

ALLAMAH AL-HILLI ON IMAMATE IN HIS *KASHF AL-MURAD*

TRANSLATED BY KARIM AGHILI

ABSTRACT: It is necessary for all people to have a leader, or *Imam*, who guides them towards morality and abandoning corruption. This type of leader is a blessing and grace of God. In Shi'i Islam, the concept of Imamate refers to the necessity of having a divinely-appointed leader who will lead the Islamic nation after the Prophet's death. This Imam surpasses all people in every venerable quality such as piety, knowledge, courage, and wisdom. The infallible Imam carries the role of both continuing the task of the Prophet in presenting true Islam as well as being a political leader. This is a chapter on the responses to objections raised against Imamate from prominent scholar Allamah Hilli's *Kashf ul-Murād*, expanded on from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqād* – the first treatise on Shi'i theology. *Kashf al-Murad* is one of the most widely read of Allamah al-Hilli's publications as it is the first commentary written on Allamah al-Tusi's work.

Translator's Introduction

Jamal al-Din Abu Mansur Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn al-Mutahhar, called al-'Allamah (The Learned One) al-Hilli, was born in al-Hilla on 29th Ramadan in 648/1250. He was a nephew of Muhaqqiq al-Hilli who studied under Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi¹, Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, Ibn

¹ b. 11 Jamadi I597/1201

Tawus, Ibn Nima (Shaykh Ja'far) and Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani, as well as a number of Sunni ulama. He was a resident of al-Hilli and responsible for the conversion of Uljaytu (Sultan Khudabandah) to Shi'ism after debating with Qadi Nizam al-Din al-Shafi'i in 709/1309. He was the author of numerous books particularly on *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) and is specifically noted for his development of the role of the mujtahid. Among many of his students included his son Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin (Pride of the Investigators) and Taj al-Din ibn al-Mu'ayyah. Al-Hilli died in Hilla on 21th Muharram in 726/1325 and was buried in Najaf.

Al-Hilli started to write his famous commentary on Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-i'tiqad*, called *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad* probably after he had already written at least some of his works. As he states in the introduction, he began composing this commentary after he had already written an array of theological works.² However, because of not mentioning there his latest work, *Niyat al-Maram fi 'Ilm al-Kalam*, it seems most likely that he started to write the *Kashf al-Murad* before beginning the latter work, given that he refers to the *Nihaya* throughout the first half of the *Kashf al-Murad* but only to the *Manahij* and the *Asrar*. However, because of referring to it in the second half of the *Kashf al-Murad*, he appears to have started to work on the *Nihaya* before having finished with the *Kashf al-Murad*. He completed the *Kashf* on either 15 or 16 Rabi' i 696/11 or 12 January 1297.³

² *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad*, edited and annotated by Hasan Hasan-Zadah al-Amuli, Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami, Qum, 1472 A.H., p. 24.

³ According to Agha Buzurg al-Tehrani, (*al-Dhari'ah ila tasanif al-Shi'ah*, Tehran 1355-1405H., 18:60) it was completed on 15 or 16 Rabi' I 696/11 /12 January 1297.

The treatise is one of the most widely read of al-Hilli's works, since it was the first commentary written on Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*⁴ which served as a basis for understanding that work for future commentators. It was only in the seventh/thirteenth century that the first systematic treatise on Twelve-Imam Shi'i *kalam* (theology) was written by the celebrated mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, also known as Muhaqqiq Tusi.⁵ This is perhaps the only instance in history in which the major theological text of a religious community was composed by a scientist like Nasir al-Din. The work of al-Tusi entitled *Tajrid al-i'tiqad* (*Abstract of the Doctrines*) quickly became the standard theological text, and more than a hundred commentaries written on it before this century. Perhaps the most notable commentary is *Kashf al-Murad* (*Disclosing the Intention*) by Jamal al-Din 'Allamah al-Hilli (d. 762/1326), the most celebrated Shi'i mutakallim after Tusi.

