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The Imām and The Perfect Human – An Analysis Between Ibn 'Arabī's al-Insān al-Kāmil and Shī'ī Imāmology

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Andalusian mystic, Ibn 'Arabī's (1165-1240) central theme of the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), alongside the Doctrine of Imāmat as understood in Shī'ī thought. As a comparative work, it is divided into two sections - with the first of its two sections dedicated to Imāmat, and its second section to Ibn 'Arabī. The Imāmat section begins by briefly contextualizing how the doctrine evolved, whilst taking into consideration the origins of the term *shī'a* and the theological position of leadership in both Shī'ī and Sunnī thought. The section on Ibn 'Arabī addresses his life and times, in addition to delving into the historical development of how the term 'Perfect Human' formed and what was understood by it. An explanation on who a Shī'ī was, in light of how the term developed in the first two centuries of Islām, will also be looked at.

As the core aim of this research is to identify Shī'ī influences on Ibn 'Arabī, this research will also consider the position of Muhammad, 'Alī and the subsequent Shī'ī Imāms as found in the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, whilst also taking into consideration the Shī'ī understanding of the Prophet and *ahl al-bayt*.

Finally, as part of its conclusion, devotional literature found in both the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī and Shī'ī Islam will be addressed. It will then go on to focus on certain misconceptions on Shī'ism and in particular the term *rawāfiḍ* as used by Ibn 'Arabī, ending with influences on the study of Ibn 'Arabī as witnessed the last three decades, with a need for wider research on the mystical philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī.

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Acknowledgment

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Needless to say, this work would not have been completed without the constant prayers of my parents, who I sincerely thank and as always, have been a great source of moral support and guidance.

This work in particular, is dedicated to Zaynab, the daughter of ʿAlī and her nephew, the son of Ḥasan al-Askarī.

Introduction

This thesis introduces its reader to an analysis between Ibn ‘Arabī’s (1165-1240) concept of the ‘Perfect Human’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and the Shī‘ī theological doctrine of Imāmat, a topic which surprisingly has been underexplored in Western Academia.[1] The hope therefore is that a refreshing perspective on the subject will be provided, whilst creating an opening for much needed further comparative studies on Shī‘ī influences on Ibn ‘Arabī, and on Sufism in general. In recent years, there has begun a rereading of Ibn ‘Arabī, by academics such as Mark Sedgwick, Gregory Lipton, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad and James Morris,[2] who have vocally steered away from limiting the study of Ibn ‘Arabī to a Perennial interpretation,[3] that had primarily become the default voice in Akbarian studies in the latter parts of the twentieth and early part of the twenty-first century. Perhaps it can be added that this selective interpretation, may have been based, at times on presupposed assumptions to a particular Perennial philosophy as understood by latter Perennial philosophers and disciples of Frithjof Schoun (d. 1998). This study will therefore build upon a careful and historized reading of both Shī‘ī Imāmology and Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual position. Moreover, is that this thesis will attempt to be the first in Western academia to explore in detail, Shī‘ī influencs on Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of the Perfect Human, although it must be added, not the first to have addressed the subject. It is in Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad’s short chapter entitled *‘Imamate by any other name would smell as sweet’ : Ibn ‘Arabī’s Doctrine of the Perfect Man (al-insān al-kāmil)*, found in the journal, *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī‘ah Islam*, that the potential for Shī‘ī influences are first mentioned. Similarly Lipton and Sedgwick both prove important, as though their studies

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[1] Oddly, very little comparative study on Shī‘ism and Sufism has been undertaken, with most commentators on this subject being of Iranian origin, such as the likes of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mohammad Faghfoory, whose translation of *Tuḥfah yi-‘Abbāsī* provides a useful insight into Sufism in Shī‘ī Islām.

[2] For more information, refer to Mark Sedwick’s *Against the Modern World*, Lipton’s *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi*, and Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad’s *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī‘ah Islam*.

[3] The Perennialist or Traditonalist School as it was known as, finds its origins in the early part of the twentieth century. It’s founding fathers were primarily René Guénon (d. 1951), Ananda Coomaraswamy (d. 1947) and Frithjof Schoun, however William Stoddart (b. 1925-), an important member of the School, in his foreword to *René Guénon: Some Observations*, concluded that it was in fact Guénon and Schoun who were commonly viewed as the “dual originators and expositors” of Perrenialism, William Stoddart, foreword to *René Guénon: Some Observations*, by Frithjof Schoun, ed. William Stoddart (Hillsdale: Sophia Perennis, 2004), xi.

mention nothing on Shī‘ī elements in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thoughts, however, what is offered is a detailed critique of the Perennial position on Ibn ‘Arabī, thus allowing this thesis the scope to widen their critique by adding a further critique as to the lack of scholarship on the study of Shī‘ī influences, or other significant influences that may have occurred in the evolution of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. As a future study, it would be worth exploring influences that both the Ismā‘īlīya and the Ghulāt may have had on Ibn ‘Arabī’s intellectual emdeavour.

For Ibn ‘Arabī, the Perfect Human plays a central role in his worldview, as is the case for the Imām in Shī‘ī theology. Whilst Shī‘ism clothes its central doctrine of Imāmat in theological language, Ibn ‘Arabī appears to mirror many of these fundamental characteristics of the Imām in his mystical explanation of the Perfect Human. Terminologies may differ, but both functions of the Shī‘ī Imām and the Perfect Human find synthesis. Therefore, in attempting to understand Imāmat as it may have been perceived leading up to the time of Ibn ‘Arabī, this thesis allows for there to be a theological discourse on the major tenets of Imāmat. The importance of carefully understanding these major tenets, such as infallibility, Divine appointment, the role of the *ahl al-bayt* and Divine knowledge, as it appeared leading up to the period of Ibn ‘Arabī, will allow this study to better conclude major doctrinal similarities, between the position of the Imām and that of the Perfect Human. This thesis becomes even more critical in light of the fact that there is nothing similar to the Perfect Human in classical Sunnī theology. As a result, the first section on Imāmat is paramount to understanding the only theological parallel to the idea of a Perfect Human found in mainstream Islām[4] before and leading up to the time Ibn ‘Arabī was able to pen the doctrine of the Perfect Human.

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[4] The term ‘mainstream Islām’ is used for both Shī‘ī and Sunnī theological schools due to their development side by side of each other dating back to the late part of the first century of Islām.

Whilst Shī'ism with its subgroups is identified as the second largest denomination in Islām, Ibn 'Arabī is undoubtedly one of the most influential mystical philosophers to have shaped Islamic thinking, leaving an undeniable legacy in the study of Islamic philosophy, Sufism and Shī'ī *Irfān*. Found in the Qur'ān is the notion of Divine leadership, be it in the form of God's Vicegerent or Imām over the people. In this thesis, the doctrines of Imāmat and the Perfect Human will be explored. Key to both doctrines are two verses of the Qur'ān which identify God's desire for Divine leadership on Earth. Whilst conversing with the angels, God in the Qur'ān says; "[…] Surely I am going to place on Earth a Vicegerent (*khalīfah*) […]".[5] Similarly whilst talking to Abraham, God states "*[…] Surely I am going to make you an Imām over the people [Abraham] said, 'And of my descendants? [God] said, 'My covenant does not include the wrongdoers*".[6] It is this very discussion on Divine leadership that legitimizes and supports the doctrines of the necessity of Imāmat and concept of the Perfect Human. In the case of the above-mentioned two verses, though God is speaking in a particular context, for adherents to Shī'ism and Sufism, the first verse is symbolic in establishing spiritual leadership in all ages, whilst the second verse is predominantly used to support the Shī'ī position of a righteous Imām emerging from the children of Abraham, as a promise by God to Abraham.[7] In light of these two verses and the Shī'ī position on leadership, the key question which will be addressed in this thesis is how influential, if at all, was the doctrine of Imāmat on Ibn 'Arabī's formulation of the concept of the Perfect Human?

Before outlining the structure of this thesis, which will be divided into two parts; the first section examining Imāmat, followed by the second, exploring Ibn 'Arabī, potential Shī'ī influences and his concept of the Perfect Human, I will contextualize both sets of discourses,

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[5] Qur'ān 2:30.
[6] *Ibid.* 2:124.
[7] The Qur'ānic notion of the righteous Imām is in direct contrast to the notion of false Imāms, also found in the Qur'ān, [Qur'ān 9:12]. God promises Abraham that Imāmat will continue in his progeny, but only for the righteous amongst them. Similarly, the Qur'ān divides Imāmat into two types, 'Divine Guide' and 'False Guide'. In chapter *thirty-two*, the Qur'ān states: "And We made from among them *A'immah* (plural of Imām) guiding by Our command, when they became patient and believed firmly in Our signs", [Qur'ān 32:24]. Thus from this verse comes forth the notion of a 'Divine Guide'. Additionally, in chapter *nine*, the Qur'ān describes those leaders who break their oath and defame the religion of God as 'False Guide' or '*A'immah al-kufr*.

the first being on Imāmat and the second on Ibn 'Arabī in these next subchapters of this introduction.

1. Imāmat

When compared to the study of Ibn 'Arabī, there has been limited discourse on Imāmat in Western intellectual circles. Aside from translations of modern Shīʿī theological textbooks such as Jaʿfar Soubhani's *Doctrines of Shiʿi Islam*, by Reza Shah Kazemi, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Hossein Modarressi and Abdulaziz Sachedina have provided serious contributions to the evolution and understanding of Imāmat as it was in the first three centuries of Islām, leading to the formative years in the advent of the major occultation (941/ 329 AH-). More recently, scholars such as Hassan Ansari too have facilitated for further theological studies pertaining to Imāmat. Much of the focus however, has centered around political theology, in particular, how God's sovereignty is established on Earth whilst maintaining the doctrine of monotheism and separation between the Divine and the Sacred. This thesis will only touch upon the theopolitical dimension of both the Imām and Perfect Human, but will be better positioned to evaluate the mystical and spiritual dimension of religious leadership. If a definition of an Imām was to be given as understood immediately after the beginning of the major occultation, it would be that *an Imām is the successor to the Prophet, as indicated by the Prophet and appointed by God to guide the faithful in both worldly and religious matters. The Imām is infallible from sin and is gifted with Divine knowledge so as to fulfil the obligations of leading and guiding the faithful as sanctioned by God.*

2. Ibn 'Arabī

In modern times Ibn 'Arabī's life and works have gained much attention in Western intellectual circles through the writings of Henry Corbin (d. 1978), Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1993) and later Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933-). Equally important is Claude Addas's *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (1993), which carefully provides historical context to Ibn 'Arabī's life.[8] It is perhaps fair to say that without studying Ibn 'Arabī, it is hard to appreciate the development of

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[8] Ali. M.H, *Ibn al-'Arabī, the Greatest Master, On Knowledge, God, and Sainthood,* John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, (London, 2019), 1.

Islamic intellectual thought after the thirteenth century. Ibn 'Arabī's influence has been such that not only did his spiritual and intellectual teaches quickly disseminate across the Ottoman Empire, thanks to the efforts of Dawūd Qayṣarī (d. 1350)[9] and Shams al-Dīn Fanārī (d. 1431),[10] but so too were his ideas integrated into the theological and philosophical circles of Shī'ī Iran, first appearing with Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 1385), and later finding its grounding at the heighth of Ṣafavid rule through the works of Ṣadr ad-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1635), famously known as Mullā Ṣadrā.[11] Ibn 'Arabī's success can partially be credited with his ability to synthesize both illuminative and speculative knowledge into a cohesive body of literature, pooling from his expertise in Islamic theology, philosophy, mysticism, Qur'ānic sciences and the occult. What this has resulted in is an articulation of a number of key doctrines, namely 'the unity of existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) 'the perfect human' and the ontological role of 'the isthmus' (*al-barzakh*), which have since become foundational tenets in the study of a variety of Islamic disciplines. In addition, it is as if Ibn 'Arabī expects his audience to be familiar with the Islamic sciences, as William Chittick explains:

> Ibn al-'Arabī expected his readers not only to be practitioners of Sufism but also familiar with most fields of learning, especially Koran commentary, Hadith, jurisprudence, Kalam, and philosophy, and he made few allowances for those who did not know these sciences well.[12]

In fact when elaborating on his own writings, Ibn 'Arabī states:

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[9] Qayṣarī was a student of 'Abd al-Razzaq Kāshānī (d. 1330/ 751 AH), who in turn was a disciple of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274/ 638 AH), custodian of the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Ibn 'Arabī. Qayṣarī is credited for having written the acclaimed *al-Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena) to Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which itself became instrumental in summarizing the mystical philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī over twelve chapters. *Al-Muqaddimah* provides a framework in unpacking some of the more complex concepts introduced by Ibn 'Arabī in the Fuṣūṣ, so-much-so that it has become an essential textbook in modern day Shī'ī *'irfānī* circles, with a commentary on *al-Muqaddimah* written by the late twentieth century philosopher Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn 'Ashtiyānī (d. 2005).
[10] Fanārī was the first to hold the office of *Shaykh al-Islām* in the Ottoman Empire, whilst also being famed for writing a commentary on Qūnawī's authoritative *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* called *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* (Lantern of Intimacy), a seminal text in its own right, developing on key doctrines found in the Akbarian School.
[11] Mullā Ṣadrā not only philosophized key tenets of Akhbarian mysticism, but also synthesized Ibn 'Arabī's epistemic modalities of revelation (*Qur'ān*), reason (*burhān*) and mysticism (*'irfān*) in developing his own Transcendental Theosophy.
[12] Chittick. W.C, *In Search of the Lost Heart, Explorations in Islamic Thought*, SUNY Press, (New York, 2012), 72.

In what I have written, I have had a set purpose, as other writers. Flashes of divine inspiration used to come upon me and almost overwhelm me, so that I could only put them form my mind by committing to appear what they revealed to me. If my works evince any form of composition, that form was unintentional. Some works I wrote at the command of God, sent to me in sleep or through mystical revelation.[13]

It is this very synthesis of divine inspiration and the use of speculative – rational sciences that have become a distinctive quality in the works of Ibn 'Arabī. For this purpose, interpreting Ibn 'Arabī requires his works to be read in light of explanations penned by his immediate successor Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and close disciples who emerged as a direct product of this unique School.

Elusive in style, Ibn 'Arabī is very different from other writers on mysticism and spirituality before him. Nor is he systematic as in the case of al-Ghazalī or presents his arguments in a well-organized manner similar to Qushayrī.[14] However what Ibn 'Arabī does do is write in *ishāra* (signs), pooling together a diverse internal library and manifesting it in written form, such that it is codified yet open to wider interpretation. For this reason, Qūnawī becomes even more important as he provides much needed structure and explanations within his works of his Master. As a consequence, when examining the notion of a Perfect Human and by extension Shī'ī influences in this thesis, it will be important to not just evaluate similarities, but also start by addressing the historical context, followed by explanations on terminology, immediate interpretations of the Perfect Human by Ibn 'Arabī's students, and what he wrote on the *ahl al-bayt*.[15] Important to also mention is that there was in fact a second accepted leader from the disciples of Ibn 'Arabī, the lesser mentioned Ibn Sawdakin (d. 1248-49), whose incomplete

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[13]Ibn 'Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: From the Rūh al-Quds and al-Durrat al-Fākhirah*, trans. R.W.J Austin, Beshara Publications, (Oxford, 2011), 48.

[14] Takeshita. M, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and it's Place in the History of Islamic Thought*, (doctoral dissertation), University of Chicago, (Chicago, 1986), 4.

[15] As there is currently no comprehensive material in English on Ibn 'Arabī and his position on the *ahl al-bayt* that I have come across, it is with immense hope that the sections presented on the *ahl al-bayt* in this thesis will provide the reader with new insights into the belief structure of Ibn 'Arabī.

handwritten manuscript of *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* remains a major reference point for those researching *al-Futūḥāt.*

3. Literature Review

As noted above, very little has been written on Shī'ī influencs on the intellectual thought of Ibn 'Arabī, and that which has been attempted, has primarily been in the Persian language. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the specific topic of this thesis, which focuses on the Perfect Human, in light of Imāmat in Shī'ī thought, may well be a first in English. The only notable work on this topic to date is by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, in a short chapter entitled *'Imamate by any other name would smell as sweet' : Ibn 'Arabī's Doctrine of the Perfect Man (al-insān al-kāmil)*, found in the journal, *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, which was published in 2017 by The Shi'ah Institute. That said, the idea of Shī'ī influences on Islamic esotericism and by extension Ibn 'Arabī, were first made by Henry Corbin in his five volume works, entitled *Cahiers de Saint Jean de Jerusalem*,[16] in which he identifies Islamic esotericism mainly with the Ismā'īlīya, and to a lesser extent, the Twelver Shī'ī Tradition.[17] As is highlighted by Philipp Valentini,

> In the fourth volume, Corbin explicitly writes that the doctrine of the Verus Propheta (the doctrine that, according to Corbin, goes from early Christianity to Shi'a Islam) is not fully understood by Sunni Islam. According to Corbin, the integral understanding of this doctrine happens most fully in Shi'a Islam.[18]

Valentini then continues to add,

> In the time between the final prophet Muhammad and the coming of the Mahdi, through which the cosmological reconciliation happens, lies the choice one must make between the sixth day

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[16] Corbin. H, *Cahier de Saint Jean de Jérusalem*, Berg International, (Paris, 1975).
[17] Valentini. P. (2020), *French Sufi Theopolitics on the Approach of the Akbarian Concepts of God's Unity, Law and Perfect Man by French Modern Perennialists*, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), l'Université de Fribourg, Suisse, p.227.
[18] *Ibid.* 227

(the final revelation of Muhammad embodied in a book and a law) and ther seventh day (cosmological reconciliation between God and man through the Imam)…Sunnism and the physical body are destroyed on the sixth day, and both represent the law that needs to be spirituality overcome. On the seventh day, the spirit can rise and the hidden Godhead can be known.[19]

This final quote by Valentini is in reference to Corbin having written, "*Sunnism stops at the sixth day, while Shī'ism is the religion of the seventh day*".[20] A bold statement made by Corbin, though not one which would be universally accepted. It is fair to add however, that Corbin's understanding of Ibn 'Arabī would have been an Ibn 'Arabī inclined towards Shī'ī spirituality, in particular his interpretation of the Shī'ī Imām and the Perfect Human. Such an understanding from one of the most distinguished Western academics of Islamic esotericism in the twentieth century, gives us confidence to conduct our undertaking (comparing the Imām to the Perfect Human), which has previously not been attempted. In describing the Imām, Corbin states,

> The word Imām designates those persons who in their earthly appearance and apparition were epiphanies of the Godhead, spiritual guides of mankind toward the esoteric and saving meaning of Revelations, while in their transcendent existence they assume the role of cosmogonic entities.[21]

The centrality of the Imām is identified by Corbin and completed in his description of the Perfect Human,

> He is the homologue of the Noūs of the Neoplatonists, of the Obeyed One (*Mutā'*) in Ghazālī, of the sacrosanct Archangel or First Intelligence in Ismailism (*Malak muqaddas, 'Aql Awwal,*

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[19] *Ibid.* 228.
[20] "*Le sunnisme s'arrête ainsi au sixième jour, tandis que le shi 'isme est la religion du septième jour*", Corbin. H. *Cahier de Saint Jean de Jérusalem*, vol. 6, *Le Combat pour l'Âme du Monde*, Berg International, (Paris, 1980), 164.
[21] Corbin. H. *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, Trans. Ralph Manheim, Princeton University Press, (Princeton, N.J, 1969), p. 258.

