, titled *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*, Hagee further elaborates on the theme of a global war against Islam and Muslims that he appeals to Christians and Jews to jointly launch, arguing that this is precisely what Jesus wants to happen before his Second Coming. Not surprisingly, and like other Christian Zionist messianic evangelists, Hagee is convinced that there can be absolutely no room for dialogue with Muslims, principally because, so he argues, Christians and Jews, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other, do not worship the same God. In fact, he goes so far as to claim

that the God of the Jews and the Christians is the diametrical opposite of the Muslim God. [1] Accordingly, he presents Islam in the most lurid colours. He claims that Islam aims at nothing short of exterminating all non-Muslims and establishing a one-world Islamic government. Islam, he argues, is 'a doctrine of death'[2] which promotes 'terrorism'[3], He approvingly quotes George Bush as having declared that America 'is at war with Islamic fascists' and insists that 'This is a religious war' and that 'there is no room for compromise'.[4]

Hagee writes that America, and 'Christendom' more generally, along with the Jews, are now deeply involved in the final war that will supposedly herald the return of Jesus as messiah, a war in which Christians and Jews are pitted against Muslims. All Christians (and Jews), he asserts, must participate whole-heartedly in this cosmic war because, he says, if America loses the war,

'[T]he Law of Shariah, the Islamic law, will rule America and the Western world. Christian churches and synagogues will be burned to the ground. Every Christian who refuses to denounce Jesus to accept Allah will be decapitated […] Radical Islam does not want us to be quiet—they want us to be dead.'

Hagee, like many of his fellow Christian fundamentalists, fervently exhorts America to take the lead in bloody attacks against Muslim states that are opposed to Israeli brutalities, because he sees these as fundamentally 'anti-Christian'. In this regard, he singles out Iran, one of the most militarily

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۱. John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*, Lake Mary: Frontline, 2006, p.2.

۲. Ibid., p.23.

۳. Ibid., p.10.

۴. Ibid., p.3.

powerful Muslim countries in the world and certainly the most vocally opposed to American imperialism, for particular attack. He claims that Iran is rapidly building up a nuclear stockpile, which it intends, so he says, to use to bomb and destroy Israel and perhaps America. Before that can happen, he insists, America must take the initiative and invade and destroy Iran, particularly targeting its nuclear facilities. This step, he argues, would actually be 'part of God's plan for the future of Israel and the entire world', in that it would drive the world to the global disaster of Armageddon, 'the countdown that will usher in the end of the world'. This will be, so he claims, followed by the rise of the Anti-Christ, and then, finally, the Second Coming of Jesus, when all non-Christians, including Muslims, will be slain.[1] In short, a global war against Islam and Muslims is precisely what Hagee, like many others of his ilk, want to see unleashed in the hope that their wild messianic expectations will thereby be fulfilled.

Conclusion

Based on a fundamental hatred for Islam and Muslims, a legacy of many centuries, Christian Zionist messianism has emerged as one of the most pressing and disastrous threats and challenges of our times. With the massive financial and political clout that it wields, particularly in America, it is the new face of Western imperialism, one that is inherently and fiercely opposed to people of other faiths and even to Christians who do not subscribe to its bloody doctrines.

Islam and Muslims have a special place in the ideology of Christian Zionist messianic fascism: as alleged 'enemies' of God. Based on this bizarre belief, theological sanction is sought for bloody wars against Muslims the world over. This ideology has instigated and is being used to justify

١. Ibid., p. 38.

American (and Israeli) imperialist aggression in many Muslim countries today, and possibly against Iran in the near future. Clearly, Muslims need to be aware of this dangerous project and take appropriate measures. So, also, do other non-Christians, who, like Muslims, are seen as doomed to hell by Christian fundamentalists. And so, too, do other Christians, who relate to their religious traditions in different ways and who firmly believe that the Christian Zionist messianic project represents a fundamental betrayal of the message of Jesus Christ, ironically a betrayal being so aggressively perpetrated in his name.