In this magnum opus, one will come to know that Twelve-Imam Shi'i *kalam* differs in various respects from Ash'arite *kalam*. The work is divided into seven sections, each section is subdivided into several chapters (*fasl*), and each chapter is again subdivided into several issues (*mas'alah*).

The first section is under the heading of general metaphysical concepts (*al-umur al-'ammah*), which are the essential properties of "being *qua* being" or being understood as being. The section is about existence and non-existence, the modes and grades of existence, and develops an elaborate ontology reminiscent of Avicenean (Ibn Sinan) ontology

⁴ Agha Buzurg, *Dhari'ah*, 18:60

⁵ 597/1201-672/1274

rather than Asha`rite atomism. The work then turns to a discussion of quiddity, which complements that of existence, and proceeds to the relation between cause and effect and the discussion of causality in general where the reality of horizontal causality in direct opposition to the Ash`arite view is confirmed and thus Ash`arite occasionalism (i.e., the doctrine that God is the sole causal actor and that all events are merely occasions on which God brings about what are normally thought of as their effects) is rejected.

The second section is on substance and accidents, and in contrast to Ash`arism, all forms of atomism are rejected. The view of Ibn Sina holds that a body can be divided *ad infinitum* potentially, not actually. Tusi also confirms the reality of non-material substances which include both the intellect (*al-`aql*) and the human soul (*al-nafs*), which from the perspective of Shi`i kalam, are immortal substances. However, according to Ash`arism, the soul is not independent of the body; rather, the soul is recreated by God on the Day of Judgment along with the resurrection of the body.

In the third *maqсад*, Tusi turns to theology in its proper sense in contrast to metaphysics in its general sense with which he is occupied in the first two sections of the book. In the third, fourth, and fifth sections he turns to God and His existence, attributes and acts, prophecy (*al-nubuwwah*), and imamology (*al-imamah*) respectively where he deals with general Islamic doctrines.

In the fifth section, he turns to Shi`i beliefs concerning the Imam. And in the sixth and last section, he deals with the questions of eschatology (*al-ma`ād*), such as passing away and restoration, promise and threat, reward and punishment, the question of the Muslim grave sinner,

Divine Forgiveness, intercession and repentance, *al-iḥbat* (to have one's good deeds annulled due to one's sins) and *al-takfīr* (to have one's sins forgiven and covered due to one's good deeds), punishment and reward, the bridge (*sirat*), and the scale (*mīzan*).

The method used in dealing with theological subjects served as a model for many treatises as written subsequently, and many theologians and philosophers began to make a distinction between metaphysics in its general sense (*al-ilāhiyyat bi'l- ma'na'l-a'amm*), corresponding to the first two sections of Tusi's work, and theology dealing with God and His Attributes and Acts, prophecy, and other specifically religious issues (*al-ilāhiyyat bi'l- ma'n'l-akḥass*).

What follows is the translation of Section Five on the Imamate (*al-imamah*) of *Kashf al-Murad (Disclosing the Intention)* by 'Allamah al-Hilli, the most notable commentary upon *Tajrid al-i'tiqad (Abstract of the Doctrines)* by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672/1273). It should be noted that the volume and page numbers as given in the endnotes are the same as those given in *Kashf al-murad fi sharḥ tajrid al-i'tiqad (Qism al-ilāhiyyat)* (Part II: Theology] introduced and annotated by Ayatullah Ja'far al-Subhan.¹

Imamate: Divinely-appointed leadership

The existence of an Imam, or a divinely-appointed spiritual and temporal guide and leader, is a favour (*lutf*) of God. Therefore it is necessary for God to appoint him for the attainment of the main purpose,⁶ which is to guide people in the direction of utmost dignity

⁶ *Talkhis al-Muḥassal*, p. 407; *Anwar al-malakut*, p. 202; *al-Lawami' al-ilāhiyyah*, p. 262; *al-Shafi fi'l-Imamah*, vol. 1, pp. 36-39, 47-54, 144-154, 164-167; *al-Dhakhirah*, p. 190, *al-Iqtisad*, p. 183; *Risalah fi'l-imamah* of al-Muhaqqiq al-Tusi, p. 426.

and nobility and to the superabundant source of unity, justice, and purity.