Protokistos, Deus revelatus), of the Logos of Christian theology; he is the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Quds*) as cosmic potency".[22]

What is lacking in Corbin's writings is a direct comparison on the Imām and the Perfect Human. He also fails to substantiate his hypothesis on Shī'ism as the sole pathway to Islamic spirituality, and subsequently there appears a lack of study as to why Ibn 'Arabī was influenced by Shī'ī thought. That stated, both Ahmad and Corbin play a fundamental role in probing the idea of Shī'ī influences in the works of Ibn 'Arabī.

What this thesis tries to offer, is a brief, yet comprehensive discussion outlining potential Shī'ī influences on Ibn 'Arabī, and in particular any parallels the doctrine of Imāmology may have had on the Perfect Human theory. The methodology used in this thesis is very similar to the one adopted by Toshihiko Izutsu (d.1993) in *Sufism and Taoism*.[23] The reason for this is that Izutsu is able to concisely summarize, whilst explaining complex doctrines found in the mystical philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī. He then follows up in similar fashion in his section on Taoism, before concluding on similarities and differences. It is of course important to state that Izutsu was in fact comparing two traditions with separate histories, whereas the comparison in this thesis has both historic and doctrinal overlaps.

 Following Izutsu's methodology, the first section of this thesis is on Imāmat. This section allows the reader to gain a complete understanding of what Imāmat entails, in addition to witnessing Imāmat from its theological roots, as opposed to solely a mystical lens. Indeed, to gain legitimacy among Islamic scholars, Ibn 'Arabī would require his doctrine to be grounded in some form of tradition or a mixture of various Islamic theological traditions. By discussing Imāmat from both the perspective of the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition, it allows the reader to gain an insight into possibly why Ibn 'Arabī emphasizes 'Alī, the *ahl al-bayt*, or in terms of specific components of the Perfect Human doctrine, why divine wisdom, infallibility and spiritual leadership play a central role in the make-up of the Perfect Human. Furthermore,

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[22] *Ibid.* 317.
[23] Izutsu. T, *Sufism and Taoism*, University of California Press, (Berkeley, 1992).

some additional questions addressed in the first section are what did Imāmat mean to a Shīʿa? Or what constituted being Shīʿa? It is only by exploring such questions, can one better understand if Ibn ʿArabī was in fact Shīʿī in belief, or was it just a case of him being influenced by various esoteric schools, including a number of Shīʿī schools, such as the Ismāʿīlīya, the Twelver or even the Ghulāt – Or was it that Ibn ʿArabī was actually not influenced at all, but his findings were common place in Sunnī theology? This thesis will present an argument that Ibn ʿArabī's Perfect Human, though it may have had generic similarities with certain mystical concepts before him, has no apparent parallels in Sunnī Islām. That which later developed in Sunnism was in fact a result of the Akbarian school and its effect on theologians inclined to Sufism. The only potential influences therefore, would have come through Shīʿism.

Core primary material in understanding Imāmat will be *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, compiled by Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 940/ 329 AH), simply because it would have been one of the most important books on *Ḥadīth* literature of the time. The structure of the book is such that it has no commentary, rather it is a compilation of selected traditions, which makes it easier in many ways to interpret tradition. Furthermore, two primary sources with theological value in outlining Shīʿī belief and rationalizing it are Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's (d. 991/ 381 AH) *al-Iʿtiqādāt* and Shaykh al-Mufīd's (d. 1022/ 413 AH) *Taṣḥīḥ al-iʿtiqādāt* and *Awāʾil al-maqālāt*; the former laying out Shīʿī belief, whilst the latter being an early theological exposition.

Of the secondary sources used, the first are a series of books authored by Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, such as *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism*[24] and *The Spirituality of Shiʿi Islam*.[25] What is provided in these books, is a mystical exposé of the position of the Imām, and his position within certain early Shīʿī communities. Amir-Moezzi may fall short in presenting a balanced account of early discussions pertaining to the Qurʾān in Shīʿī thought, however his mystical exposition presented through primary sources, does allow for this thesis to benefit from his critical research. The other main secondary source worth mentioning is a Persian

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[24] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism*, State University of New York Press, (Albany, 1994).
[25] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shiʿi Islam*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, (London, 2011).

work entitled *Āmūzish kalām islāmī*, by Muḥammad Saʿīdī Mehr.[26] To all intents and purposes, it is a modern theological textbook, which thematically presents key principles that the doctrine of Imāmat is based upon.

As the focus of the Imāmat section is to extract core tenets of Imāmat found in both early Shīʿī literature up until the time of Ibn ʿArabī, finding *Ḥadīth* literature which mirrors the various dimensions of Ibn ʿArabī's Perfect Human is not difficult. In fact, compilations such as *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* and *Kitāb al-Kāfī* offer sufficient mystical traditions on Imāmat, comfortably complementing the Perfect Human doctrine. With no such parallels found in early Sunnī theology, the only other influences on Ibn ʿArabī could have come from Neoplatonism or Christology, albeit the former being limited to the need and potential functions of an enlightened human and the latter having little relation to Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine. The only viable Islamic influence therefore would be Shīʿī Imāmat, in so much as details found specially on the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt* and ʿAlī in Ibn ʿArabī's works, such as *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* could very easily be mistaken for that found in select Shīʿī devotional literature.[27]

Unfortunately, comparative works investigating Shīʿism and Sufism remain under-explored, with the majority of literature available on this a topic being found within a Sunnī paradigm. This should not come as a surprise as Sunnī Orthodoxy, which eventually came to be regarded as Islamic Orthodoxy, largely evolved as a reaction to what was perceived as Shīʿī 'heresy' or 'heterodoxy'. This naturally meant that links between early Shīʿī influences and Sufism were either veiled, or in time eliminated all together. With the rise of organised Sunnī Sufism and it becoming extremely influential in both the Ottomon and Mughal Empires, such as the Naqshbandī order, coupled with Ṣūfī persecution at the hands of the Shīʿī Ṣafavids, Sufism in the later period became stripped of perceived Shīʿī influences.[28]

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[26] Mehr. M.S, *Āmūzish kalām islāmī*, Kitāb Ṭāhā, (Tehran, 2002).
[27] Refer to Chapter 18 of this thesis for a further discussion on Muḥammad, the *ahl al-bayt*, ʿAlī and the Mahdī.
[28] Hermann. D & Terrier. M, *Shiʿi Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives,* I.B. Tauris, (London, 2020), 1-13.

Of some of the comparative works produced on Shī'ism and Sufism, is the book *al-Ṣilat bayn al-taṣawwuf wa'l tashayu'*, written by Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi and later translated as *Sufism and Shi'ism*. The original Arabic work was published in 1963, by *Matba'ah al-zahrā'*, Baghdad, whilst its English translation was first published in 1991 by LAAM Ltd in London. This particular comparative work is of extreme importance, as it looks at the historical evolution of Sufism under the influences of Shī'ism. In his introduction, Shaybi writes,

> However, as we shall discover, it is highly probable that Shi'ism provided Sufism with numerous ideas in many fields. From the many similarities prevailing between both parties, we can infer that Shi'ism came first and had established its whole body of doctrine upon a spiritual foundation, just as Sufism did afterwards. Following upon this, we shall prove that Sufi *Wilāyah* (Sainthood) formed a complete *Imāma* with all its divine privileges and God's support. It is for this reason that the Sufis were compelled to be dependent upon Shi'ite beliefs, and even obliged to associate all their doctrines with the person of 'Alī. After the death of the eighth Shi'ite Imam, 'Alī Rida (the heir designate of al-Ma'mun), who converted Ma'ruf al-Karkhi to Islam, the Abbasid dynasty persecuted the Shi'ites very severely…This was an object lesson for the Sufis on which to mediate well. Al-Junayd (d. 298/910) pretended to be a Shafi'id faqih, al-Qushayri (465/1074) wrote his *Risala* to put Sufism in a Sunni framework some years before the overthrow of the Abbasid dynasty in favour of the Fatimids…However, the Sufis did not lose anything, they went on drawing upon Shi'ism to enrich their own system, and, with the Government's support, they obtained the position of which they had always dreamed.[29]

The author contextualizes the growth of Sufism under the shadow of Shī'ism. Al-Shaybi addresses his comparative topic by looking at the origins of Shī'ism and then goes on to discuss the rise of Sufism and its dependency upon core Shī'ī doctrines, such as the position of 'Alī, the *ahl al-bayt* and *wilāyah*. Following on, he then looks at important early relations between Sufism and Shī'ism as they grew together. The final part of his discussion addresses Ṣūfī influences on later Shī'ism. By investigating Sufism in Kufa, Basra, Syria, Khurasan and Egypt in the first few centuries of Islām, al-Shaybi not only touches upon early Ṣūfī

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[29] Shaybi. K.M, *Sufism and Shi'ism*, LAAM Ltd, (London, 1991), 11.

communities; influential in developing Sufism as an independent school, but he then links these early communities with prominent Shī'ī figures, or as in the case of Syria, emphasizes Shī'ī extremist influences such as the *Ghulāt* on the development of early Syrian Sufism. In his analysis, al-Shaybi connects any affiliation to the Imāms or emphasis of their qualities as hidden Shī'ism. This type of interpretation may be problematic for Sunnī theologians, such as the likes of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who in his writings does demonstrate affection towards the *ahl al-bayt*, but at the same time expresses lesser affections for Shī'ism. For later Sunnī Ṣūfīs, Sufism had very little to do with Shī'ism and everything to do with Sunnism.[30]

At first glance, al-Shaybi's work does appear selective in taking examples, such as loving 'Alī or taking a tradition from him with being synonymous with *Tashayyu'*, however a deeper look into his timeline would suggest that in fact he is correct in his analysis. Where he falls short is to give a historical timeline of what Shī'ism represented in the first two centuries, similar to what Chapter 17 of this thesis does. As is outlined in Chapter 17, first century communities regarded an individual who supported or affiliated themselves with 'Alī and subsequently the Imāms as Shī'ī. It would therefore be appropriate in terms of early definitions of Shī'ism, to

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[30] The principle split that has since divided Islām, took place as a result of disagreement concerning the succession to Muḥammad. Did Muḥammad actually appoint a successor or was it for the fledgling community to decide? These are questions that will continue to be debated, lead to conflict and ultimately act as a source of division in Islām. In essence, sectarianism in the Islamic world has primarily stemmed from the question of succession. Whatever the immediate reasons for sectarianism or at times violent clashes between Muslims, can be traced to the very first schism in Islām, which must be acknowledged, took place straight after the death of Muḥammad. Two distinct groups instantly formed; broadly speaking, the first was the Family of Muḥammad and those loyal to them, the other group were those who had given allegiance to Abū Bakr. Now whether or not members of the Family later gave allegiance to Abū Bakr makes little difference. In the lifetime of Fāṭimah, the Family of Muḥammad refrained from giving allegiance. Fāṭimah's anger and lack of cooperation with Abū Bakr is well documented. There is no tradition, be it primary or secondary, authentic or fabricated that documents Fāṭimah ever having given allegiance or cooperating with Abū Bakr. Both al-Bukharī and al-Muslim in their collections mention a tradition that states: "Fāṭimah remained in a state of anger (*ghaḍbān*) with Abū Bakr and did not talk to him until her death", (Al-Bukharī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, Dār al-Fikr (Beirut, 1981/1401 AH), V, 82, al-Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Dār al-Fikr (Beirut, 1981/1401 AH), V, 1540). The toxicity of the situation surrounding leadership in the early period can only be described through another tradition collected by al-Muslim: "If in one time, two individuals are given allegiance as caliph, the first is the rightful caliph and the second should be put to death", (Al- Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Dār al-Fikr (Beirut, 1981/1401 AH), VI, 23). These were not sentiments of reconciliation, but simply describe an atmosphere prevalent at least in the period of the first eleven Imāms. For this very reason, the personality of 'Alī becomes crucial, especially because if there was a unifying personality after Muḥammad, the most respected of all of the companions was 'Alī. All parties concerned agree that if 'Alī was not the first Imām, he was certainly the fourth caliph.

conclude that as the founding fathers of Islamic piety and asceticism, such as Salmān (d. 656/ 36 AH), Uways al-Qarnī (d. 656/ 36 AH) and Maʿrūf Kharkhī (d. 815-20) were known followers of the Imāms, and in fact referred to as Shīʿī, early Sufism would have been heavily influenced by Shīʿī. Works on early Ṣūfī personalities and their relationship with the Imāms are available, such as Hamid Algar's article on *Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim and Ṣūfī Tradition*, published in January 1990, in the *Journal Islamic Culture,* volume LXIV:1, which in this case discusses the *seventh* Imām's influence on early Ṣūfī personalities. Whilst Sufism in time became synonymous with Sunnism, found firmly rooted in Sufism were significant elements of Shīʿī doctrine, most probably incorporated by early Ṣūfīs, which included reverence to ʿAlī and the *ahl al-bayt*, whilst at the same time, borrowing core tenets such as *wilāyah* from Shīʿism. It is not hard therefore, to appreciate why later Ṣūfī figures such as al-Ghazālī continued to uphold early Ṣūfī doctrines that corresponded with Shīʿī belief, but at the same time, remained dismissive of Shīʿism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr sums up the link between Sufism and Shīʿism in the later period as follows; "*if we take Sufism and Shīʿism in their historical manifestation in later periods, then neither Shīʿism nor Sunnism nor Sufism within the Sunni world derive from each other. They all derive their authority from the Prophet and the source of the Islamic revelation, but if we mean by Shīʿism Islamic escotericism, then it is of course inseparable from Sufism*".[31] There is an undeniable common parentage found in what is today, two branches of Islām. Denis Hermann and Mathieu Terrier in the introduction to *Shiʿi Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives* write,

> While majority Sunni Islam embodies the exoteric dimension of Islam, Shiʿism and Sufism share its esoteric dimension, even though both also comprise exoteric (Shiʿi legalism, institutionalized Sufism) as well as esoteric dimensions (Shiʿi gnosis, Sufi mysticism) of their own. Opposition between Shiʿism and Sufism only occurs on the inessential plane of the exoteric, giving way to a deep spiritual bond on the essential esoteric plane.[32]

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[31] Nasr. S.H, *Shiʿism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History*, Religious Studies vol. 6, issue 3, Cambridge University Press (1970), 242.
[32] Hermann. D & Terrier. M, *Shiʿi Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives,* I.B. Tauris, (London, 2020), 3-4.

Perhaps this may be a reason that on the esoteric plane, there appears fundamental unity in the core ideas expounded by Ibn 'Arabī to that of Shī'ī dogma. Incredibly important, is al-Shaybi's comments on Ibn 'Arabī. He states;

> The first striking Shi'ite idea was that Ibn 'Arabī described 'Alī as "the *Imam* of all the Worlds and the secret of all the prophets". As for the fraternity between the Prophet and 'Alī, Ibn 'Arabī considered them to have originated form one light, and that both were on the same spiritual level. Regarding the position of 'Alī as the same as that of Aaron to Moses, he called Aaron the master (*al-Sayyid*) – the name applied to the 'Alawis – the Imam, and the High Khalifa (*al-Khalifatu'l-'Aliyy*), and called his Heaven (*Sama'*) in Ibn 'Arabī's Ascent, 'the Heaven of the chosen men of the army after 'Alī's chosen men in the Battle of al-Jamal…As has been stated, the main Shi 'ite doctrine was the preference of 'Alī to the Khalifas…he concluded that both the caliphate of Abu Bakr and the spiritual office of 'Alī were right, an idea that indicated the Zaidi doctrine of "The *Imāma* of the less preferred" (*Imamtu'l-Mafdul*) to which Ibn 'Arabī referred…He also adopted the famous Shi'ite conception that the descendants of Muhammad intercede for people, and that at the end of the world there will be two resurrections, a shorter and longer, this being the same in Shi'ite conception of the Second Coming (*al-ra'ja*) and the resurrection (*al-Qiyama*).[33]

The passage quoted above brings to light a number of key observations. The most apparent observation is that the author summarizes core elements of Shī'ī dogma, unique to Shī'ī schools of thought. By doing so, and making a comparison with Ibn 'Arabī's mystical doctrine, the author quite blatantly highlights the need for an investigation to be made which addresses Shī'ī influences on Ibn 'Arabī. Furthermore, what is quoted in the above passage is not merely a metaphysical discussion highlighting commonalities from the mystical philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī, but points raised in fact amplifies Ibn 'Arabī's theological position, which prior to Ibn 'Arabī were unique to Shī'ism. Why this is significant is for the obvious reason that if it is shown Ibn 'Arabī either borrowed ideas from Shī'ism or was in fact theologically Shī'ī himself, this would in many ways open the door for a rereading of his life

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[33] Shaybi. K.M, *Sufism and Shi'ism*, LAAM Ltd, (London, 1991), 64.

and works. Hence the second part of this thesis is just as important to highlight some of the more specific commonalities and potential influences.

More challenging than Shīʿī primary literature are existing primary recessions of Ibn ʿArabī's major work, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. The majority of all citations to *al-Futūḥāt* in Western academia before the Osman Yahia critical edition , were referenced solely to the *Konya* manuscript. Osman Yahia (d.1997), whose critical edition of *al-Futūḥāt* was the first, and perhaps the last to have also included an examination of two other recensions, that of the *Beyazit* manuscript (considered to hold Shīʿī tendencies)[34] and the little known *Faith* manuscript, is to date the best researched publication of *al-Futūḥāt*. Yahia however, made no claim that his version was the complete version. For this reason, it is deemed fitting to read *al-Yawāqit wa al-jawāhir* by al-Shaʿrānī (d. 1565), alongside *al-Futūḥāt*. An acclaimed Egyptian Shāfiʿī scholar, al-Shaʿrānī seems honest in pointing out Shīʿī tendencies that in newly published editions of *al-Futūḥāt* are absent. When reading *al-Yawāqit*, what is evident is that the *Futūḥāt* available to al-Shaʿrānī differed slightly to the printed editions found today. Moreover, Western interpetators of Ibn ʿArabī, and in particular, early Western literature published in French, tended to approach Ibn ʿArabī through a particular prism, which left very little space for wider interpretation. These French publications written by French Perennialists, such as René Guénon, Michel Valsan and later his students, such as Michel Chodkiewicz (d. 2020), became a unique template for later scholars of Ibn ʿArabī to follow. Chodkiewicz not only rejected any Shīʿī tendencies, but tended to dismiss the need for any potential investigation, as is evident in his *Seal of the Saints*[35] and *An Ocean Without Shore*.[36] Needless to say both publications also provided a serious contribution to the study of Ibn ʿArabī. This is not to conclude that the only voice in the study of Ibn ʿArabī came from the Perennialist school, but that as the subject has traditionally been dominated by Perennial philosophers, it is only natural for this particular interpretation to be the more widely used one. In criticizing the perennial interpretation, Valentini in the main hypothesis of his doctoral thesis, states, "*French*

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[34] Refer to Chapter 12. Sources, for a detailed discussion.
[35] Chodkiewicz. *M, Seal of the Saints, Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*, The Islamic Texts Society, (Cambridge, 1993)
[36] Chodkiewicz. M, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, The Book, and the Law*, SUNY Press, (New York, 1993).

Sufi Perennialists presented the teachings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī in a way that fit their modern theopolitical views on the authority they ascribe to the Islamic Tradition".[37] Although the perennial philosophy as presented by Guénon and Valsan may have raised eyebrows in Muslim theological circles, it was their affiliation with the rector and forty-sixth Grand Imām of al-Azhar University, 'Abd al- Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (d. 1978), which provided the school with much needed legitimacy. Valsan would later attest to Maḥmūd having described his interpretation of Islām as Islamic Orthodoxy.[38] It can therefore be inferred that to maintain the status quo, Valsan, and later his prize student Chodkiewicz rejected any Shī'ī tendencies, both in their articulation of Ibn 'Arabī's philosophy and in their explanation of the Islamic esoteric tradition. For a school based on pluralism and perennialism, the outright rejection of Shī'ī contribution, both in the reading of Ibn 'Arabī and that of the Islamic mystical tradition, can be greatly inhibiting to the wider study of Islamic mysticism. It can also raise questions as to the school's supposed neutrality, as a result of its selectiveness in choosing which tradition to engage with. This selective inclusivity limits the idea of plurality and objective research.

Indeed an important critique of the Perennial school has come in the form of Mark Sedgwick's *Against the Modern World*,[39] in which he tries to distinguish between Traditionalism and Perennialism, concluding that Traditionalism encompasses Perennialism, whilst differentiating between pre-modern and modern Perennialists. Whereas pre-modern Perennialists were in fact rooted in Christian tradition, modern Perennialism appears to reject Western tradition, for Eastern practices. Although Sedgwick's observations may not wholly be relevant to our discussion on the Perfect Human, he does however, explore in-depth, the idea that the Western study of Sufism is far from objective in the Perennial school, but is as much politically motivated as it is subjective to a particular interpretation and historical context. If this be the case, it is not hard to understand why the study of Ibn 'Arabī among French Perennialists, is in what can only be described as a set political and philosophical matrix.

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[37] Valentini. P. (2020), *French Sufi Theopolitics on the Approach of the Akbarian Concepts of God's Unity, Law and Perfect Man by French Modern Perennialists*, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), l'Université de Fribourg, Suisse, pp.10-11.
[38] Valsan. M. "L'Oeuvre de René Guénon en Orient", *Etudes Traditionnelles*, no. 411 (January/ February 1969).
[39] Sedgwick. M, Against the Modern World, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004).

Two equally relevant works are Sedgwick's *Western Sufism*[40] and Gregory Lipton's *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabī*.[41] Both authors are strongly critical of the Perennial school, however the former retains the idea that Sufism is universal at its core, whilst the latter understands it as an exclusive practice, lacking in many of its claims, such as tolerance and pluralism. It is interesting that although both authors are united in their critique of the Perennial school, their understanding of Sufism and its core principles differ. As an example, for Lipton, Ibn 'Arabī is nothing more than an Orthodox Sunnī. Where both authors fall short is a lack of wider discussion on Sufism as witnessed in the Islamic World, in particular demonstrating little understanding of the central themes found in Eastern Sufism, its evolution, its different schools and how each would have differed from Western interpretations of Sufism. Both authors also fail to identify the complexities presented in Sufism, and more specifically by Ibn 'Arabī. What is meant here is a lack of discourse on the metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī, which appears to have been substituted with selective passages, thus only contributing to a distorted understanding of the Shaykh al-Akbar. It is fair to note that although both authors present significant contributions in critiquing the Perennial school, its founding fathers, their motives, and the political context in which the school was founded, both authors demonstrate a lack depth in their research on Sufism and Ibn 'Arabī. Important to add are critics of the Perennial school fall short in differentiating between French Perennialists and American Perennialists such as William Chittick, whose methodology in the study of Sufism and Ibn 'Arabī differs from that of the school of Guénon and Valsan. For this reason, much of the criticism raised against French Perennial interpretation of Sufism, is not always an accurate assessment of the works of William Chittick, Seyyed Hossein Nasr or even Reza Shah-Kazemi. From experience, those Perennial thinkers who had spent time in Iran, or in some way were influenced by the Iranian version of Perennialism, appear to be more open in appreciating diverse interpretations of Sufism. This may very easily be explained as a result of an acceptance of diversity in the intellectual culture of Iran, when compared to that of North

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[40] Sedgwick. M, *Western Sufism*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2017).
[41] Lipton. G, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabī*, Oxford University Press, (New York, 2018).

Africa. Iran for centuries had after all been a depositing ground for various schools of philosophies and mystical thought.

Before beginning the next subchapter, it is important to mention that in recent years, the study of Ibn 'Arabī has witnessed publications, from authors such as Cyrus Zargar, Fitzroy Morrissey, James Morris and Nizamuddin Ahmad, who have differed in their approaches and methodologies from an older generation of scholars on Ibn 'Arabī, heavily influenced by the Perennial school. This I believe can only be healthy for the subject.

4. Overview of the Chapters

This thesis is divided into two sections – the first being on Imāmat and the second section on Ibn 'Arabī. In both sections, the first chapter begins with a brief introduction contextualizing the discourse. The key principle outlined in the introduction on Imāmat is to note that a pre-existing theological template was present defining the doctrine of Imāmat before the birth of Ibn 'Arabī, containing stark similarities with his concept of the Perfect Human. This doctrine of Imāmat was also unique to Shī'ism and existed before any written discussion came to light in Sufism on the position of a spiritual guide-master, or Perfect Human. The introduction concludes by emphasizing that the purpose of the thesis is not primarily to prove Ibn 'Arabī was influenced by Shī'ī thought, but to demonstrate that there is room for a comparison to be made between the Imāmat doctrine and Ibn 'Arabī's Perfect Human.

The second chapter in both sections will address the sources used. In the case of Imāmat, primary sources which will be used will mainly consist of *Ḥadīth* literature pre-Ibn 'Arabī, with reliance on the famous *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, compiled by Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 940/ 329 AH), as it was and is the most widely known Shī'ī compilation in the Islamic world. Theological textbooks including Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's (d. 991/ 381 AH) *al-I'tiqādāt* and Shaykh al-Mufīd's (d. 1022/ 413 AH) *Taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqādāt* and *Awā'il al-maqālāt*, alongside secondary English and Persian sources on Shī'ī theology and its historical developments will also be referenced. This will mainly focus on the works presented by Muḥammad Saʿīdī Mehr, Syed Wahid Akhtar, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Hossein Modarressi.

The third chapter on the origins of the term *shī'a* and Imām will be divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter will identify the term *shī'a*, its roots and a brief overview of its early historic usage. The second subchapter will explore three meanings of the word Imāmat, before moving to the third subsection on defining Imāmat. The importance of this final subchapter is that it provides the reader with an understanding of the theological importance of Imāmat when compared to the Sunnī legalistic position on leadership. The subsequent chapter is entailed 'Theologizing Imāmat', and will again be divided into three subchapters. It is in this chapter that theological reasoning for the necessity of Imāmat will be addressed, including the nature of the Imām, both in its exoteric and esoteric natures.

Both the fifth and sixth chapters will discuss the conditions for Islamic leadership, with the former delving briefly into conditions found in classical Sunnī thought and the latter chapter analyzing conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī thought. In the chapter addressing classical Sunnī thought, the research of three important leading classical theologians on the subject will be listed. These three classical theologians are Abū Bakr Bāqillānī (d. 1013), al-Mārwardī (d. 1058) and al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390). The reason for choosing these three are because of their authoritative and comprehensive contributions to the study of Islamic leadership and governance. As the main purpose of this section is to gain a better understanding of Imāmat, the chapter on conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī thought will be lengthier and divided into three subchapters. These three subchapters will address the doctrine of infallibility, divinely-inspired knowledge, including its sources, spiritual superiority of the Imām over all others and divine appointment.

Following a broader discourse on Imāmat, the seventh chapter will be more specific and will focus on 'Alī as the prototypical Imām. similarly, this chapter will be divided into three parts, with the first addressing 'Alī and his qualities as found in Sunnī literature. The second and third subchapters will focus on the 'Imām and Creation' and ''Alī and the Qur'ān'. The purpose of these subchapters is to contextualize the position of 'Alī, both his primordial – spiritual reality and his foremost understanding of revelation. The ninth chapter will consist of one subchapter, with the chapter as a whole focusing on the concept of *Wilāyah*, a central theme in both Shī'ism and Sufism. Its subchapter will look at the events of Ghadīr, itself symbolic in the official transfer of *wilāyah* from the Prophet to 'Alī. Chapters eighth and the

final chapter on the Mahdī are important due to the central nature of both ʿAlī and the Mahdī found in the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī.

The second section which is on Ibn ʿArabī will begin with an introduction contextualizing the concept of the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Though Ibn ʿArabī has a unique discussion on the concept, the idea itself is not unique to him. However, if one were to compare the preexisting concept of a perfect human to the concept encapsulated in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī, it is fair to say that prior to Ibn ʿArabī the idea of a perfect human was similar to a skeleton requiring meat to be put on its frame. Ibn Arabī's discourse provided the meat required on the skeleton such that after him, it was his teachings that became central in discussions pertaining to the Perfect Human. Indeed it would be correct to conclude that any discussion since the time of Ibn ʿArabī on the Perfect Human has taken into consideration Ibn ʿArabī's position. It is the ontological nature of the Perfect Human that has attracted mystical philosophers to widely commentate on this concept, with its many linkages to broader topics found in Islamic Mysticism and Philosophy. The Perfect Human as described by Chittick is "[…] the ontological prototype of both man and the cosmos". Chittick then goes on to write,

> He is the first creation of God or, rather, the primordial and original self-disclosure of the Essence, and thus the first point in the descending arc (*al-qaws al-nuzūlī*) of the manifestation or effusion of existence. But the descending arc must reach its lowest point, which is the corporeal world (*ʿālam al-ajsām*) or the world of sense perception (*ʿālam al-ḥiss*, *ʿālam al-shahāda*). Then the circle closes upon itself. The goal of the ascending arc (*al-qaws al-ṣuʿūdī*) – the return to the Principle – is likewise the state of the Perfect Man. Hence the Perfect Man has two dimensions: First, he is the ontological prototype of man and the cosmos, or the origin of the descending arc of creation. Second, he is the exemplar to be emulated, or the goal of the ascending arc of creation.[42]

Following an initial discussion on the Perfect Human, the second chapter will involve a brief explanation on sources used, in which both the primary works of Ibn ʿArabī and its

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[42] Chittick. W.C, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, SUNY Press, (Albany, 2012), 143.

commentaries will be addressed. Important will be to give this section historical context and therefore the third chapter will involve chronologically highlighting key aspects from the life and times of Ibn 'Arabī. The fourth chapter will then follow on from the historical narrative to discuss Ibn 'Arabī's key concepts. Under the heading of 'The Perfect Human', chapter four will be divided into four parts, namely 'The Absolute and Divine Names', 'A Summary of the Opening Chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ'*, 'The Angels' and 'The Breath of the All-Merciful'. The purpose of these subchapters are to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationship the Perfect Human exhibits both with the Divine and in creation. The other side of this discussion is how the Perfect Human fits within the spiritual hierarchy and therefore the fifth chapter will look into the position of the Perfect Human from the position of a religious guide. This chapter will be titled 'Messengers, Prophets and Saints'. The final chapter in outlining religious leadership and in essence the position of the Perfect Human in a spiritual hierarchy will be chapter six, entitled 'The Seal of Prophecy and the Seal of Sainthood'. This particular discourse is one of the more complex ones in the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī as in places it remains highly abstract and unclear. Following on from questions posed by the mystical writer Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 869) in his *Khatm al-awliya'*,[43] Ibn 'Arabī begins to unravel the intricacies of what a 'Seal' may be, as well as specifically identifying individuals for the position of 'Seal'. Though the universal concept of a 'Seal' is quite compatible with Shī'ī belief, the apparent identities of the individuals mentioned as 'Seals' do not immediately fit the identities as mentioned by Shī'ī mystics such as the revered Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī.

For an informed conclusion to be made as to whether there were Shī'ī influences or indeed cross-pollination of ideas with the doctrine of Imāmat, requires that a working definition of what the term Shī'ī meant and how it evolved be given. Chapter seven, 'Problems of Definition', is divided into two subchapters; the first providing historical context, whereas the second is further broken into four parts, three addressing the different understandings of the term '*shī'ī*' in the first three centuries of Islām, with the final part briefly exploring

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[43] Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is the first notable master to have given a doctrinal formulation on the idea *wilāyah* and the notion of 'Seal of the saints', though both concepts are found in the Qur'ān, with the discussion on *wilāyah* having preexisted in Shī'ī *Ḥadīth* literature.

relationships between Shīʿism and Sufism. Leading on from this, the final chapter before the conclusion addresses Ibn ʿArabī and his beliefs surrounding the Family of Muḥammad. This penultimate chapter is significant due to a lack of secondary literature on this particular theme. The chapter itself will be divided into three parts – the first on the *ahl al-bayt*, the second on ʿAlī and the third on the Mahdī.

The conclusion of this thesis discusses similarities found between Ibn ʿArabī and Shīʿī thought, beginning at similarities found in devotional literature used by Ibn ʿArabī and in Shīʿism. It will then go on to address certain misconceptions on Shīʿism and in particular the term *rawāfiḍ*, both historically and as used by Ibn ʿArabī. The final part of the conclusion touches upon influences on the study of Ibn ʿArabī in the last three decades, with the need for wider perspectives in the study of Ibn ʿArabī.

Section 1 - Imāmat

Chapter 1. Introduction

As our thesis will examine overlaps between Shīʿī Imāmology and Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the Perfect Human, we will in this first section examine what Imāmat may have looked like leading up to the lifetime of Ibn ʿArabī. Only by gaining a concise understanding of what Imāmat entails, can one fully appreciate how it may have contributed to the evolution of ideas in the doctrine presented by Ibn ʿArabī. The purpose of this section therefore is not to prove that Shīʿī Imāmology impacted the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī, but is merely to demonstrate that a template, be it in the form of a belief or a *kalāmī* methodology existed, therefore allowing for a comparison to take place. A method of identifying influences would have been to solely present a historical narrative, mapping out how and where Ibn ʿArabī may have come into contact with Shīʿī ideas. The methodology which will be adopted in this thesis however, will be to couple historical facts with an understanding of both Imāmat and Ibn Arabī's Perfect Human, whilst attempting to fully understand key overlaps and places of influence the tenet of Imāmat may have had on Ibn ʿArabī's ideas. The Shīʿī concept of Imāmat was very much unique and without parallel in Islamic thought, though after the forth century of Islām, discourse into ideas surrounding divine leadership did begin to take form, particularly in philosophical and later mystical circles.[44]

Adding to this, for a comparison to be made between two ideas, does not always necessitate both ideas coming in contact with the other for a comparison to be valid. There is little debate to suggest Ibn ʿArabī was not the first to expand a detailed discourse on the Perfect Human. He may not have been the first to suggest the term, but he was the first to expound a nexus of ideas that developed the theory of the Perfect Human, which resulted in it becoming a template for future discourses on the subject. It is important to note such a profound mystical

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[44] With discussions on Greek philosophy having begun as early as the third Islamic century, the Shīʿī philosopher, al-Fārābī (d. 943/ 331 AH) had begun to build on Platonic ideas such as the *philosopher-king* in his metaphysical and political discourses. The concept of the *philosopher-king* as expounded by al-Fārābī and later Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) was very much similar to Imāmat, whilst laying the foundations for later discussions on the doctrine of a perfect- enlightened human.

discourse on the Perfect Human had not previously been undertaken, nor is there any such concept found in Sunnī literature. The only place where something similar has been found, is in Shīʿī *kalāmī* literature and that too in respect to the nature of the Imām. In short, similar detailed mystical ideas that had developed in concern to the Imām in Shīʿī thought, seem to emerge in Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the Perfect Human. It may be coincidence, or it may be possible that Ibn ʿArabī reached these conclusions through divine intuition, independent of any external influences, but it can also suggest that there were influences that history has not accounted for. The only other explanation is that the Imām or the perfect human are archetypes found in a perennial wisdom that transcend religion and belief, similar for instance to the concept of a Messiah, found in some form across both Abrahamic and most *Dharmic* faiths. Either way, to compare something is to look at similarities, in this case, between two concepts that have become foundational for wider topics in both theology and mystical philosophy. For there to be any conclusions as to what the similarities between the Imām and the Perfect Human are, or even why similarities exist, requires an evaluation of what Imāmat meant up to the period of Ibn ʿArabī.

Before beginning the chapter on Sources, it is important to note that the structure and themes raised in this first section is necessary for two main reasons – the first being that Divine Grace, the esoteric and exoteric nature of the Imām, Infallibility, Divinely-inspired knowledge, Spiritual Superiorty, Divine Appointment, Imām ʿAlī in the light of the Qurʾān, creation and *wilāyah*,[45] and finally the discussion on the Mahdī,[46] are all key facets, contributing to the fundamentals of Imāmology. More importantly however, is that fact that they are just as vital in the arguments presented on the Perfect Human by Ibn ʿArabī.

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[45] As understood through the events of Ghadīr (refer to chapter 9.1).
[46] Each theme is mentioned in the order of chapters in this first section.

Chapter 2. Sources

Whilst being the oldest surviving Shī'ī text, *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, compiled by a Kūfan disciple of 'Alī, Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī al-'Āmerī (d. 678/ 76 AH) is the oldest source that will be used in this thesis. Although its authenticity may not be agreed upon by all Muslim scholars of tradition, the book still stands as the oldest surviving book of *aḥadīth* in Islām. It is a compilation of *ḥadīth* with editorial content being limited to the titles of the chapters. There currently is no historical evidence to suggest a book older than *Kitāb Sulaym* that had been in circulation.[47] Hossein Modarressi mentions that the oldest preserved version of the *Kitāb Sulaym* comes from the final years of the reign of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 743/ 125 AH).[48] In addition to this, Amir-Moezzi accepts there being six types of manuscripts, the oldest dating back to Ibn Abī 'Umayr (d. 832), a companion of the *seventh*, *eighth* and *ninth* Imāms respectively, whilst also considered by Shī'ī scholars as part of *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'* (People of Consensus), on whom there is consensus as to the reliability and trustworthiness of their narrations. The other manuscripts were compiled by Ḥasan ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Dinawarī,[49] al-Ṭusī (d. 1072) and Abū Muḥammad al-Rummānī (d. 1213). The remaining two series of manuscripts cannot presently be located. Aside from the al-Rummānī manuscript that shares roughly half of the traditions with the other three types of manuscripts, the other three share forty traditions, with al-Ṭusī consisting of forty-eight traditions and Ibn Abī 'Umayr's forty-one.[50] The difference is in the additional traditions found in both of these manuscripts, with the rest remaining the same.