The First Issue: The appointment of the Imam is necessary for God.

Allamah al-Hilli: People held different views as to whether imamate is necessary or not.

Those who hold that the appointment of an Imam is not necessary: Abu Bakr ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Kaysan al-Asamm,⁷ the Mu‘tazilites, and a group of the Kharijites.

Those who believe Imamate to be necessary according to tradition (*sam‘an*) although not according to reason (*‘aqlan*): The Jubba‘iyan,⁸ the traditionists, and the Ash‘arites.

Abu‘l-Husain al-Basri, the Baghdadis⁹ and the Imamites hold that it is necessary according to reason. However, then they disagreed on who should appoint the Imam. The Imamites held that the appointment of the Imam is incumbent upon God. However, Abu‘l-Husayn and the Baghdadis hold that it is obligatory on rational people to choose a leader.

Al-Tusi argued that the appointment of the Imam is a divine favour, and this favour is incumbent upon God. And the reliability of this minor premise is known through reason because it is necessarily known that when people have a leader who prevents them from conflict, domination, and immorality, guides people towards the truth, and promotes justice and equity, they would move towards righteousness

⁷ d. 816/18

⁸ Abu ‘Ali al-Jubba‘i and Abu Hashim ibn al-Jubba‘i

⁹ The Baghdadi Mu‘tazilites

and away from corruption. As for the major premise, it has already been explained.

Al-Tusi: Imamate is free from all evils (harms; *mafsadah*), and that divine favour is exclusive to the existence of the Imam is known to rational people. His existence is a favour of God, his exercise of authority (*tasarruf*) is an additional favour, and his absence is because of us.

Allamah al-Hilli: The following are the objections raised against the doctrine of Imamate along with responses for each:

First objection: Imamate being a favour (*lutf*) of God is not a sufficient reason for its being compulsory upon God to appoint the Imam (unlike the necessity of knowing God for us which involves a sufficient reason that necessitates knowing God, because there is no evil that can be assumed by us to result from knowing God). However, it is not a sufficient reason that the existence of the Imam is a favour of God; therefore, it is incumbent upon God to appoint him as long as it is not known to us if imamate is free from all evils that can be assumed, and it is not sufficient just to assume its being free from evils. Since it is possible that the Imamate may involve an evil which is known to God and not known to us, it is not incumbent upon God to appoint the Imam.

Counter-argument:

- a) Imamate is evidently free from all evils. The reason is that all different types of the evils are specified and known, and this is why we are expected to avoid them completely. It is certainly incumbent upon us to avoid them when we come to know about them because being religiously responsible for that of which we have no

knowledge is absurd, and Imamate is free from all those evils known to us. Therefore, the Imamate as a favour remains free from evil, and for this reason it is incumbent upon God to appoint an Imam.

- b) If evil were an inseparable part of Imamate, it would not be separable from Imamate. The consequent is definitely false, because God says, “*I am making you the Imam of mankind*” (II, 124).¹⁰ If evil were considered to be separable from Imamate, its being separable from it could be possible; therefore, the appointment of the Imam will be necessary assuming that evil can be separable from it.

Second objection: Imamate would be necessary if divine favour were specific to it. The question is why it is not possible that there can be another divine favour in place of Imamate as a result of which the Imamate cannot be specified as being a favour, and the designation of the Imam will not be incumbent upon God? In others words, there can be other ways in which God can protect mankind from committing sins, and the appointment of the Imam can be one of those divine favours.

Response: Divine favour (*lutf*) being exclusive to Imamate is known to reasonable people because there exist within man unbridled desires and destructive inner forces that are hostile to his struggle to develop and advance towards perfection. Therefore, Imamate as a rational necessity cannot be denied. For this reason, reasonable people, at all times and in all places, resort and hold fast to a leader to establish social order and avert harms resulting from the absence of one.