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[47] There are reference to books in traditions, such as commentaries of the Qur'ān, and esoteric texts that were exclusively in the possession of the Imāms and only accessible to members from the family of Muḥammad.

[48] Modarressi. H, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi'ite Literature*, Oneworld Publications, (Oxford, 2003), I, 83.

[49] The exact date of his life and death are unknown, but he lived in the eighth – ninety century.

[50] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Silent Qur'an & the Speaking Qu'ran*, Columbia University Press, (New York, 2016), 48-50.

In relation to the authenticity of *Kitāb Sulaym*, Amir-Moezzi has produced a concise research to suggest its reliability as a book of reference for early Shīʿī belief,[51] whilst also refuting suggestions that Sulaym was a pen name adopted by early supporters of ʿAlī.[52][53] Indeed *Kitāb Sulaym* has been considered by the majority of Shīʿī scholars as a reliable source,[54] with traditions directly from at least two Imāms, validating the person of Sulaym and his book. Amir-Moezzi brings a quote from the *fourth* Imām to evidence this point: "Everything that Sulaym says is truthful, may God have mercy on him. All of this forms a part of our teachings and we recognize it".[55] Similarly he mentions on the authority of the *sixth* Imām a well known quote: "He is from among our Shīʿa and those who love us who do not have *Kitab Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī*, is tantamount to one who has no share in our cause and who knows nothing of the basis of our doctrine".[56] It is sufficient for this research to use the first forty existing traditions as found in the Ṭusī manuscripts which are common to the other existing manuscripts.

In regards to the book, *Kitab Sulaym* focuses on the events preceding the death of Muḥammad, with narrations describing aspects of Imāmat, its esoteric nature and the Imāms being twelve in number.[57] It also contains prophecies by Muḥammad and ʿAlī, depicting future events, with multiple traditions being eschatological in nature. Traditions from *Kitāb Sulaym* can be found directly in early texts such as *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* and *Kitāb al-Kāfī,* with its themes sufficiently rooted in theological texts written immediately post occultation, such as *al-Iʿtiqādāt* and *Taṣḥīḥ al-iʿtiqādāt*. *Kitāb al-Kāfī* is the most well-known text before the start of the major occultation and its style is similar to *Kitāb Sulaym* and *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* in that it is only a thematic compilation of *ḥadīth* without any further analysis or commentary. This also means that the chapters are thematically compiled and based on supporting *ḥadīth*, without the

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[51]*Ibid*. 38-50.
[52] *Ibid*. 41-45.
[53] Amir-Moezzi argues that information presented as radically different from the general narrative in the early stages of the Caliphate would have required the author not to be fictitious, rather a faithful man of integrity.
[54] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Silent Qurʾan & the Speaking Quʾran*, 38-50.
[55] *Ibid*. 39.
[56]*Ibid*. 38-39; also written on the front cover of its English translation, Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī*, trans. Syed Ali Abid Rizvi & Nilam Rizvi, Ahmed Group Services, (Karachi, 2001).
[57] *Ibid*. 84.

compiler's own words and reflections. It is not to say that limited clarification or the odd footnote commentary on the text of a *ḥadīth* cannot be found, but that the primary style is to narrate either prophetic traditions, or traditions from the Imāms, as opposed to presenting a theological discourse based on the author's own interpretations of the traditions. Each of the three early texts (*Kitāb Sulaym*, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* d *Kitāb al-Kāfī*) have a sizable focus of Imāmat, with chapters dedicated to the various qualities and qualifications of the Imām.

The first major compilation of early mystical *ḥadīth*, thematically organized on the topic of Imāmat[58] currently available is the text *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* by al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 902-3/290 AH). It is without doubt, the single most important early source on Imāmat, with the compiler being from amongst the companions of the *eleventh* Imām. Although the term '*insān kāmil*' does not appear in early traditions, from the primary texts, the closest text to match the description provided by Ibn 'Arabī, albeit for the station of the Imām is found in *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*. Therefore, the text is of importance as a primary source in this thesis. What this text also demonstrates are complex and multifaceted elements within early Shī'ī mystical and esoteric teachings, traditions which very quickly become less focal with the rise of a rationalist theology in the Islamic communities of Iran and Iraq. Neverthless, the appearance of mystical and initiatory material, with a strong messianic component, happens to develop in the second Islamic century through disciples of the Imāms, particularly from the *sixth* Imām onwards. *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin* by al-Barqī (d.887/274 AH) is an example of an early text housing elements of mystical and messianic traditions in the body of the text.[59]

The most influential of the primary sources which will be referred to is *Kitāb al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī (d. 941). It is the most authoritative book amongst the four main books (al-*Kutub al-*

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[58] Themes are arranged into qualities of the Imāms, such as "the Imāms are the Proof of God and His Threshold, His face and His side, His eyes, and the treasurers of His knowledge", "the Imāms are the heirs of the knowledge of Adam and of all initiates of the past", "they keep the primordial Books and the Scriptures of earlier Prophets", "the Imāms are the Supreme names of God". These mentioned titles are also found in *al-Kāfī* and will be discussed in the body of this thesis.

[59] This text will also be referred to in the discourse on Imāmat.

arba'a)[60] of Shī'ī *ḥadīth* literature. Therefore *al-Kāfī* will be given preference due to its popular acceptance and comprehensiveness. Al-Kulaynī holds a special position as the most reliable, well respected and most accomplished scholar amongst early Shī'ī compilers of *ḥadīth*, thus any analysis on Imāmat would require a thorough look at his compilation.[61] He has been considered by early Shī'ī scholars of *Rijāl*[62] as trustworthy[63] and complementing this is the title *Thiqat al-Islām*,[64] a title not used officially by any other Shī'ī scholar,[65] but bestowed specifically to al-Kulaynī. There are possibly five main reasons that makes *al-Kāfī* an extremely important primary source. The first is that its compiler lived in the period of the minor occultation, allowing him direct access to the four emissaries (*nuwwāb*)[66] of the *twelfth* Imām.[67] Secondly, the vast majority of his chain of narrations reaches either the Prophet or the Imāms. Third and importantly, al-Kulaynī arranged his compilation so that each chapter or sub-chapter begins with the strongest chain of narration and ends with that which he considers relatively weaker. Fourthly, he also refrains from using contradictory traditions on a given subject, thus allowing for traditions to be directly relevant.[68] In short, al-Kulaynī had forged a methodology to weigh the reliability of traditions. Lastly, *al-Kāfī* is comprehensive in comparison to any other primary compilation of its time, covering all branches of faith and

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[60] Also referred to as *Uṣūl al-Arba'a*, are the four primary books on *ḥadith* in Shī'ī Islām. They are *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, compiled by al-Kulaynī (d. 941/329 AH), *Man Lā Yahḍuruhū al-Faqīh*, compiled by al-Ṣadūq (d. 991/380 AH), *Tahthīb al-Aḥkām* and *Al-Istibṣār*, compiled by al-Ṭusī (d. 1067/460 AH).

[61] For further information refer to al-Najāshī (d.1058/ 450 AH) *and* al-Ṭūsī's (d.1067/ 460 AH) *al-Rijāl*, under the section of al-Kulaynī.

[62] *'Ilm Rijāl* literally translates to 'knowledge of men' and is commonly referred to as the science that evaluates the chain of narrators, by looking at their biographies and determining their reliability as a trustworthy source.

[63] As referenced to Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 1274/ 673 AH), Akhtar. S.W, *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, Ashish Publishing House (New Delhi, 1988), 12.

[64] The term *thiqa* means truthful. This title is uniquely used for al-Kulaynī and explicitly bares witness to his truthfulness and just nature.

[65] Al-Kulaynī has also been given the title of a Shī'ī *mujaddid* (reviver) of the faith by a handful of Shī'ī and Sunnī scholars, such as the Sunnī theologian Ibn Athīr (d.1210), who proclaimed him as the Shī'ī *mujaddid* of the third century in his *al-uṣūl*, or later Shī'ī theologians, such as 'Abbās Qummī (d.1941) and Aqa Buzurg Tihrānī (d.1970).

[66] In the minor occultation, which lasted 874/260 AH to 941/329 AH, access was limited to an elite number of the pious from amongst the community to the Imām. The four emissaries of the Imām in this period that carried put the work of the Imām were 'Uthmān b. Sa 'īd āl-Asadī (873-880), Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān b. Sa 'īd āl-Asadī (880-917), al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ (917-938) and 'Ālī b. Muḥammad al-Samarrī (938-941).

[67] Akhtar. S.W, *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, 12.

[68] Contradictory sources are as a result of those traditions uttered by the Imāms under *taqiyya* (dissimulation). There are complex processes in *ḥadith* studies to verify if a tradition was said in *taqiyya* and what the the Imām was alluding to. The reason for this was the persecution and marginalization of the Shī'ī communities in the era of the Imāms.

sharīah, for example it contains just over of fifteen thousand *aḥadīth* to al-Bukharī's four thousand, if one is to omit repetitive *aḥadīth* from this count.[69] A further point that should not be overlooked is how the masses would have perceived *al-Kāfī*. The compilation was not just a source book for scholars, but was a book to guide the masses in the period of occultation and therefore what the early Shī'ī community thought of the book is of importance to this thesis. In the immediate years following the *twelfth* Imām's major occultation, it was *al-Kāfī*, which proved a coherent source for the Shī'ī communities across the Islamic world to benefit from. It can reliably be inferred that *al-Kāfī* shaped much of the dogma that exists today, especially on Imāmology. It is famously perceived that when going into the major occultation, the Imām commented on *al-Kāfī* as 'sufficient (*kāfī*) for our Shī'a', hence the book being confirmed as *al-Kāfī* (the sufficient) in the eyes of the masses.[70]

With the advent of al-Ṣadūq (d. 991/ 380 AH), and his student al-Mufīd (d. 1022/ 413 AH), emerged a dialectical and rationalist theology, referred to as the science of *kalām*. In general, the Buyid period (beginning of the tenth/fourth century AH) saw a shift from a non-rational, *ḥadīth*- based approach prevalent in Qum and Ray to what can be described as 'the rationalistic juridical and theological tradition' of the School of Baghdad.[71] This did not mean that the esoteric traditions found in early books were negated. It only meant that the template through which belief was outlined was standardized into a rational and theological prism. The first two standardized theological manuals, were produced towards the end of the fourth Islamic century, namely *al-I'tiqādāt* and *Taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqādāt*. These were single volumes consisting of articles of faith, rationalized and extrapolated from *ḥadīth* literature. Standardized theological manuals were simple guidelines for the faithful, but this did not negate the option of referring directly to mainstream *ḥadīth* texts or early esoteric literature such as *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*. Al-Ṣadūq wrote *al-I'tiqādāt* at the behest of early Shī'ī scholars from Nayshāpūr, as the first official manual of its kind. This was followed by al-Mufīd's *Taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqādāt*, where he objected to some of the beliefs mentioned by his teacher, the

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[69] Akhtar. S.W, *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, 13.
[70] *Ibid.* 13.
[71] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Silent Qur'an & the Speaking Qu'ran*, 169. Akhtar. S.W, *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, Ashish Publishing House (New Delhi, 1988)

main doctrinal difference being on the definition of infallibility of the Imām.[72] He used traditions found in *al-Kāfī* to refute some of the theories presented by al-Ṣadūq. Al-Mufīd later wrote his own book on Shī‘ī theology called *Awā'il al-maqālāt*.

It should be noted that by the third Islamic century, there had developed two parallel methodologies; one which focused on mainstream exoteric *ḥadīth*, and the other which focused on a body of *ḥadīth*, esoteric, mystical and initiatory in nature. Whereas the latter in time became less prominent, classical texts remained present for those wishing to delve deeper into early esoteric literature. A major reason for this would have been the intellectual climate of Baghdad in the fourth and fifth Islamic centuries, where frequent Shī‘a and Sunnī exchanges meant that a more rationalized template was deemed conducive for polemical discourse. Thus a template was developed to address contemporary theological questions, for instance, monotheism, discussions on the nature of God, His names and attributes, anthropomorphism, the question of whether the Qur'ān was created or not, or free will and predestination, were all topics that had migrated from the court of the Abbasids to the intellectual circles in Baghdad. The nature of Shī‘ī *kalām* was that it initially tackled contemporary questions on God and the nature of religion. By the time Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's (d. 1274) wrote his seminal work *Tajrīd al-i‘tiqād*, the first chapter on monotheism consisted of a section on existence, indicative of philosophical influences of the day, with fundamental arguments grounded in the metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) and wider still, in the peripatetic – Neo-platonic schools of philosophy.

A final observation is that from all of the sources mentioned in this chapter, there are five core principles pertaining to Imāmat that can be extrapolated. These are that the Imām is divinely chosen, that the Imāms are infallible (although the definitions of infallibility differed from al-Ṣadūq to al-Mufīd), that the number of Imāms are twelve, that the final Imām will be the son of al-Ḥasan al-Askarī (d. 874/ 260 AH) and that the *twelfth* Imām is living.

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[72] There were secondary points of difference too, such as was an Imām born infallible or did he become it once he took the position of the Imām? Was the Imām bestowed with complete knowledge prior to becoming an Imām? Was it obligatory to follow the Imām before he became an Imām?

Before starting the next chapter, it is also worth mentioning that in regards to secondary sources, two texts will be referred to, that being *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, by Syed Wahid Akhtar and *Āmūzish-i kalām-i islāmī* by Muḥammad Sa'īdī Mehr.[73]

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[73] *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers* is a concise text outlining the historical developments of the Shī'ī theological school. *Āmūzish-i kalām-i islāmī* is a two volume theological book, outlining core contemporary Shī'ī beliefs.

Chapter 3. Origin of the terms shī'a and Imām

Before beginning a discourse on Imāmat, it would be beneficial to briefly understand the origins of the word '*shī'a*' and examine what the title 'Imām' meant in early Shī'ism. The coming subchapters will look at the origins of the word '*shī'a*', followed by an analysis of what the meaning of Imām entailed. The purpose is to grasp the meaning of the word'*shī'a*' as it was, thus allowing us the ability to better understand in section two if Ibn 'Arabī can indeed be viewed as having Shī'ī tendencies or only being influenced by Shī'ī theology. Similarly, by gaining a concise understanding of the title Imām, it would allow us better to demonstrate similarities. Following this, the third and final subchapter will touch upon the definition of Imāmat in Shī'ī theology.

3.1 The origin of the term *'shī'a'*

The term '*shī'a*' emerged in the lifetime of Muḥammad, with its usage embedded in the Qur'ān to denote a follower or member of a particular party, group or sect, upholding the same beliefs and principles.[74] Rāghib al-Isfahānī (1108-1109/ 502 AH) in *al-Mufradāt fī al-gharīb al-qur'ān* (his famous lexicon on Qur'ānic terminology), defines the word *shī'a* as "a person or people through whom another is strengthened […]", meaning friends or helpers of a person. The Qur'ān mentions: "*And most surely Abraham was amongst His shī'a*".[75] In this verse, Abraham is regarded as a partisan of Noah, and therefore his *shī'a*. Abraham like Noah before him, was a monotheist, therefore Abraham is likened to a follower or partisan of Noah, making him his *shī'a.* Similarly, *shī'a* can refer to a party: "And he (Moses) went into the city at a time when its people were unaware, so he found therein two men fighting, one being his party (*shī'atihi*) and the other his foe […]".[76] It has also been used in the Qur'ān more generically in the verse: "Then We will most certainly draw forth from every sect (*shī'at*)

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[74] Ṣafavī, S.S, *Danesh-nameh mu'asir qur'ān karīm*, London Academy of Iranian Studies, (Tehran, 2018), 866.
[75] Qur'ān 37:83.
[76] Qur'ān 28:15.

those of them who were worst against the Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*) in insolence".[77] In this instance, the term implies a sect. Needless to say that in the context of this thesis, *shīʿa* will imply, the 'Shīʿa of ʿAlī' and of the remaining eleven Imāms who descend from his lineage. With help from the mentioned semantical and Qurʾanic descriptions, it is possible to assume that a Shīʿa of ʿAlī is one who follows the beliefs and principles of ʿAlī, including in his understanding of monotheism and his interpretation of Islām. A Shīʿa therefore is a partisan of ʿAlī and acknowledges him as the legitimate successor to Muḥammad.

In gaining a better understanding of who the Shīʿa are, there are a number of traditions on the authority of both the *fifth* and *sixth* Imām describing the creation of 'our shīʿa' (*shīʿatunā*), either from the left over clay (*al-ṭīnā*) of the Imāms, or that their hearts were made from the same substance used to make the Imāms, hence why the hearts of the Shīʿa incline towards loving them.[78] Not only are there records of the term *shīʿa* being used as early as the time of ʿAlī, but also traditions stating that the Shīʿa of ʿAlī were those who took their faith from ʿAlī and therefore were of a superior pedigree.[79] Both al-Barqī (d.887/274 AH) and al-Ṭūsī (d. 995/ 1067 AH) have indicated the term Shīʿa having been used by Muḥammad when commenting on the verse: "*As for those who believe and do good, surely they are the best of men*".[80] The 'best of men' in this context are ʿAlī and his Shīʿa as referenced in *al-Kāfī,* on the authority of the *fifth* Imām, with a chain of narrators reaching Muḥammad.[81] Al-Ṣadūq (d. 991) in two traditions, mentions the term *Shīʿa of Jaʿfar*[82] and *Shīʿa of ʿAlī*,[83] the former by the *sixth* Imām to imply his own followers and the latter by Muḥammad to mean the partisans of ʿAlī. Al-Ṣadūq goes on to meticulously describe the qualities, beliefs and attributes of the Shīʿa, distinguishing them as the elite from among the Muslims.[84] Each tradition that he narrates in explaining this comes with a chain of narrators reaching either an Imām or the Prophet himself. Our purpose here is to establish that the term *shīʿa* was in use for a group, sect or

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[77] Qurʾān 19:69.
[78] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, The Islamic Seminary INC NY, (Qum, 2004), II:1:2-4.
[79] *Ibid*. 4-6.
[80] Qurʾān 98:7.
[81] Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, *ḥadīth* 909, al-Barqī, *Maḥāsin*, n.p., n.d., *ḥadīth* 537.
[82] Al-Ṣadūq, *Ṣifāt al-Shīʿa*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2001), 282.
[83] *Ibid*. 285.
[84] In the book *Ṣifāt al-Shīʿa.*

community of people who followed the Imāms as their spiritual leaders and guides. What may help in explaining the term *shī'a* further, is the phrase *dīn 'Alī*. Although its usage was less common, it did however imply partisans of 'Alī, in particular during his reign. The term found its usage especially in the Battle of the Camel (656):

> He (i.e Ibn Yathribī) claimed to have killed (my three companions) because they followed the religion (Dīn) of 'Alī, the religion of 'Alī is the religion of Muḥammad (*wa dīn 'Alī dīn Muḥammad*).[85]

Amir-Moezzi describes the origins of the term *dīn* as: "*Dīn* in pre-Islamic times designated a set of both secular and sacred laws. By extension, dīn also referred to submission to a law or a leader[…]". Madelung contextualizes the term by pointing out: "*Dīn 'Alī* could at this stage have only a limited meaning, most likely the claim that 'Alī was the best of men after Muḥammad, his legatee (*wasī*), and as such most entitled to lead the Community."[86] As al-Ṭabarī (d.923/ 310 AH) has mentioned in his *Tārikh*, during the reign of 'Alī, two major groups existed; those who were loyal to him and those referred to as the '*Uthmāniyyah* (who revered the first three caliphs, but expressed hostility to 'Alī).[87][88] Nevertheless, what can be reasonably inferred is that by the period of 'Alī's reign, there were a firm group of Muslims who not only aligned themselves with 'Alī, but took their interpretation of Islām from him. The other major group were his opponents. His partisans came to be known as 'Shī'a', a term used for all those who upheld 'Alī's right of succession. It was later that the term evolved into upholding the right of those Imāms who succeeded him.[89] It was thus that the term 'Shī'a' was coined.