¹⁰ The Qur'an, 2:124

Third objection: The Imam is a favour of God if he exercises authority by commanding good and prohibiting evil, while Imamites do not say this. In other words, what you do believe to be a favour, you do not deem it to be necessary, and what you deem to be necessary, it is not a favour.

Response:

- a) The existence of the Imam as such is a divine favour for certain reasons, one of which is that he preserves the divine laws and protects them from undergoing additions, deletions, and alterations.
- b) The Imam's existence on the part of those who are religiously responsible (*mukallaf*) for obeying him and who deem his authority permissible at all times is conducive to preventing them from engaging in immoral practices. Moreover, it will be a means of bringing them near to righteousness, and this point is necessarily and evidently known.
- c) His exercise of authority is undoubtedly a favour, and it is not accomplished save through him himself; therefore, his own existence is one favour and his exercise of authority (*tasarruf*) is another.

Imamate as a divine favour that is accomplished by certain things: What is compulsory on God is to create the Imam and enable him to perform his functions by providing him with ability and knowledge, and to designate him by name and lineage. This is what has been done by God. The duty of the Imam is to take over and accept the position of the imamate, and this is what the Imam has done.

The duty of people (*al-ra'iyah*) is to support and help the Imam, and accept and act upon his guidelines. Not doing so will deprive themselves of enjoying divine favour in its fullness.

The Second Issue: It is necessary for the Imam to be infallible¹¹

Al-Tusi: One of the reasons for the infallibility¹² of the Imam is the impossibility of an infinite regress (*al-tasalsul*) which necessitates his infallibility.¹³

Another reason is because he is the protector of the Divine Law, and if he commits a sin, it will be necessary to disapprove of his action. Thus, his violation will be contradictory to the Divine command that he should be obeyed; thereby the goal of his appointment will not be achieved, and his degree and rank will be lower than that of the lowest of the laypeople.

Al-Hilli: The Imamites¹⁴ and the Islama'lis¹⁵ hold that it is necessary that the Imam be infallible; all the other sects disagree. The reasons for the infallibility of the Imam are as follows:

- 1) If the Imam were not infallible, it would necessitate an infinite regress. The consequent is false, therefore the antecedent will be also false. In other words, the prerequisite for the necessity of the

¹¹ *al-Iqtisad fi'l-i'tiqad* of al-Ghazali, p. 189; *Anwar al-Malaktut*, p. 204; *al-Shafi*, vol. 1, p. 300; *al-Dhakhirah*, p. 429; *al-Lawami' al-ilahiyyah*, p. 268; *Risalah fi'l-imamah* by al-Muahaqqiq al-Tusi printed at the end of *Talkhis al-Muhassal*, p. 430.

¹² Immunity from sin and error

¹³ Translator's note: Because if an imam (a leader) commits a sin or an error, he will necessarily need another guide, and if the second one be like the first one, he will also need a guide, therefore, the non-infallibility of an imam will entail an infinite regress, which implies the necessity of the infallibility of the Imam. Therefore, the non-infallibility of the Imam would be void and invalid.

¹⁴ i.e., the Twelvers

¹⁵ i.e., the Seveners

appointment of the Imam is to deem it possible that an error may be committed by his subjects (*ra'iyah*). If the prerequisite holds true of the Imam, it will necessitate that he should be guided by another imam and an infinite regress would arise unless the end result ends in an Imam who is free from error; therefore, he will be the true Imam.