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[85] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, (London, 2011), 5.
[86] Madelung. W, *The succession to Muḥammad*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1997), 178-179.
[87] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* vol. 16, translated & annotated by I.K. Poonawala, SUNY Press, (New York, 1990), 6; Madelung. W, *The succession to Muḥammad*, 298.
[88] This is not to say that these two were the only groups, but that they were the two main groupings. During the latter part of 'Alī's reign saw a third group, the *Khārijīs* come into prominence.
[89] An in-depth discourse on the evolution of the word Shī'a can be found in the second section of this thesis.

3.2 Imāmat

The word Imām is commonly derived from the root *a-m*, which literally means to have intent or pay attention (to something). In its technical usage, it means origin or point of reference, with Imām meaning a person who possesses power and is a leader of people. The well known lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab*, indicates that the word Imām has multiple meanings, such as leader, teacher, or guide. However, to better understand the word Imām would require not just an etymological or semantically interpretation, but also a theological one. Three meanings for Imām can be extrapolated from the Qurʾān; the first is as a leader, the second as a pathway and the third as a book of guidance. With the Qurʾān being the main source used by Shīʿi theologians to define faith, pursuing an understanding of these three meanings from it would be most appropriate in attempting to better understand Imāmat.

3.2.1 First Meaning

The first meaning is encapsulated in the following verse: "*And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you an Imām of men. Abraham said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He*".[90] From this verse it can be inferred that the station of Imāmat is a divine station bestowed by God on a person (in this case Abraham) after being tested. Al-Ṣadūq whilst interpreting a similar verse states: "*And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place on earth my caliph'[...]*", God was in fact setting a precedence that it is solely He who appoints His representatives on earth.[91] Al-Mufīd (d.1022) in explaining the position of the Imām mentions that the Imāms: "take the place of the Prophets in enforcing judgments, seeing to the execution of legal penalties, safeguarding the Law, and educating mankind".[92] For this to occur, the Imām must be infallible and chosen only by God, so al-Mufīd argues[93] and from the bloodline of Muḥammad. [94] The initial verse quoted, also holds an exceptionally high threshold, as the unjust from the offspring of Abraham would not be possessors of this divine station. The term unjust in its technical sense could apply to any indecency committed, thus penalizing an

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[90] Qurʾān 2:124.
[91] Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Iʿtiqādāt*, Markaz Taḥaqīqāt rāyāneh qāʾimiyyah Iṣfahān, (Iṣfahān, n.d.), 165.
[92] Al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil al-maqālāt fī al-madhāhib al-mukhtārāt*, Charandābī, (Tabriz, 1952/1371 AH), 35.
[93] Al-Mufīd, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra min āl-ʿuyūn wa al-maḥāsin*, al-Ḥaidariyyah, (Najaf, 1962), 239-40.
[94] A further analysis will be undertaken in later chapters.

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individual (a descendent of Abraham as per the verse) from acquiring the divine station of Imāmat.[95] The Qur'ān goes further in explaining that *ẓulm* also has a spiritual dimension, for instance, polytheism in the Qur'ān is regarded as *ẓulm* on the self (soul).[96] In a conversation between Luqmān[97] and his son, Luqmān advises his son not to associate others with God, for polytheism is *al-shirk laẓulm 'aẓīm* (a terrible injustice). The complete definition of injustice in its theological context therefore is outwardly sinning, and inwardly holding spiritual vices, the most troublesome being polytheism. Thus al-Mufīd argues the need for the Imām to be infallible from sin, appointed by God as indicated in the verse, and from the bloodline of Muḥammad (a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael).[98] Al-Mufīd further explains the conditions of an Imām by producing a tradition on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. Masūd (d.650), who in turn quotes Muḥammad saying God said to Abraham, the covenant (of Imāmat) would not be given to those amongst his children who were oppressors. Abraham then continues to ask God, who the oppressors from his children would be. God replied, those who have prostrated to idols, would not be worthy of becoming an Imām.[99] From this tradition, al-Mufīd establishes a principle, that anyone who has committed polytheism at any stage in his life, would be exempt from the Imāmat. Ibn Maghāzalī,[100] a prominent Sunnī

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[95] The term unjust as mentioned in the verse above, takes its origin from the word *ẓulm*, which means to oppress or to be unjust. The discussion on *ẓulm* is important to grasp when addressing Imāmat in Shi'ī thought. *Ẓulm* is mentioned in the Qur'ān in opposition to equity and justice, in that it is an action which is intended or something which is put in a place not meant for it, causing it to deviate from its rightful (balanced) position, Ṣafavī, S.S, *Danesh-nameh mu'asir qur'ān karīm*, 903. Any action that violates the parameters of justice would be regarded as *ẓulm*. The Qur'ān in this context states "These are the limits of God, so do not exceed them and whoever exceeds the limits of God these it is that are the unjust" (Qu'rān 2:229).
There are three understandings of *ẓulm* that appear in the Qur'ān. The first is violating the parameters of the natural, social and legal world. The second is to put something in a place which is not for it. The third is to cause harm to the truth and digress from equity and justice. The themes in which *ẓulm* are mentioned in the Qur'ān, consist of socio-political oppression, an inability to give a wife her due, economic transgression, an inability to act with equity and justice with people, an inability to communicate with equity and justice in speech and character vices which oppose divine virtue, such as backbiting, lying and slander.
Therefore, *ẓulm* can range from a sin to a mistake, if that mistake violates any parameters or causes imbalance to equity. Thus, the threshold for the divine station of Imāmat is such that only those infallible of sin and mistake qualify for it.
[96] "Luqmān counseled his son, 'My son, do not attribute any partners to God: attributing partners to Him is a terrible injustice (*ẓulm*)'", Qur'ān 31:13.
[97] In the Qur'ān, Luqmān is considered as a righteous and wise man. The Qur'ān does not provide any biography of Luqmān, however, Arabic, Persian and Turkish folklore have described him as either Ethiopian or Nubian, living in the time of King David and most probably being a carpenter or a slave.
[98] Al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-maqālāt fī al-madhāhib al-mukhtārāt*, (n.d., n.p.), 35.
[99] Mufīd, *Al-Amālī*, Dār al-Mufīd, (n.p., 1994/1414 AH), narration 13,151.
[100] 4th century theologian, whose exact dates are unknown.

theologian, in his *Manāqib*, quotes a tradition on the authority of the Ibn Masūd (a chain similar to al-Mufīd) that he who has worshipped an idol will not be bestowed Imāmat. Ibn Masūd then goes on to narrate from Muḥammad: "The result of the prayer of Abraham has reached me and my brother ʿAlī, as both of us have never prostrated to an idol (worshipped other than God)".[101] This effectively disqualifies all but ʿAlī as the successor to Muḥammad in Shīʿī theology.

The belief that God's reply to the prayer of Abraham proves the infallibility of the Imām, is not an uncommon one. Al-Rāzī (d.1210), the celebrated Sunnī theologian writes: "The text indicates the necessity of the Imam to be infallible, and every Prophet is an Imām."[102] Al-Rāzī makes a distinction by saying that those who became Imāms from the children of Abraham were in fact infallible Prophets. He may not uphold al-Mufīd's understanding as to who the verse was revealed for, but does acknowledge the Imām, or in the case of al- Rāzī, the Prophets as being infallible.

Before continuing, it would be sensible to mention that there are four divine stations found in Shīʿī tradition. They are a *muḥaddith* (a person who converses with angels), a Prophet (*nabī*), a Messenger (*rasūl*), and an Imām.[103] The lowest station is that of a *muḥaddith* and the highest being that of an Imām. To concisely explain the order from the most basic up – a *muḥaddith* does not always need to be a Prophet, as in the case of Mary who was able to converse with the angels, but was not a Prophet.[104] The second station is that of a *nabī*, who is one that experiences divine guidance in his dream, is given divine news in his soul and hears the voice of the angel of revelation, but does not see the angel. This type of Prophet does not necessarily have a responsibility to go to the people and share his experience. A *rasūl* on the other hand is a higher type of Prophet who is given the burdens of a message by God to deliver to the people. He experiences all that a normal Prophet may, but also sees the angel, such as Gabriel.

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[101] Ibn Maghāzalī, *Manāqib*, c.f. Shirāzī. N.M, *Payām Qurʾān*, Dar al-kutb al-islāmiyya, (Qum, 1997), II, 33.
[102] Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Dār iḥyāʾ al-tirāth al-ʿarabī, (1995/1415 AH), IV, 43.
[103] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:2:139.
[104] Qurʾān 19:17-2.1

These are Prophets who are Messengers and were sent to nations, be they smaller nations such as in the case of Jonah or larger ones such as in the case of Lot. The final station would be that of an Imām. In the case of Abraham, he is described as an Imām. An Imām would be from among the Messengers and therefore by definition a Prophet, though not all Messengers are Imāms. Lot was a Messenger, having been sent to a group of people, however, his Imām was Abraham, because only one Imām can exist in any given time.[105] The Shīʿī opinion therefore is that not all Prophets from Abraham's progeny were Imāms as described by al-Rāzī, but through traditions on the authority of the *sixth* Imām, the number of these Messenger-Prophets, who were also Imāms numbered five and are referred to as *ūlū al-ʿazm.*[106] They are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. The evolution of Abraham sheds light on the various stations he transcended. He was primarily an *ʿabd* (servant)[107] of God. He then became a Prophet, further evolving to become a Messenger, before being chosen as a *khalīl* (friend of God) and finally being bestowed upon with the divine station of Imāmat.[108]

With the station of Imāmat being the final and most complete position, the successors to Muḥammad, as Imāms or divine guides, would have inherited the complete dimensions of Muḥammad's power, despite not possessing prophecy or any of the previous stations, such as Messengership. Muḥammad as the final Prophet meant that any successor would need to be an extension of his ministry, but exempt from prophecy. To explain this position, the famous narration known as *Manzilah* quotes Muḥammad as making a comparison between him and ʿAlī to that of Moses and Aaron: "You (ʿAlī) are to me in the same position as Aaron was to Moses, but there will not be after me a Prophet".[109] Incidentally, the position of ʿAlī to Muḥammad is a unique one not held by any other. It is a two-fold relationship. The first is that ʿAlī was part of the *ahl al-bayt*, and what the Quʾrān also defines as *dhiʾl-qurbā* (kinsmen) or *qurbā*. In relation to *dhiʾl-qurbā/qurbā*, the Quʾrān states: "*Those who are bound by blood are*

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[105] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:2:139.
[106] *Ibid.* 139.
[107] The title of ʿ*Abd Allāh* (servant of God), is used for Muḥammad, and has in the Qurʾān been used for Jesus (19:30).
[108] *Ibid.* 139.
[109] Muslim. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Dār al-Fikr, (Beirut, 1981/1401 AH), VII, 120.

nearer to one another in the Book of God than the believers and the emigrants".[110] The second is that he was married to his daughter. In an outstanding depiction of ʿAlī as son-inlaw, Hazleton (1945-) captures the subtleties of Arab culture by describing this unique relationship in the following light:

> In a society where to give was more honorable than to receive, the man who gave his daughter's hand bestowed the higher honor. While Abu Bakr and Omar honored Muhammad by marrying their daughters to him, he did not return the honor but chose Ali instead…the new couple would follow the example of his own marriage to Khadija and be monogamous. Ali and Fatima, he seemed to be saying, would be the new Muhammad and Khadija, and would have the sons Muhammad and Khadija never had.[111]

In seventh century Arab society, blood-relations (*nasab*) and marriage alliance (*muṣāhara*) were indicators of how favorable an individual was in the eyes of the bestower. Here it is evident, that there was no one more favorable to Muḥammad than ʿAlī.

It is not difficult to appreciate why the *ahl al-bayt* of Muḥammad have been compared to the *ahl al-bayt* of Abraham in the Qurʾān. In both cases, the families of these two Prophets gain superiority through ties of kinship, however this privilege comes with a heavy burden. It is to behave as an example for others to follow, to guide the faithful in both good times, and in times of tribulation. The burden is not a light one and as part of this mammoth responsibility, the Qurʾān secures a lofty position for the *ahl al-bayt* with Muḥammad being asked to proclaim by God: "[…] Say: 'I do not ask you any recompense for it (prophecy), but love for my family (*qurbā*)[…]".[112] ʿAlī's position as patriarch of the family after the death of Muḥammad also meant that he would exercise considerable power whether as the caliph or a subject of the realm.

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[110] Qurʾān 33:6
[111] Hazleton. L. *After the Prophet, The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split*, Anchor Books, (New York, 2010), 37.
[112] Qurʾān 42:23.

To navigate back to our earlier discussion, having previously looked at the verse of when Abraham is made an Imām, a second verse just as important in describing the functions of Imāmat reads: "*And We made them Imāms who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms, and Us (alone) did they serve*".[113] Finally, an Imām can be a righteous, divinely appointed guide, or he can also be an instrument of misguidance.[114] Both types exist as mentioned in the Qur'ān, however the Qur'ān warns the faithful to choose carefully between the two, cautioning that on the *day of reckoning*, the faithful will be assigned with their chosen Imām: "*(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imām; then whoever is given his book in his right hand, these shall read their book; and they shall not be dealt with a whit unjustly*".[115] Al-Kulaynī narrates a tradition as a commentary on the above verse that puts emphasis as to who the Imāms are and the importance of choosing the right Imām. Within Shī'ī thought, the Imām can only be from the family of Muḥammad *(ahl al-bayt)* and a descendant of his daughter Fāṭimah. This will be discussed in detail in the proceeding chapters.

> People asked the Prophet, "Are you not the Imām of all the people?" The Prophet replied, "I am the Prophet of God to all of the people, but after me there will be Imāms from my family *(ahl al-bayt)* for the people. They will rise among the people but they be rejected. The leaders of the unbelievers and misguided and their followers will do injustice upon them. Those who support, love, follow, and acknowledge their authority, are from me, they are with me and will meet me. People must know that whoever will do injustice to the Imāms and reject them is not from me and is not with me. I denounce them and I have no association with them".[116]

3.2.2 Second Meaning

Following on from the first meaning, the second meaning is a pathway, in so much as the Imām is a guide to either the divine path or a path to the hellfire. A pathway here denotes a set

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[113] Qur'ān 21:73.
[114] Qur'ān 28:41.
[115] Qur'ān 17:71.
[116] Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kafi*, I:25:183.

of actions or a path that takes the believer to the goal set for them by God. A pathway can therefore be a door (*bāb*), or it can be the bridge (*ṣirāt*) as mentioned in the Qur'ān.

In Islām's daily canonical prayers it states: 'guide us on the straight path (*ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*)'. In a commentary on the *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, the *sixth* Imām states: "The *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* is *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* 'Alī".[117] A similar tradition supported by a chain of transmission going back to 'Alī reads: "I am the *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* of God and its most firm link[...]",[118] with the *fourth* Imām, saying: "We are *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* and the treasure trove of its knowledge".[119] In a final tradition referenced to Muḥammad, it mentions: "O' 'Ālī! On the Day of Judgement, I, you and Gabriel will be sitting on the *ṣirāt* and no one will be able to cross it but those who profess to your *wilāyah* (love and Imāmat)".[120]

The importance of these traditions are that they explain, two elements of the *ṣirāt* – The first is as an actual path taking the believer towards heaven, with the condition of safe passage being the belief in the *wilāyah* of 'Alī, with the esoteric interpretation that the *ṣirāt* are the Imāms.

An Imām is also a gate or door. The famous prophetic tradition about 'Alī states: "I (Muḥammad) am the city of knowledge (*madīnatu'l-'ilm*) and 'Alī is its gate (*bāb*)".[121] In another version of the same tradition it says: "I am the house of wisdom and 'Alī is its door (*dār*)".[122] 'Alī in the given context, as the door or gate to Muḥammad, opens up to a number of interpretations, be they esoteric or apparent. What both types conclude on is that 'Alī is an integral part of the prophetic ministry of Muḥammad, similar to a door to a house or gate to a city, in both cases, the entry point is either a door or gate.

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[117] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, Markaz taḥaqīqāt dār al-Ḥadith, (Qum, 2006/1427 AH), VI, 249.
[118] *Ibid.* 248.
[119] *Ibid.* 248.
[120] *Ibid.* 250.
[121] Mīlanī. S.A, *Ana madīnatu'l 'ilm wa 'alīun bābuhā'*, Nashr al-Ḥaqā'iq, (Qum, 2013/1434 AH), 1.
[122] Amir-Moezzi. M.A., *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam, Beliefs and Practices*, I.B,Tauris Publishers, (london, 2011), 324.