- 2) The Imam is the protector of the Divine Law; it is necessary that he be infallible. As for the first premise, the Imam is the guardian of the Divine Law on the grounds that the following are not by themselves guardians of the Divine Law:
 - a. The Qur'an and the Sunnah, because they do not contain all the detailed rulings.
 - b. The consensus of the Muslim community because each member, supposing there is no infallible Imam among them, is liable to error, as is the case with all the members, as their consensus is not based on a reliable proof, otherwise that proof would have become well-known and widely transmitted. Their consensus cannot be based on conjectural evidence (*amarah*),¹⁶ because it is impossible for the Muslims living in various places to agree on a single conjectural evidence (*amarah*) as we know that people do not agree on having a specific type of food at the same time; and if there be no consensus based on reliable proof or a conjectural evidence, their consensus of opinion will be invalid.
 - c. The preservation of the Divine Law cannot be based on analogy (*al-qiyas*) either because of the invalidity of its authority as an

¹⁶ Translator's note: *Amarah* literally means sign or allusion.

acceptable proof based on what has been proven in the principles of jurisprudence, and even if its validity be accepted, it is unanimously agreed that it cannot be the preserver of the Divine Law.

d. It cannot be based on original freedom from liability (*al-bara'ah al-asliyyah*),¹⁷ because had it been correct to apply it as a reliable proof, the prophetic mission of the prophets would not have been necessary, and it is unanimously agreed that it is not the preserver of the Divine Law.

Therefore, nothing will remain for the preservation of the religion except the existence of the Imam, and if he is liable to error, there would be no trust in the ritual practices as received from the Imam through which we serve and devote ourselves to God and that for which we are religiously responsible. This contradicts the purpose of religious duties (*taklif*) that display submission to the Will of God.

- 3) Should the Imam commit an error, it will be necessary to disapprove of his wrong action, and this is diametrically opposed to the Divine Command which requires obeying him as God says: “*Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*” (4:59).¹⁸
- 4) Should he commit a sin, the purpose of the appointment of the Imam will be necessarily nullified. The consequent is invalid, and therefore, the antecedent will also be false.

¹⁷ Translator’s note: Presumption of original freedom from liability (*al-bara't al-asliyyah*) means freedom from obligations until the contrary is proved.

¹⁸ the Qur’an, 4: 59

To explain the conditional mentioned above, the purpose of his appointment is that the Muslim community should follow him and obey his instructions. Should he commit a sin, obedience to him would not be mandatory, and this is incompatible with the purpose of his appointment.

- 5) Should he commit a sin, he will be of the lowest rank among the laypeople, whilst as an Imam, his intellect should be fully mature and his knowledge of God and of His reward and punishment should be more than his subjects. Should he commit a sin, he will be in a lower state than that of his subjects. However, as described in the abovementioned responses, these assumptions are false.

Al-Tusi: Infallibility is not incompatible with the power to commit a sin.

Al-Hilli: Those who believe in infallibility (*ismah*) disagree as to whether the infallible person is capable of committing a sin. Some hold that the body or soul of the infallible possesses a faculty (*malakah*) that prevents him from sinning, while others believe that the infallible is capable of committing a sin.¹⁹

As for the others who do not deny them [the Infallibles] the power [to obey or disobey], some of them interpret it [i.e., *ismah*] as one of the favours which God, the Exalted, bestows upon His servant, as a result of which he is given an incentive to obey, and because of [the bestowal of that favour], He [i.e., God] knows that He does not commit a sin on condition that it is not done out of compulsion. Some others interpret it as being a spiritual faculty through which its possessor does not commit a sin.

¹⁹ As held by Abu'l-Hasan al-Basri

Some others say: 'Infallibility is a favour which God, the Exalted, bestows upon its possessor through which he has no motive for abandoning obedience and committing a sin. The causes for this favour are four in number:

1. One is that his soul or body possesses a characteristic which necessitates a faculty that prevents [its possessor] from committing a sin. Therefore, possessing this faculty is incompatible with committing a sin; in other words, possessing this faculty requires avoiding committing a sin.
2. He is divinely inspired and given knowledge of the harms of sins and the benefits of obedience.
3. The knowledge of the harms of sins and the benefits of obedience is reinforced through successive divine revelation or inspiration emanating from God.
4. He will be punished for neglecting the preferred course of action for refraining from doing what is best (*tark al-awla*) so that he may know that he is not left neglected. He also emphasizes on performing non-obligatory good acts.