3.2.3 Third Meaning

Two verses in the Qur'ān define the Imām as a book; the first describing the book of Moses as an Imām and mercy[123] and the second verse explaining that the records of all of creation have been placed in a clear book (*Imām mubīn*), with the term for book being an Imām.[124] The Torah and similarly the Qur'ān as a book revealed upon Muḥammad is also an Imām. Amir-Moezzi describes in depth the embodied Imām as the speaking Qur'ān (*Qur'ān nātiq*) and the Qur'ān as the silent Qur'ān (*Qur'ān ṣāmit*) or silent Imām, both with a responsibility to guide the faithful to the path of God; Amir-Moezzi writes:

> Without the initiatory teachings of the imam, the profound meaning of Revelation would remain unfathomed, just as a text interpreted in a letter but not in spirit would remain forever poorly understood. This is why the Qur'ān is called the mute, Silent Book or Guide (*imām ṣāmit*), whereas the Imam is said to be the speaking Qur'ān (*qur'ān nāṭiq).[125]*

In reference to the clear Imām (*Imām mubīn*), it is not merely a tablet or book, but according to Shī'ī esoteric tradition, its manifestation can be witnessed in the person of 'Alī.[126] The living Imām is the embodiment of the Qur'ān, the word of God and the enactment of the divine will. As the Qur'ān contains the divine secrets of creation and the created realms, so does the Imām in his essential being.[127] The function of the Imām is to initiate the elite from amongst the believers (*mutaqīn*) into the esoteric dimensions of the divine book, in the way that the prophetic mission was to bring forth to the people the word of God.[128] Thus the prophetic responsibility in relation to the divine word is general, whereas the Imām has a specific function in initiating the elite from the believers into the hidden aspects of the divine word. The *ta'wīl* (interpretation) of the Qur'ān in Shī'ī thought becomes the responsibility of

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[123] Qur'ān 11:17.
[124] *Ibid.* 36:12.
[125] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam, Beliefs and Practices*, 248.
[126] Ṣafavī, S.S, *Danish-nameh mu'asir qur'ān karīm*, 304.
[127] This will be further explored in the section of ibn 'Arabī.
[128] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam, Beliefs and Practices*, 248-249.

the Imām in the absence of the Prophet. The literal meaning of *ta'wīl* is in fact to return a thing to its origin, or in the case of its theological meaning, would be to return creation back to its archetypical reality, which is at union with the divine.[129] The Imām therefore in interpreting the Qur'ān, is in fact initiating the *mutaqīn* to 'return' back to the origin from where the divine word was uttered. Thus the circle of creation comes to completion. The Qur'ān descends (*tanzīl*) from the origin to the heart of Muḥammad,[130] and returns back to its origin through the grace and initiation of the Imām.

The word Imām therefore consists of multifaceted dimensions, ranging from its etymological meaning, to that of its Qur'ānic usage, Shī'ī theology cushions on both these dimensions and expands its meaning further by concluding that an Imām should be perceived in the context of the successor to the Prophet. In the way that a Prophet is divinely chosen to guide people back to God, so is the Imām, with the various definitions and usages of the word Imām found in the Qur'ān forming the mystical properties of the Imām. He is the book through which the faithful are guided and the bridge that leads the faithful to heaven. He is also a physical guide and God's successor on earth.

3.3 Defining Imāmat

Imāmat in Shī'ī Islām equates to divine leadership on earth and is an extension of prophecy. It therefore appears in the study of Shī'ī theology and is a concrete requirement of faith, similar to prophecy. This does not mean that an Imām is a Prophet, but what it signifies is that the Imām is a divinely appointed guide, consisting of the same social and spiritual functions as a Prophet may have over a community.[131] In Sunnī Islām, leadership comes under *furu' al-*

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[129] *Ibid.* 247-248.
[130] "And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, Upon your heart that may be of the warners", Qur'ān 26:192-194.
[131] It is worth mentioning that there are four main responsibilities of an Imām according to early traditions found mostly in al-Kāfī. In wanting to better understand the function of the Imām in Shī'ī thought, it is also worth briefly discussing the insertion of false traditions, known as *Isrā'iliyyat* (Traditions originating from foreign scriptures, although mainly from Jewish sources), which are ambiguous interpretations as well as influences of Greek philosophy on early Muslims in the absence of an accepted Imām for all, whose key function would have been to safeguard the faith from corruption and adulteration.
The first responsibility of the Imām is to explain the Qur'ān and provide for the faithful its commentary, highlighting both the exoteric and esoteric secrets found in it. The second most important responsibility is to explain both individual and collective responsibilities legislated by God for the faithful. In addition, the Imām is

the interpreter of divine law and resolves questions of how *sharīʻah* should be interpreted. It is therefore unjust according to Shīʻī tradition, that God would hold the faithful accountable if there was no Imām to teach them about God and His requirements for the faithful, (Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 141). The third responsibility is to answer questions brought by non-Muslims. For this reason, an Imām with a broad understanding of the rational sciences and of comparative religions is necessary. This type of quality has only been highlighted in Islamic literature for 'Alī and then specific members of the twelve Imāms. The most famous from among the Imāms after 'Alī is the *eighth* Imām, ʿAlī b. Mūsa' al-Riḍā (d. 819) whose inter-religious dialogue and debates have been well documented in al-Sadūq's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.

Focusing on the succession to Muḥammad, in the book *Kashf al-yaqīn* (The book is about virtues of 'Alī and is authored by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥasan bin Yūsuf al-Ḥillī (d. 1325), also known as *'Allamah al-Ḥillī*), a detailed discourse is captured when a group of rabbis come to 'Umar (d. 644) during his caliphate, searching for answers. When he is unable to satisfy them, a lengthy dialogue takes place between 'Alī and the rabbis, (The whole discussion can be found online on the following link; https://www.imamreza.net/old/eng/imamreza.php?id=12426). For the purposes of our discussion, I will quote only a very small passage from the lengthy tradition:

> 'Alī hurriedly went to the mosque. Seeing that 'Alī was coming, 'Umar hastily welcomed and kissed him, saying: O Abū al-Ḥasan! It is only you who can solve the problems. I seek refuge in you in this relation. You are an asset for Islām and the only one on whom we set our hope when an emergency arises!

Anyway, 'Alī expressed his readiness for answering the questions, saying: Ask me about anything you wish, for the Messenger of God opened a thousand gates of knowledge to me and opened a thousand other gates from each gate. I assure you that you will receive your answers.

But there is one condition which you have to observe. The Rabbis said: What is that condition? 'Alī said: If I answer your questions as mentioned in the Torah, will you convert to Islām and believe in the Messenger of God? They said: Yes, we accept this condition.

The fourth quality is an ability to protect the teachings of Islām from corruption and misinterpretation. The *sixth* Imām has been quoted as saying:

> The earth has never been left without an Imām so that if the faithful add anything (to *sharīʻah*) it is brought back (to its original form) and if they reduce anything it is completed for them, (Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:5:142).

In another tradition worth mentioning, this time by the *fifth* Imām, it is stated:

> I swear by God, God has not from the day Adam died, left the earth without an Imām who could serve as the source of guidance for the people towards God. He is the divine authority over the servants of the Lord. The earth will never be left without an Imām with divine authority over God's servants, (*Ibid*. 43).

From this tradition, it is clear that Imāmat is not a mere political position, but it represents the divine will and authority of God on earth. It is similar to a prophetic position, in that it represents divine leadership. As previously discussed, the station of Imāmat was also held by select Prophets who had preceded Muḥammad. Muḥammad himself was an Imām and so too are his twelve successors.

If these four responsibilities were important in a leader to hold the fledgling community together, what transpired after Muḥammad was very different. Huge disagreements on the interpretation of the Qur'ān began, creating a void that with the passing of time only deepened. This was coupled with opposing edicts on *sharīʻah* and on differing understandings of the *sunnah* (prophetic traditions) to the extent that certain edicts to this day have polar opposite rulings depending on the school of law, (There have been schools of both thought and law that emerged and were followed but today have become extinct. Examples of is the *Ẓāhirī* school in Andalusia that Ibn 'Arabī belonged to, or had at least for part of his life followed).

In time there has been an acceptance that many so-called prophetic traditions had come into the body of Islamic literature which were not from the teachings of Muḥammad. The science of *Rijāl* grew around the notion that not every tradition or narrator was authentic. Certain additions and subtractions in the formative years were politically motivated. Later insertions by early converts to Islām from their previous faith traditions lead to chapters in Islamic texts being written in highlighting these external influences. Those traditions deemed as having Judeo-Christian influences came under a chapter referred to as *Isrā'iliyyat*. It was characterized as so, after early converts from Judaism and Christianity had brought over their traditions into the corpus of *ḥadīth* literature. One such prominent convert whose conversion took place in the caliphate of 'Umar, was Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 652-6), a Rabbi from the Yemenite Jewish tribe of *Dhī Ra'yīn*. Whereas Islām accepted Judaism and Christianity as divine religions from an authentic source, not all interpretations of Judaic-Christian texts tallied with Islamic belief.

A final point which should be mentioned is the influence of various philosophical schools in the time of the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258). Much of the discussions found in early Islamic theology, from free-will and predestination, to the nature of God and existence, found their roots in Greek and Persian philosophy. With no official refutation or acceptance of what was being presented, this meant that at least doctrinally, there was no immediate consensus on what was right to believe and what not to believe, (Historically each caliph reigned with his own influences and understandings of Islām, for instance al-Ma'mūn (d. 833) was perceived as holding *Mu'tazilah* beliefs, whereas later caliphs adopted the *Ash'arī* school as their formal school of belief in the caliphate). Between the Mu'tazilah and Ash'arī schools, there were extremes in opinion, ranging from the nature of God to the creation or eternal nature of the Qur'ān. Both schools have been accepted as loosely under the umbrella of Sunnī Islām. Where Shī'ism differed was that with the existence of an Imām, a unified theological narrative eventually prevailed. The need in Shī'ism for a unifying Imām was necessary due to the religious, social and political climate that had developed in the first two centuries. The idea that one could be a citizen of the State under the patronage of the caliph, but still follow a divinely-appointed Imām started to develop as the need for guidance became more important in times of confusion. This is witnessed especially in the foundational years of Sufism, with early figures such as Ibāhīm al Adham (d. 777), Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 850) and Bāyazīd Basṭāmī (d. 874) embarking on spiritual training from the *sixth* Imām as an example, (Nasr. S.H, *Sufi Essays*, 114). With the later development of Ṣūfī lineages, not only did many Shī'ī Imāms feature in them, but the transfer of *wilāyah* from one master to another was very similar in style to the way Imāmat was transferred.

In the Shī'ī school, the Imām is a *ḥujjah*, or proof of God on earth, whose existence is mandatory in every time so that the *halal* (that which is permissible by God) and the *haram* (that which is prohibited by God) are known, and to invite people to the path of God, (Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:5:142). In a well-known tradition found in both Shī'ī and Sunnī literature, on the belief and recognition of the Imām, it states: "Whoever dies without knowing the Imām of their time, dies the death of *jāhilīyyah* (ignorance)", (Al-Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, (Bierut, 1401 AH/1981), VI, 22. Similar traditions are found in both *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* and *Musnad Aḥmad*). Therefore the question of authority is not just a political or jurisprudential one, as to die in a state of *jāhilīyyah* would imply dying in a state devoid of Islām. Thus, the question is doctrinal. In the time of the Abbasids, the idea of the caliph being the shadow of God on earth developed to satisfy such traditions. A similar parallel can be found in medieval Europe, with the notion of the 'Divine Right of Kings'. No different to this notion, many caliphs believed they had a divine right to rule. In fact, some of the discussions in the Umayyad period (661-750) pertaining to predestination were motivated by the court of the caliph to justify the position of the caliph.

In summary, there was an obvious need for an Imām after the death of Muḥammad, and in what followed, political leaders became claimants to the Imāmat. A fundamental problem came in that not all were practicing and many were tyrannical. It was after all, Yazīd I (d. 683) who had sent an army to kill the grandson of Muḥammad. Later persecution of the family of Muḥammad in the time of the Abbasid caliphs also emphasizes this. Not all who became leaders of the Muslim community had the given qualities to be able to fulfill what may be perceived as sacred responsibilities, in part, expected from at the least the Shī'ī community. Furthermore, from what can be inferred when reading Ibn 'Arabī, is that these four major responsibilities, are not mandated as a duty upon the Perfect Human, in as much as they are to the Imām. What therefore becomes apparent is that the Imām has a responsibility not confined only to spiritual guidance, and it is at this juncture that it can be concluded that the Imām has an extra dimension not immediately found in Akbarian literature pertaining to the Perfect Human.

dīn (branches of religion/jurisprudence),[132] commonly referred to as *sharī'ah*.[133] Whereas leadership in the Shī'ī school is part of the tenets of faith, in the Sunnī schools, it appears as part of jurisprudence. It is no surprise therefore that both schools interpret the notion of Imām differently as their understanding of the term comes from different Islamic sciences.

For Sunnī Muslims, an Imām is a social figure, who may also contain a political element depending on the need of the society he lives in. 'Alā' al-Dīn Qushchī (d.1474) commentating on the classical text *Tajrīd*, writes that Imāmat in Sunnī Islam is: "Social and political leadership in the affairs of religion (*dīn*)[134] and worldly matters (*dunyā*) as the successor to the Prophet".[135] To further explain the definition given; *Imāmat in Sunnī Islām is a political responsibility, encompassing social governance and therefore an Imām would be in practical terms the leader of an Islamic government*. An Imām could be either chosen by the people, appointed by a predecessor or elected by a body of elders as has historically been witnessed from the time of the first appointment in Islām to appointment processes found in Sunnī majority countries today.[136] The final method by which an Imām can come into power is through armed uprising as witnessed in the second century of Islām with the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty by the Abbasids. This in itself is sufficient in demonstrating that the Imām is not infallible or chosen directly by God, as is the criteria in Shī'ī Islam. Al-Mufīd defines the Shī'ī Imām as: "[…]the successors to the Prophets in administering Islamic law, prescribing legal punishments, protecting the *sharī'ah* and seeing to spiritual/moral training of people and are infallible (from sin and mistake) in the same way as the divine prophets were".[137]

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[132] *Sharī'ah* equates to the science of jurisprudence in Islām and therefore has no direct impact on the articles of faith.

[133] *Sharī'ah* in its classical format is a system of law consisting of primarily two aspects; communal/individual relationships, and worship. It therefore ranges from guidance in business transaction or etiquettes of interacting in a family, as examples of the former, to ritual practices, such as canonical prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage, as examples of the latter. The term Imām appears in both aspects of *sharī'ah* within Sunnī jurisprudence, from a leader in a community to leading prayers. What is not addressed in the corpus of *sharī'ah* literature, are articles of faith, theology, reasoning and what it is to be Muslim.

[134] In the context of legislating *sharī'ah*.

[135] Qushchī. A, *Sharḥ tajrīd al-'aqā'id li naṣīr al-millat wa al-dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭusī*, Intishārāt Bīdār, (Qum, 1999), 472.

[136] Each of these processes have been witnessed in the first two centuries of Islām.

[137] Mufīd. M.M.N, *Awā'il al-maqālāt*, Maktabat al-Dāwarī, (2002, n.p.), 74.

The most important condition in Shīʿī theology for an Imām is being divinely chosen.[138] This means that Imāmat is not merely a political post, but the Imām is a divine guide through whom the will of God is enacted. This results in the Imāmat much like prophecy, as an article of faith. After Muḥammad established an Islamic government in Medina, his role as the Imām of the community was:

> Receiving and explaining *waḥī*, commentating on the Qurʾān, teaching the laws of God (*sharīʿah*), educating and spiritually training the masses, practically implementing all the duties needed to lead an Islamic community, resolving personal and communal problems of the people, arbitrating amongst the people, judging where judgment is needed, implementing the law, heading the judiciary, balancing peace and war and being responsible for the economic/ commercial affairs of the community.[139]

Muḥammad Saʿīdī Mehr presents a comprehensive definition of Shīʿī Imāmat:

> Imāmat is a divinely appointed position as the successor to the Prophet, in religious and non-religious affairs of the Islamic nation. The Imām is a person who is infallible, and whose knowledge is divine, bestowed by God, and it is through God and his prophet that he (Imām to be) becomes an Imām and he is introduced to the people as the Imām informing them of his duties as encompassing all that of the Prophet (but that he does not receive revelation).[140]

Before beginning the next chapter, it is worth summarising that two concepts were addressed in the current chapter; the first being the term *shīʿa* and the other being that of Imām, and including what Imāmat may have meant in early Shīʿism. Without this foundational chapter, it would be difficult to capture whether what ibn ʿArabī expresses in his writings is indicative of his *tashayyuʿ* and whether if at all, the Imām and the Perfect Human tally in terms of a

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[138] *Ibid.* II, 20.
[139] Mehr. M.S, *Āmūzish kalām islāmī*, Kitāb Ṭāhā, (Tehran, 2002), II, 131.
[140] *Ibid.* II, 135.

singular concept, which when placed in theological language appears similar to the notion of the Imām and when reduced to mystical philosophy shows itself as the Perfect Human. For this reason, the next chapter entitled 'Theologizing Imāmat" is of significant importance in examining what an Imām represented in early theological discourse.

Chapter 4. Theologizing Imāmat

When reading Islamic theology as it evolved in the first century, it is evident that divergence between Shī'a and Sunnī interpretations of Islām began at the point of succession to Muḥammad. As our existing discussion pertains to Shī'ī Imāmology, I believe it is crucial to summarize what belief in Imāmat entailed. Key to the discussion is a principle accepted by both Shī'ī and Mu'tazilah[141] theologians, referred to as the 'Principle of Divine Grace' (*Qā'dah lutf*). In short, what this means in Islamic theology is that divine grace is an act of God through which the faithful servant is brought closer to the obedience of God and begins to move away from disobedience. The act does not consist of force, but is a grace, which allows for the faithful an opportunity to either take the grace offered or reject it. The Imām is regarded as the most important divine grace, allowing the faithful who follow the Imām to come closer to the obedience of God and if followed correctly, to gain divine union. This chapter, entitled 'Theologizing Imāmat' will look at three important themes. The first will be 'divine grace' and its two types. The second will look at the 'esoteric Imām', which in short means the Imām as a manifestation of the divine will and a locus for manifestation of the divine names and attributes. The final section, under the heading the 'exoteric Imām', will look at the functions of the Imām, which in its basic form is to interpret the Qur'ān and *sharīah*.

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[141] With an absence of centralized religious and spiritual authority, a number of theological schools appeared in the Formative years of Sunnī intellectual development. One such school was the Mu'tazilah. Founded in the 8th century, it was described as the rationalist school of Islamic theology and adherents of the school, were initially regarded as the sole *mutakallimūn* (expounders of *'ilm kalām*) in the Islamic world. The *muḥaddithūn* (*ḥadīth* scholars), such as al-Shāfi 'ī (d. 820), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 795), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 778) stood for the prohibition of *'ilm al-kalām,* Akhtar. S.W, *The Early Imāmiyyah Shi'ite Thinkers*, 102. These scholars were not small personalities either, but the first three were founders of schools of law in the Sunnī tradition. The development of theology has been put down to the emergence of Greek philosophy in court life during early Abbasid period. The school became the official theological interpretation of dogma in the early part of Abbasid rule. The school's founder is commonly considered to be Wāṣil ibn 'Atā' (d. 748). Theology developed as a result of polemics in the Islamic world. The 'first schism' if it can be described as such, was in relation to the position of he who has committed a major sin, in that is he still a believer or has he become a non-believer. Wāṣil ibn 'Atā' took an intermediary position to the traditional position of the sinner remaining a believer. For this he became known as 'the one who has withdrawn from us' (*i'tizala 'annā*). It was from the term *i'tizala* that Mu'tazilah developed from.