Therefore, the Imam is infallible. Al-Tusi adopts the second belief, that infallibility is not incompatible with possessing the power to commit a sin; rather, the infallible Imam is capable of committing a sin, otherwise he does not deserve praise or reward for avoiding sins, and reward and punishment and being held accountable for religious obligations would be meaningless with respect to the Imam. However, to hold that the Infallibles have no obligation is invalid and rejected both by consensus of the Muslim community and by tradition as God says, "*Say, I am*

*only a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God.” (18:110).*²⁰

The Third Issue: It is necessary that the Imam should be superior to all people.²¹

Al-Tusi: The ugliness of preferring an inferior to a superior is known and there is no preference for an equal [when an imam (leader) is of equal merit his subjects].

Allamah Hilli: It is necessary that the Imam be better than his subjects (*ra'iyah*), because he is either equal to them or inferior or superior to them, and the third [assumption] is what we are seeking (*al-mathlub*). If the leader and his subjects are equally qualified, it will be impossible to prefer him over others for Imamate. Moreover, it is illogical to prefer an inferior to a superior.

Another argument can be found in the Qur'an confirms this: “...Say, ‘Is there anyone among your partners who may guide to the truth?’ Say, ‘Allah guides to the truth. Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is not guided unless he is shown the way? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?’” (10: 35).²²

The idea of superiority of Imam implies that the Imam must be the most qualified in every aspect of a person's physical appearance, knowledge, character, and spirituality.

²⁰ The Qur'an, 18:110

²¹ *al-Shafi fi'l-imamah*, vol. 1, p. 326; *al-Dhakhirah*: 429; *al-Iqtisad*: 190, *Risalah fi'l-imamah*, p. 431, *Anwar al-malakut*, p. 206; *al-Lawami' al-ilahiyyah*, p. 261

²² The Qur'an, 10: 110

The Fourth Issue: On the Necessity of the Designation of the Imam²³

Al-Tusi: Infallibility and conduct (*al-sirah*) [of the Prophet] requires the Imam's specification (*al-nass*).

Al-Hilli: From among the Muslim sects, it is the Imamites who maintain that the only way to appoint Imam is explicit specification.

The Abbasids believe that the way to appoint the Imam is through either specification or inheritance, while the Zaydis hold that the Imam must be appointed by specification or by inviting people to himself. Others believe that the way to appoint an Imam is through specification or the decision of *ahl al-hall wa'l-'aqd* (lit. those who loosen and bind; technically, those qualified to elect or depose a caliph on behalf of the Muslim community.).

There are two proofs in support of what we believe.

- 1) It is necessary that the Imam be infallible. Infallibility is an inner faculty of self-restraint of whose true essence only God has foreknowledge; therefore, it is necessary that he be appointed by God because no one but He knows who is qualified for becoming Imam.
- 2) The Prophet is more compassionate towards people than a father towards his child to such an extent that he advises them on those things which are not comparable with the succession of the successor after him as, for example, he advised them on many recommended things with regard to relieving oneself. When the Prophet travelled out of Medina for a short time, he appointed

²³ *al-Shafi fi'l-imamah*, vol. 2, p. 5; *l-Dhakhirah*, p. 429, *al-Iqtisad*, p. 194, *Anwar al-Malakut*, p. 07; *Risalah fi'l-imamah*, p. 430, *al-Lawami' al-ilahiyyah*, p. 272.

someone who dealt with the affairs of the Muslims. Therefore, how is it possible that he might neglect one of the most important, brilliant, valuable, and beneficial aspect, which is the function of being in charge of Muslim affairs after him without advising his people (the *Ummah*) in this regard. Thus, the nature of his conduct (*sirah*) necessitated that he appoints the Imam after him and designate and introduce him. This is a causal proof (*burhan limmi*); an inference made from the prophetic practice (the cause), and the specification of the Imam (the effect).

The Fifth Issue: The Imam or successor after the Prophet is Ali.

Al-Tusi: The immunity from sin and error (*al-'ismah*) and designation (*al-nass*) are specific to Ali.