4.1 Divine Grace

Divine grace is of two types – the first type is referred to as *lutf muḥsil* where as a result of divine grace, the faithful willingly acts. This action which has taken place as a result of divine grace is either one that is in obedience to God, or one that protects the faithful from disobeying God.[142]

The second type is known as *lutf maqarib*, which means an act of God (through divine grace) that paves the way for obedience to take place. Therefore it can be considered as a foundational action that lays the ground for obedience to God or refraining from disobedience.[143] What it does not do is curtail free-will. The Imām is a divine grace that is both *muḥsil* and *maqarib.*

Divine grace traditionally has been interpreted by Shī‘ī and Mu'tazilah thinkers as an obligation and a moral responsibility upon God. Due to God's complete free-will and omnipotence, we can reasonably assume that He is not obliged to fulfill an action, and so the question arises as to how it is possible for God to be obliged. In answering the question, it is worth noting that as God is the source of morality and righteousness, these traits would be core to how He manifested His actions in creation. His goodness is essential and being the source of all goodness, there is no contradiction in His actions, thus making it an 'obligation' for Him to show divine grace and provide human beings a template of how goodness and morality should be. If there was a contradiction between the divine nature and how it manifests in creation, God would not then be the source of goodness, rather a source of contradiction and confusion for the faithful. Just as the sun is a source of light and by extension gives light, God is the source of goodness and therefore gives goodness. Religion therefore provides moral structures, ethical principles and a code of conduct as to how to behave on earth. This would come under virtuous living and as God is the source of virtue, He would take it upon Himself to show examples of these virtues. In fact it is the Imām that manifests the innate virtues of God in creation, as he is the divine guide and yardstick for

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[142] Mehr. M.S, *Āmūzish Kalām Islāmī*, Kitāb Ṭāhā, (Tehran, 2002), II, 137.
[143] *Ibid.* 137.

human perfection. Innate morality would also pertain back to the divine disposition. As the human *fitrah*[144] (innate nature) is from the divine disposition, so too are morality and virtue. Morality and virtue as universals are key components found in the *fitrah*. Taking this into consideration, it is moral and ontologically necessary for there to be divine grace present. The Imām is the pinnacle of this divine grace.

The Ashʿarī[145] school denies the concept of divine grace and innate morality. They are of the belief that good and bad are legal and jurisprudential. A thing (*shay'*) is good because God has legislated it and bad because it has been legislated so. The idea that it is innate is not considered a viable one for the Ashʿarī school. Therefore, as per their argument, human-beings cannot innately comprehend moral good or bad, but that it is told to them through revelation. The Shīʿī school would argue for example, that wrong is wrong and innate in human beings. It does not require divine law to conclude on that which is good and bad, or right and wrong. Morality is not merely legal, for example lying is not immoral because divine law says it is, but lying is immoral because it is inherently so. Lying is not just a vice for Muslims, or those adhering to the Abrahamic faiths, but is considered a vice across all societies. Had morality been only legal and had no inherent dimension, it would be near impossible for there to be any universal understanding of right and wrong, virtue or vice. The purpose of the Imām is to take human beings back to the way of the innate disposition, as it contains the divine disposition. Through returning back, the faithful comes to understand the most perfect way of living and

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[144] *Fitrah* is the innate nature or original disposition that human beings were created upon. It is essentially the spiritual substance that was present when human beings were conceived by God. As the Qur'ān 30:30 equates the *fitrah* back to the *fitrah* of God, virtues and attributes of God are mirrored in human beings too. For this reason morality as argued in Shīʿī Islām has traditionally been considered as innate. According to al-Mufīd, a key characteristic of the *fitrah* is the ability to comprehend the oneness/ unity of God. Al-Mufīd cushions his argument on a tradition by the *sixth* Imām which says: "God has created men with a disposition towards accepting the unity of God", but continues to argue: "yet this does not imply that He willed them to accept His unity, because, then the whole of mankind would be monotheists […]". In light of this, the tradition: "every infant is born according to the *fitrah*, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian", can be interpreted, in that every child is born with the comprehension of the unity of God at its core. Judaism, Christianity or Islām are similar to the clothes one wears, but the body or core remains the same. In this case, the core is a human's disposition in accepting the unity of God, al-Mufīd, *The Emendation of a Shīʿite Creed*, WOFIS, (Tehran, 2006), 40.

[145] The Ashʿarī school was founded by Abū al-Ḥasan Ashʿarī (d. 936) and replaced the Mu'tazilah as the leading Sunnī school of theology in the Abbasid period. It came be witnessed as 'Sunnī orthodoxy' due to its influence in court. This was later replaced by the Māturīdī school with the emergence of the Ottoman and Mughal Empires. In modern times, the school most followed in Sunnī Islām would be the Māturīdī school.

behaving on earth. The nature of the Imām is that he is a 'proof' (ḥujjah) of God upon creation and not just upon Muslims. This is where universal truths, objective virtue, certainty of knowledge and structures are important.[146] The Imām speaks to the *fitrah*, and as the *fitrah* is what gives human beings their humanity, these core principles must be universal.

To summarize our discourse so far, Shī'a dogma dictates the need for divine grace. Part of this divine grace is the appointment of an Imām. The Imām through divine grace becomes the grace of God on earth. This grace is also part of divine goodness and of virtuous overflow. The Imām as a result of divine grace, guides the faithful in understanding the realities of creation, attain certainty and comprehend the immaterial dimension of creation. He is the complete representative of God, His proof (ḥujjah) and complete manifestation in the world of being ('*ālam kawn*). In brief, the Shī'ī argument alludes that God would never leave humankind without some form of guidance or direction, nor would God leave humankind without a catalyst to do good and understand goodness. It is a moral responsibility on God to guide His creation to that which is best for them. For this purpose an Imām has been chosen to guide the faithful.

4.2 The Esoteric Imām

Divine grace facilitates human beings to either do good or to understand good. For this reason, Shī'ī and Mu'tazilah thinkers have upheld the concept that morality and immorality are innate in all human beings. There is an objective reality and therefore objective morality and virtue transcends humanity. This is part of what is meant by the 'image of God'.[147] As God is both

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[146] It can be argued that there must be something preexisting and inherent in human beings for them to quantify truth and reality. Shi'ī philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā have argued that there is an objective reality, as without it there would be no certainty in knowledge. Without certainty, knowledge would be difficult to obtain, as patterns found in the empirical world would not exist due to a lack of certain truths. Science would not be able to find inductive patterns and philosophers would not be able to sum up deductive theories. The material world is not in chaos, but consists of order, and even if existence is regarded as being in flux, there is an order and pattern to the flux. This order is certain and through certainty, there are natural laws which are certain too. Scientific truths are based on certainty, which have been derived through empirical methods. In the same vain, rational and essential truths are based on certainty, which in this case is based on an objective reality that governs all of creation, be it the physical world or immaterial being. Part of these essential truths are virtues, goodness and differentiating between that which is good and that which is evil.

[147] The term 'image of God' (*imago dei*) is a doctrine found in Judaism, Christianity and Islām. The term 'image of God' finds its roots in the Book of Genesis, but also has reference to it made in the New Testament. Ibn 'Arabī

transcendental and immaterial in nature, being free from the limitations of matter, the 'image of God' that man is created in, is not a physical image. In fact what the image of God represents are the characteristics and names of God through which God is understood. Humankind too have the potential to actualize and manifest all of the names and qualities of God, because they are created in His image.[148] There are multiple traditions from the Imāms that negate God having a body (*jism*), form (*ṣūra*), or being subject to time (*zamān*) and place (*makān*). He is devoid of movement (*ḥaraka*) and at the same time is not stationary (*sukūn*). God is therefore completely immaterial, but in light of the famous tradition of the hidden treasure,[149] loved to be known and so showed Himself to creation through a series of emanations. He gave Himself names and attributes so that He maybe recognized. Part of these names pertain back to the divine essence (*dhāt*), whilst others represent His actions (*fiʻl*). To understand a thing is to be able to grasp something of its essential qualities. The ninety-nine

in explaining the famous prophetic tradition, 'God created Adam in His own image', goes into similar discussions which are found in rabbinic *Midrash* and the teachings of Aquinas (d. 1274).

[148] There has been much debate over centuries in Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah as to the nature of becoming 'God-like'. The general premise found in the *Zohār* is that human beings share the same essence as God. Similar parallels can be found in the school of Ibn 'Arabī and the theory of *waḥadat al-wujūd* (unity of being) or predating Ibn 'Arabī, the school of Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and his discussion on *nūr* (light). It needs to be mentioned that although Ibn 'Arabī never used the term *waḥadat al-wujūd*, it was from his works, that the idea was extracted. It later became a foundational doctrine in the Sadran school. In brief, the concept is that as there is no reality save God, the source of existence and the giver of existence to other than It, creation therefore shares in the same existence emanating from God. Whereas existents (*muwjūdat*) may be multiple, existence provided is the same. If light from the sun is considered light, so too is light radiating from a candle. The only difference is in its intensities. Both forms of light, regardless of their intensity would be considered light. The same applies to existence. Despite God being the source of existence and creation receiving from His existence, existence still remains existence, despite the disparity in its intensities. Light within Suhrawardī's philosophy holds the same principle. The only difference is that existence has been substituted to light. Using the notion of light would not be uncommon. Light is perceived as the substance which brings into apparency that which is hidden, or if we were to take the analogy of existence, until light does not make a thing apparent, it is not existing for us. Light also is a source of guidance. There is no real difference between the usage of the term light in Suhrawardī's philosophy and the Kabbalah. Thus it is improbable to infer that there may have been cross-pollination of ideas. Suhrawardī's philosophy is also very scriptural, in that the Qur'ān mentions the concept of being taken out of darkness and into light (2:255) or that God is the light of the heavens and the earth (24:35). In fact there is a whole chapter in the Qur'ān entitled 'Light', which give greater awareness to the term when used in prophetic traditions, especially those discussing the *nūr Muḥammadī* (Muḥammadan light) as a primordial light or the spark which caused creation. In these particular philosophies, as the premise is that there is a unity in existence or light, mystical union with God therefore is really a movement back to the origin of creation.

[149] The tradition of the hidden treasure (*kanz mukhfīyā*) is regarded as a *ḥadīth qudsī* (sacred *ḥadīth*), which is the word of God but other than the Qur'ān. This tradition seems to appear mostly in *ṣufī* texts from the 5th/12th century onwards. It begins as a reply to a question posed to God by David, asking what the purpose of creation was. Ibn 'Arabī also alludes to this tradition in the first chapter of his *fuṣūṣ*. Further reference and citations of this tradition can be found in the *mathnawī* of Rūmī (d. 1273), *ṭabaqāt al-ṣufīyya* by 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 1088) and al-*insān al-kāmil* by Nasafī.

names or a thousand and one names of God which are found in the majestic prayer referred to as *Jawshan al-Kabīr*[150] are in reality virtues and descriptions of God. It is through these names of virtue that God is understood. As humanity contains these very virtues, human beings are therefore created in the image of God.[151] When humankind truly understands and actualizes the names found deep in their immaterial selves, is when they are able to gain union with God. This union also comes with the enlightenment of the intellect in actualizing the realities of creation and the illumination of the heart, which is the source of divine grace and the locus of overflow of divine love. Human beings become mirrors through which the divine names are manifested in creation. They become the actualized form of the image of God on earth. Thus even though ethics, morality and virtue are inherent in human beings, through divine grace, a Prophet or an Imām is appointed to provide guidance as to how best to balance and unearth the multiple divine names required to attain human perfection. The idea of 'balance' implies that an imbalance of a virtue may actually lead to it becoming a vice. If a person is overly courageous, it would lead to foolhardiness and therefore counterproductive. In the same way, if love becomes egotistical or a preventative from justice taking place, this too could be perceived as a vice. The most important virtue in Islamic ethics, similar in many ways as found in Aristotelian ethics, is justice. Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) in his famous *al-Tahdhīb*[152] writes: "*The truly just man is he who harmonizes all his faculties, activities, and states in such a way that none exceeds the others*". He later goes on to state: "*And justice, being a mean between extremes and a disposition by which one is able to restore both excess and deficiency to a mean, becomes the most perfect of virtues and the one which is nearest to unity*".[153] Through justice, all other virtues are in balance. The quintessential Imām is one who establishes truth and justice.[154] These two virtues are the balance for all the other virtues. As

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[150] *Jawshan al-Kabīr* is a famous Muslim prayer, traditionally recited on the nights of *Qadr*, which are the odd nights of the last ten days in the month of Ramadān. It was revealed for Muḥammad as a protection. The word *jawshan* literally means a coat of armor. It consists of a hundred parts. The prayer has been narrated on the authority of the *fourth* Imām, 'Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn. The prayer became widely known around the 15th century, as part of a common prayer book known as *Al-Balad al-amīn*, compiled by Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī al-Kaf'amī (d. 1499).

[151] This will be looked upon in depth in the section of Ibn 'Arabī.

[152] *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* is the first major Islamic work in the field of ethics.

[153] Miskawayh, trans. Zurayk. C.K. *The Refinement of Character (Tahdhīb al-akhlāq)*, Great Books of the Islamic World, Inc (Chicago, 2002), 100.

[154] In Islamic tradition, the Mahdī is primarily meant to establish truth and justice on earth in fulfilling the promise of God. As both the psalms and Qur'ān speak of the righteous eventually inheriting the earth, the

he is in balance himself, so too do those following him attain balance. When enough people come into balance, the world outside of the individual slowly moves towards balance through justice being actualized. The purpose of the Mahdī is very much this.

Divine guides come with a divine map to be able to steer the faithful in the direction of God. The existence of an Imām in all times is both a divine grace and a moral duty that God has taken upon Himself to fulfill.[155] The Imām as the actualized manifestation of the divine names and characteristics becomes a medium through which God is realized. In a tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām, he is quoted as saying: "We, I swear by God, are the most beautiful names of God (*asmā' al-ḥusnā*) without which God does not accept any of the good deeds of His servants unless they know us properly".[156] The Imām is therefore a divine name, or in fact a vessel that contains all the divine names. The perfect human which in this case is the Imām, becomes an actualization of the divine names. Thus as the Imām is a place of manifestation, he becomes a vehicle through which God is actualized in creation. Two important traditions, one from the *fifth* Imām and the second from the *sixth* Imām unceasingly expresses this. The *fifth* Imām states: "We are the *wajh Allāh* (face of God), that moves among you on earth. We are the *'ayn Allāh* (eye of God) in His creation. We are His *yad* (hand) that are open with blessings for His servants…".[157] The Qur'ān mentions[158] that everything will perish but the face of God, but those who follow the teachings of the Imām will be saved from destruction, as the Imām represents the face of God. The second tradition, which is on the authority of the *sixth* Imām is slightly lengthier, but concisely encapsulates the esoteric function of the Imām in creation:

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inheritance of the righteous is truth and justice, Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* Dār al- Ḥadīth,(Qum, 1427 AH/2006), I, 378.
[155] Interesting to note, as will be discussed in the chapter of Ibn 'Arabī is that Ibn 'Arabī upholds the very same principles in his cosmology with regards to the divine names in creation. For Ibn 'Arabī, the created world is the actualization of the divine names. Human beings too, primordial house the complete spectrum of divine names, which are infinite in nature, symbolizing the infinite nature of God.
[156] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:23:113.
[157] *Ibid.* 113.
[158] Qur'ān, 28:88.

God created us and made it well. He gave us our form and formed it well. He made us His eye among His servants and His open hand over His servants with kindness and mercy. He has made us His face through which He is approached and His door that shows the way leading to Him. He made us His treasurers in the heavens and upon earth. Through us the trees give fruit and the fruits ripen and canals flow. Through us the skies send rain and plants grow on earth. Through our worship God is worshipped and were we not there, God would not have been worshipped.[159]

4.3 The Exoteric Imām

As God has also sent a *sharī'ah*, the right implementation and interpretation of it would necessitate that a divine guide be present to allow for this process to run smoothly. The *sharī'ah* at best cannot always be rationalized.[160] It is a set of divine laws that the faithful must live by. For example, there is no certain reason that can be rationalized as to why a faithful should pray five times a day and not two. The faithful prays five times a day because it has been ordained so. Therefore the intellect may serve a function in terms of understanding and appreciating virtue, ethics, morality, the realities of creations, or the perennial questions in life, however, it will not always lead a person to understand the rationale behind certain *sharī'ah* rulings. For this purpose, and the purpose of preventing extreme interpretations, a divine guide, through divine appointment is chosen to guide the faithful.

Before summing up the argument, it is important to note that *sharī'ah* is an exoteric medium which takes a faithful through the pathway of obedience towards the divine. Therefore *sharī'ah* itself is a divine grace, through which the right foundations are laid for spiritual and intellectual perfection. It is a tool, but one which has been made obligatory upon the faithful to follow. As *sharī'ah* is a divine grace, the need to deliver and understand *sharī'ah* would also

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[159] *Ibid.* 113-114.
[160] The apparent purpose of *sharī'ah* is two-fold – attaining a greater degree of God-consciousness and maintaining personal and social integrity. *Sharī'ah* is roughly two dimensional, consisting of *'ubūdiyyah* (which are effectively ritual practices) and principles of social engagement, such as marriage to business transactions. Whereas ritual practices are fixed and the principles which govern them ridged, principles of social engagement are more fluid and for certain schools of jurisprudence, open to reinterpretation and contextualization. The study of the aims, purpose, and reasoning of *sharī'ah* is referred to as *maqāṣid sharī'ah*.

be incumbent upon God to fulfill through divine grace. For this purpose, He has appointed divine guides. It would not make sense in Shīʿī theology for an Imām to be man-made. Theologically it can be argued that the survival and continuation of Islām and its principles are based upon a worthy successor to the Prophet. Therefore, a lack of divine appointment would be against the very principles of divine grace. The message of the Prophet was not only multilayered but consisted of both universal and subtle messaging, which only he who had been fully trained by the Prophet could understand. For Shīʿī Muslims, that person was ʿAlī. The following quoted passages on the virtues of ʿAlī will be taken from Sunnī sources.

The Prophet has been reported to have said to his daughter Fāṭimah: "I gave you in marriage to the best in my *Ummah*, the most knowledgeable of them, the best in patience of them, and the first Muslim among them[161]". Ibn ʿAbbas, a cousin and well-respected companion of Muḥammad, famous for his knowledge in Islām has been quoted as saying: "My knowledge and that of all of the companions of the Prophet in front of ʿAlī is like a drop in front of seven rivers".[162]

Similarly from the first and second caliphs:

> Abū Bakr said: "May God never put me in a situation where I can not have access to Abū al-Ḥasan (ʿAlī) to solve a problem."[…] ʿUmar Ibn al-Khattab used to beg God to preserve him from a perplexing case which Abū al-Ḥasan was not present to decide." Furthermore ʿUmar said: "If there was not ʿAlī, ʿUmar would have perished".[163]

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[161] Hindi. M, *Kanz al-ʿummāl fī sunnan al-aqwāl wa al-afāl*, Muʾassasat al-Risala, (Bierut, 1409 AH/1988), VI, 398.
[162] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, Intishārāt ʿAllāmah, (Qum, 1379 AH/1959), I, 310.
[163] Ḥanbal. A, *Fadhāʾil al-Ṣaḥāba*, Jāmʿa Um al-Qurā, (Cairo, 1403 AH/ 1983), II, 647.