Al-Hilli: Infallibility and designation are specific to Ali because the Muslim community hold two different views. One group does not hold specification and impeccability as two conditions for imamate, while the other stipulates them both as requirements for the imamate. The latter holds the correct view; anyone who stipulates impeccability and designation as two requirements for imamate believe 'Ali to be the Imam. [In other words, for no one other than Ali these two conditions are claimed.]

Al-Tusi: The explicit designation of 'Ali as the Imam is indicated in the Prophet's hadiths: "Greet 'Ali as the commander of the faithful" and "O 'Ali, you are my successor after me."²⁴

²⁴ *Tarikh* of Ibn 'Asakir, vol. 2, p. 260, no. 777; *al-Shafi fi'l-imamah*, vol. 2, p. 67; *al-Dhakhirah*, p. 437; *Anwar al-Malakut*, p. 209; *al-Iqtisad*, p. 196; *al-Ghadir*, vol. 1, p. 270.

Al-Hilli: This is the second proof of Ali's Imamate, an explicit specification made by the Prophet in various hadiths as narrated by the Imamate scholars at the highest level of authenticity and acceptance. It is also widely narrated by Sunni scholars.

For example, when the verse "*And warn your thy nearest relations*" (26:214) was revealed by God, the Prophet told Abu Talib to make a meal for him, and he gathered the sons of Abd al-Muttalib, saying to them, "Who amongst you will support me so that he may be my brother (*akhi*), successor, and executor (*wasi*) after me?" Ali said, "I will pay allegiance to you and will help you." The Prophet said, "This is my brother, executor, successor and heir after me, so listen to him and obey him. The Prophet also said to Ali, "You are my brother, executor and successor and the one who will discharge my debts."²⁵

When the Prophet established brotherhood among the companions, Ali said, "O Apostle of God, you have established brotherhood amongst your companions, but you have left me alone without being the brother of anyone." The Prophet said to him, "Are you not pleased to be my brother and successor after me?" And he established brotherhood between himself and Ali.²⁶ In another occurrence the Prophet commanded the companions to greet Ali as the Commander of the Faithful,²⁷ and he said to Ali, "You are the master of Muslims, the leader of those who guard against evil, and the leader of the bright-faced people."²⁸

²⁵ *al-'Umdah* of Ibn al-Batriq, pp. 121-122, 133-134; *Ghayah al-Maram*, p. 320; *Shawahid al-tanzil*, vol. 1, p. 420; *al-Ghadir*, vol 2., pp. 278-279.

²⁶ *al-'Umdah*, pp. 215-223; *al-Ghadir*, vol. 3, pp. 112-125.

²⁷ See *al-Ta'liqah*, vol. 1, p. 189.

²⁸ *al-'Umdah*, p. 418; *al-Ghadir*, vol. 1, pp. 50-52 and vol . 7, p. 176.

He also said concerning the status of Ali, “This [Ali] is the master of every believing man and woman.” There are an innumerable number of narrations on the succession of Ali as reported by both the Shi‘as and the Sunnis in this regard to such a degree that they have reached the highest level of authenticity (*al-tawatur*).²⁹

In the next part, four more issues will be discussed: The proofs for the Imamate of Ali, his superiority to the companions, the Imamate of the eleven Imams after him, and rules concerning those opposed to Ali’s Imamate.

¹ Additional excerpt from the Translator’s Introduction: Aside from other doctrinal and ritual differences between Sunnis and Twelver-Imam Shi‘as, the main difference between the branches of Islam lies in Imamah. It should be noted that the Shi‘a believe the Imam to be a divinely appointed leader, he is providently endowed with qualifications that distinguish him as a divine leader: a) superiority: the imam is a leader who, like the Prophet, excels all others in all virtues, such as knowledge, bravery, piety, and generosity. He is replete with comprehensive knowledge, excellence and blessedness and because of being aware of all the needs of the *ummah* (the Muslim community) and of all that is conducive to a felicitous life in this world and the hereafter. He plays a decisive role in securing their spiritual and material well-being. All these types of knowledge derive from the comprehensiveness of the Imam and his functions, because the Imamah is an extension or continuation of the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, and b) Infallibility or inerrancy: being free from sin, error, negligence, and forgetfulness. Insistence upon inerrancy or infallibility as a condition for leadership is a salient feature of the Shi‘a, according to whom inerrancy and extensive knowledge are two inseparable qualities of the Imam. Inerrancy, literally immunity from sin, technically means a high intellectual power in virtue of which he never commits any sins despite his free will.

According to the Shi‘a, it is rationally necessary that the Muslim community should not be devoid of a divinely appointed leader whose main functions can be summed up in inner or spiritual guidance; and outer guidance, that is, social and political leadership and religious authority. Outer guidance concerns matters of law and the shari‘ah.

It is in the nature of man to develop and advance towards perfection, and consciously or unconsciously, he struggles to attain the highest degree of nobility and dignity worthy of man. Since from within there are both positive or constructive forces as well as unbridled destructive forces that can lead him to the infra-human level, man needs a leader as an intermediary between the unseen world and the human race in order to guide and enable everyone to attain the highest degree

²⁹ *Manaqib* of Ibn al-maghazali, pp. 65-66.

possible of his ability and capacity. One of the functions of the Imam is to extend inner guidance to man. Inner guidance is a distinct and lofty rank bestowed by God upon a few select and precious among His creation; men who, themselves strongly drawn and attracted to God and are fully aware of the variations of human behaviour and the various degrees of faith and knowledge people possess can influence their thoughts and inner beings. Therefore, they can influence their inner beings and illuminate their hearts with inner knowledge and aid them in refining their souls and their inward journeying. As can be understood from numerous Qur'anic verses, the Infallible Imam, who is at the pinnacle of the spiritual life, is entrusted with inner guidance, for he is the channel of grace which comes to him from the supra-sensible, or the unseen world.

As for outer guidance, the laws as elaborated and combined by scholars over the ages always need intelligent interpreters when it comes to implementation. As is the case with the laws of Islam, which, in spite of resting on revealed norms and divine guidance, are no exceptions to this rule. Certain verses of the Qur'an, which is the primary source of Islam, are not clear in their purport and signification; therefore, it is necessary to have recourse to exegesis in order to clarify any ambiguous points. The Qur'an sets forth the main lines and general principles of action as proposed by Islam in various spheres; therefore, detailed knowledge of those programmes is required. It is necessary to have recourse to a fully qualified authority who is divinely protected against sin, having a comprehensive knowledge of the Book, the heir to the knowledge of the Prophet who can implement the commands of the Qur'an and who can distinguish right from wrong. Without fully qualified authorities and interpreters of the Qur'an, chaos will ensue and following incorrect interpretations will result in deviating from the genuine teachings of the Qur'an.

The existence of the Imam is a continuous necessary: society can never be without an Imam whether or not he is recognized.

The essential and primary qualifications of the Imam boil down to the following principles that form the essence of imamate: (1) a divine appointment by designation; (2) superiority; (3) al-isma (immunity from sin and error); (4) the miracles worked or performed by the Imam and (5) perpetuity of the imamate.

The Imams are the esoteric and exoteric representatives of the Prophet and that the Imam is the *axis mundi*, the universal pole without which the world cannot subsist because of there being a mysterious, sacramental bond between the presence of the Imam and the continuance of the terrestrial world. *Wilayah* (the esoteric aspect of prophecy) continues and will continue. The Imam is one who carries the 'Muhammadan Light' within himself and who, as a result of the presence of this light, possesses the quality of inerrancy. He fulfils the function of *wilayah*, is the sustainer and interpreter *par excellence* of the revelation, and the guarantee of its continuation. His duty is threefold: to rule over the community, to interpret the religious sciences, and to guide men in the spiritual life. The Imam is the Perfect Man, the *raison d'etre* of the terrestrial world, and society cannot continue without his existence. This is precisely the meaning of the existence of the Twelfth Imam, hidden to the human eyes but present within the hearts of the believers.