The wife of Muḥammad, 'Ā'isha (d. 678) who in the caliphate of 'Alī would come to fight him[164] has been quoted as saying: "'Alī is the most knowledgeable person with respect to the Sunnah (of the Prophet)".[165]

The reason for selecting these traditions is because they are either on the authority of those who may have been perceived historically as opponents of 'Alī, or those who had preceded him to the caliphate. It also further highlights the superiority of 'Alī in knowledge, which would be a necessary tool if correct religious guidance is to be administered. Two important religious qualities needed by an Imām are being the most knowledgeable in knowing and applying the Sunnah, and the most knowledgeable in understanding the Qur'ān. There is no doubt from the traditions looked at that aside from 'Alī there was no one else who had both of these qualities.

Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 653) has been referenced as saying: "The Holy Qur'an has outward and inward meanings, and 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib has the knowledge of both".[166]

A final tradition to conclude on what has been discussed in this section is on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, where he quotes Muḥammad as saying:

> If a person becomes the caliph of the Muslims, and there is another who is more
> knowledgeable (in the book and traditions of God), then that person (caliph) has been
> treacherous to God, His Prophet, and all the Muslims.[167]

In this subchapter entitled the exoteric Imām, knowledge of the Qur'ān and *sharī'ah* to the extent of being the most knowledgeable, have been highlighted as key qualities of a divine

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[164] The Battle of the Camel (656/ 36AH).
[165] https://www.docdroid.net/ETzoWxd/tareekh-ul-khulafa-by-imam-suyuti.pdf Suyūṭī, *Tārikh al-Khulafā',* 175.
[166] http://www.archive.org/stream/hilyah/hilyah01 Al-Isfahānī, Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliyā' wa Tabaqāt al-Asfiyā*, I, 65.
[167] Hindi. M, *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunnan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afāl*, Mu'assasat al-Risala, (Beirut, 1409 AH/1988), XVI, 88.

guide. This complements the subchapter on the esoteric Imām, who in a nutshell is the divine presence in creation and the manifestation of the divine names and attributes. The esoteric and the exoteric nature of the Imām pertains back to divine grace. It is divine grace which distinguishes the Perfect Human, as will be discussed further in the second section of this thesis. The estoric Imām holds relevance in our comparison with the Perfect Human, as the divine subtleties manifested in the Imām, his primordial nature and his representation of divine qualities in human form, are major ingredients in understanding the Perfect Human. In relation to the exoteric Imām, indeed it is the Perfect Human who has the ability to interpret *sharī'ah*, whilst providing religious guidance to those who may seek it. Important to note is that the subchapter on the exoteric Imām was consciously focused upon 'Alī to reflect Ibn 'Arabī's own focus on the spiritual excellence of 'Alī as it appears in *al-Futūḥāt*. The position of 'Alī, as described by Ibn 'Arabī at this stage of Islamic intellectual thought is not found beyond Shī'ī theology to such a degree.[168] In continuing with the comparison, the next chapter will look at responsibilities of an Imām, before delving into the conditions of an Imām in both Sunnī and Shī'ī tradition.

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[168] Refer to Chapter 18, 'Ibn 'Arabī and the Family of Muḥammad'.

Chapter 5. Conditions for an Imām in Classical Sunnī Thought[169]

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight that the discussion on Imāmat was not just limited to the early Shī'ī community, but that comprehensive thought had been given to the theme in Sunnī theological circles. What is clear is that unlike in the Shī'ī school of thought, there are no fixed conditions or criteria for the appointment of an Imām. What is present is a general consensus on core principles, followed by more fluid requirements in determining the position of an Imām, which for the better part of Islamic history has remained theoretical, as opposed to having been practically implemented. These principles and requirements are not doctrinal but appear under chapters pertaining to law and jurisprudence. This is partially due to the fact that leadership was not regarded as doctrinal in the classical period. As previously discussed, leadership in the Sunnī school comes under the *furu' al-dīn,* as opposed to being part of the *uṣūl al-dīn.* The *uṣūl al-dīn* constitutes a set of doctrinal beliefs separate from legal rulings that comprises the *sharī'ah.* Although discussions on Islamic leadership had started soon after the death of Muḥammad,[170] formalization of the chapter on Imāmat was to take another century. It

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[169] All references used in this section will be from Sunnī sources.

[170] Soon after the death of Muḥammad, an assembly of the *Anṣār* (literally meaning 'the Helpers', were a group of local inhabitants of Medina, who had opened their homes to those who had migrated with Muḥammad to Medina. The migrants accompanying Muḥammad were referred to as the *Muhājirūn* and were mainly from the tribe of *Quraysh,* the mother tribe that Muḥammad belonged to) gathered at *Saqīfat Banī Sā'ida,* which was a building used by the *Banū Sā'ida* (a prominent clan belonging to the *Banū Khazraj,* a tribe of Medina) in Medina to discuss succession. This gathering was conducted independently of the *Muhājirūn* and it was only when 'Umar had found out about this gathering; did he then take Abū Bakr and Abū 'Ubayda bin al-Jarrāḥ to confront the *Anṣār.* It was in this gathering that Abū Bakr stated: 'O group of *Anṣār,* every virtue you mention of yourselves you are worthy of, yet the Arabs will not recognize the rule of anyone but this tribe of *Quraysh [...]*'. The Anṣār then suggested for there to be two chiefs, one for the Anṣār and another for the *Muhājirūn.* It is then 'Umar pushed for the oath of allegiance to be given to Abū Bakr by first swearing allegiance himself and then forcing others to do the same.   Madelung mentions that this account, meaning the account of what took place in the succession process, was initially narrated by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (a cousin of Muḥammad) who quoted 'Umar as he gave his account of what took place during the period of his caliphate. Every other historical narrative that followed was a variant of this initial account. The account presented is from Madelung quoting 'Abd Allāh bin al-'Abbās. The oath of allegiance sworn to Abū Bakr, according to the tradition of 'Abd Allāh bin al-'Abbās was merely a 'precipitated deal'. It is at this point that Sunnī and Shī'I thought diverge. The Shī'a upheld that

Muḥammad had appointed ʿAlī in his lifetime, whereas initially Sunnī thought believed that the appointment of Abū Bakr was a necessary yet pragmatic decision that had come out of the assembly. Its purpose was to keep the fledgling community from crumbling apart. Madelung gives an important critique of the events at *Saqīfah* as follows: "The idea of the caliphate, the succession of Muḥammad in all but his prophetic mission, had not yet been born. It is difficult to see how the *Anṣār*, meeting alone among themselves, could have aspired to it […] expecting the political community founded by Muḥammad to fall apart, they met to restore their control over the city. This is why they met without consulting the *Muhājirūn*. They assumed that these, having no longer any good reason to remain in Medina, would return home to Mekka". This is why he believes that a suggestion for two chiefs was made, as opposed to a devious plot to split the community as portrayed in later tradition. The *Anṣār* effectively wanted to take control of their city from potential fragmentation. They were also happy with the *Muhājirūn* having their own leader. This does not reflect the view that the *Anṣār* wanted to take control of the Islamic community. It was Abū Bakr and ʿUmar who introduced a succession plan that would encompass all of the Arabs. As no other prominent members of the *Muhājirūn* were present, apart from the three mentioned, it can be reasonably assumed that the process of succession was not completely democratic and for this reason Madelung argues that ʿUmar called the appointment a 'precipitated deal', as it was the best outcome in the given circumstance, Madelung. W, *The succession to Muḥammad*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1997), 28-32. An important observation is that this incident took place completely independently of the clan of Muḥammad and his family. A major decision such as the succession to Muḥammad would presumably have required the participation of his clan, family and the rest of the *Muhājirūn* to give the appointment validity. It in fact took place as ʿAlī was giving the final burial rites to his Prophet. The appointment may have been pragmatic, but it was not decisive. Not all the *Anṣār* swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, nor did they all accept the decision made for them. As the situation became more heated and with some swearing allegiance to Abū Bakr, al-Ṭabarī mentions: 'The *Anṣār* said, or some of them said, "We will not give the oath of allegiance (to anyone) except ʿAlī"', al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* IX, translated & annotated by I.K. Poonawala, SUNY Press, (New York, 1990), 186. What further made matters contentious was the use of violence, firstly against Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda, leader of the Khazrajī tribe as per the account of ʿAbd Allāh bin al-ʿAbbās, but more importantly surrounding the house of Fāṭimah by armed men, and threatening to burn the house down when ʿAlī refused to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr, al-Ṭabarī (1990), *Ibid.* 187. What can reasonably be assumed, is that the appointment of Abū Bakr was a political appointment as opposed to one deeply rooted in religious reasoning. The main argument put forward in accordance with the account of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās was that the Arabs would not recognize a leader, but from the Quraysh. This criterion in later discussions on Imāmat becomes a key condition in the appointment of an Imām. Ironically, what is not mentioned in the tradition narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās is the prophetic tradition regarding the twelve leaders, all of whom are from the Quraysh.

The position of ʿAlī became both central in the direction of the community and the legitimacy of the caliphate. Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) a revered Andalusian Sunnī scholar of the *Ẓāhirī* school writes in his book *al-Maḥilī*: "and curse be upon any assembly that gathers without ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, where the companions (of Muḥammad) are present", Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Maḥilī,* Dār al-Fikr, (Bierut) p.345. Why this statement may be important, is that Ibn Ḥazm was an extremely influential scholar of the *Ẓāhirī* school to which a century later, Ibn ʿArabī would be born into. The primacy of ʿAlī over other companions would therefore have been an accepted belief in Andalusia. At the least, this indicates that not all Sunnī scholars denied the superiority of ʿAlī to other companions. The final point which is needed to be made is that there continued to be ill feeling between ʿAlī towards the first two Caliphs, which was exacerbated after the sudden death of Fāṭimah. Those who accepted the authority and superiority of ʿAlī could have been forgiven for being the Shīʿa of ʿAlī. Those who perhaps followed Caliphs other than ʿAlī would not have upheld the belief that ʿAlī was superior. A tradition by ʿAlī narrated in al-Muslim states: "By being in the presence of ʿUmar I felt disgusted", *Ṣaḥih al-Muslim,* Dār al-Fikr, (Beirut, 1401 AH/1981), V, 154. A more explicit tradition is found in the same book, but on page 152, under the title *Bāb al-Hukm al-Fay*, where a three-way conversation between ʿAlī, ʿAbbās (d. 652) and ʿUmar takes place. In the latter part of the conversation, ʿUmar says to ʿAlī that he ʿAlī had regarded Abū Bakr as "a liar, sinner, insidious, traitor […]" and that he regarded ʿUmar the same. If this was the belief of ʿAlī as narrated in a book regarded as authentic by Sunnī Orthodoxy, then it is reasonable to infer that those who believed in the superiority and leadership of ʿAlī would have been at least in belief Shīʿi, if not in jurisprudence.

gained momentum in the time of the Abbasids, who became patrons of intellectual and philosophical endeavor across the Islamic world.[171] The three most important and authoritative classical scholars, acclaimed for having contributed to the discussion on Imāmat and the development of Sunnī political theory are Abū Bakr Bāqillānī (d. 1013), al-Mārwardī (d. 1058) and al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390).[172] This is not to say that the subject had not been addressed prior to them, but that these three thinkers were able to concisely capture discourse that had previously existed. As an example of an early theologian who had touched upon Imāmat was the acclaimed theologian, Qāḍī Jurgānī (d. 1001) who stated: "The first condition for a ruler (*Ḥākim)* is that he must be learned (*'ālim*) and a jurist (*mujtahid*) in the principles of faith (*uṣūl*) [173] and *sharī'ah* (*furu')*[174] rulings, so that he can execute religious rulings".[175] Why this quote is extremely significant is that later Sunnī thinkers removed the condition of expertise in the tenets of belief as an overarching principle, but remained firm in the ruler possessing knowledge of *sharī'ah*. This may have been contributed by the fact that early Abbasid caliphs differed in their theological beliefs. The quote also indicates the need for knowledge and to be knowledgeable. In this section, we will briefly summarize the Imāmat theories of the three Sunnī theologians mentioned, with the intention of gaining an understanding of classical Sunnī thought on the subject. We will then conclude on why there may have been subtle differences expressed by these three authorities.

The first classical theologian in order is Abū Bakr Bāqillānī, a merited Ash'arī theologian from the classical period, who was given such titles as *Shaykh al-Sunnah* (Authority of the Prophetic Way), and *Lisān al-Ummah* (the Mouthpiece of the Community).[176] He mentions

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[171] It was under their patronage that Greek and Persian philosophers were translated into Arabic, discussed and commentated upon.

[172] Though al-Taftāzānī came after Ibn 'Arabī, he was instrumental in gathering together the various discussions on Imāmat that had preceded him. As a theologian, his principles and contributions became the most important in determining the criteria for leadership of the Islamic world. As was the tradition of classical scholars, they would commentate on the works of their predecessors and more importantly compile those works so that theologians after them would have an easy point of reference.

[173] The term is short for *uṣūl al-dīn,* which implies the tenets of belief.

[174] *Furu'* is short of *furu' dīn,* which entails *sharī'ah*, meaning the legal and jurisprudential parts of the religion.

[175] Jurjānī. A, *Sharḥ al-Muwāqif*, Maṭb'ah al-Sa'ādah, (Cairo, 1907), VIII, 349.

[176] https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-islamica/al-baqillani-abu-bakr-COM_00000068?s.num=71&s.start=60

three main conditions for an Imām. The primary condition is that an Imām must be from the tribe of Quraysh. Secondly that he must be knowledgeable (to the extent of a *Qāḍī*). [177] Thirdly that he should exercise understanding in how to lead a community and its defense (military insight).

Next is al-Mārwardī, a Shāfi'ī jurist, famed for having played a vital role in developing Sunnī political theory on the nature of the authority of the Imām. He gives seven conditions for an Imām. These conditions are justice, knowledge to the level of *ijtihād*, his senses should be in working order, the body and its parts should be working (not disabled), insight, bravery and being from the tribe of Quraysh.

The third classical theologian who builds on the political theories of Sunnī theologians before him is al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390),[178] who was a Persian polymath and commentator of the Qur'ān. He gave nine conditions that an Imām must possess, whilst analyzing traditions from the early period of Islām. He concluded that the Imām must be an adult, just, free (and not a slave), male, at the level of *ijtihād*, courageous, insightful, an orator and from the tribe of Quraysh.

In his commentary of *A'qāid al-nasafī*, al-Taftāzānī mentions a prophetic tradition as an explanation to al-Nasafī's (d. 1142) statement: "The *Khalifate* was for thirty years and then after it [the form of rule was that of] a kingdom (*mulk*) and a principality (*imāra*)".[179] The prophetic tradition is as follows, "After me there will be for thirty years a *Khalifate*, then it will become a tyrannical kingdom".[180]

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[177] A Qadhī would be at the level of *ijtihād*, which means would have the ability to interpret the *sharī'ah* directly from the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions. This would include both jurisprudence and law.

[178] Even though Taftāzānī came a century after ibn 'Arabī, his analysis of the two hundred years of intellectual endeavor prior to ibn 'Arabī on the topic of Islamic leadership is extremely important. Taftāzānī is able to summarize and in many ways codify much of the work on this topic preceding him. He therefore comes to represent the third of the great theologians who had contributed to the discussion on Islamic leadership in the classical period.

[179] Taftāzānī. S, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī,* Columbia University Press, (New York, 1950), 144.

[180] *Ibid.* 144.

Whereas authorities such as al-Nasafī and Al-Taftāzānī recognized that after 'Alī, what developed was a kingdom, they still upheld the need for there to be an Imām and a responsibility to know the Imām of their time. Al-Nasafī continues the discussion by writing:

> The Muslims must have an Imam, who will carry out the administration of their decisions, the maintaining of their restrictive ordinances, the guarding of their frontiers, the equipping of their armies, the receiving of their alms, the subjugation of those who get the upper hand and robbers and highwaymen, the performance of worship on Fridays and Festivals, the settlement of disputes which take place among creatures, the receiving of evidence based on legal rights, the giving in marriage of the young men and maidens who have no guardians, and the division of the (war) booty.[181]

As there was no practical solution on how to choose an Imām, despite theoretical conditions having been mentioned as to what qualities were required of the Imām, the masses continued to follow their rulers, even if it meant the ruler not tallying with the theoretical conditions given. Fully cognizant of the forceful nature of the Abbasid Caliphs to remain in power, this may be why al-Nasafī concedes: "The Imām is not to be removed for evil-doing or tyranny".[182]

Before concluding this chapter, an important question arises and that is why was there subtle differences in the criteria chosen for the Imām. There are three main reasons why this may have been the case.

The first is simply a belief that Muḥammad had not left a system of appointment for after his death. For this reason, scholars were extracting from tradition what they thought were principles and criteria that may be useful in determining an Imām. Without clear guidance on the subject, contradictions were bound to occur. One such contradiction is marrying the

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[181] *Ibid.* 145 (passage translated by Earl Edgar Elder).
[182] *Ibid.* 150.

condition of being just to not removing an evil-doer or tyrant, albeit this may well have been a pragmatic move to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the writer whilst writing under the rule of a 'tyrannical' caliph. Finally, if the ideal condition was that of the first thirty years, implying the first four caliphs, nearly all who proceeded them did not meet the threshold set. If a condition was *ijtihād*, as an example, none of the Umayyads or the Abbasids would have met that criterion. What was in theory a set of conditions drafted by Sunnī theologians required for an Imām, in practice were never met. Thus Imāmat would not be perceived as anything more than legal necessity in Sunnī Islām.

The purpose of this chapter in relation to our argument as a whole, is to identify conditions of leadership in Sunnī thought, knowing that Ibn 'Arabī has traditionally been recognised as a product of the Sunnī School of thought. By looking at conditions of an Imām, it may be possible to extrapolate that Ibn 'Arabī was in fact influenced by Sunnī theological discourse on leadership. From the discussion in this chapter, ideas surrounding Imāmat in Sunni thought are too generic, with a lack of focus on the esoteric dimensions for any detailed conclusions to be reached. In the next chapter, conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī thought will be discussed.

Chapter 6. Conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī Thought

From our existing discussion, it is apparent that the station of Imāmat in Shī'ī thought is a foundational component of Shī'ī dogma. This chapter will be looking at four general qualifications required for an Imām. These are *'iṣma* (infallibility), *'ilm ladunī* (divinely inspired knowledge), spiritual superiority, and *naṣ* (divine appointment). As by in large early discussions on the Imām pre-Mufīd are not well structured, I have thematically organized key components on Imāmat found in early Shī'ī literature such as *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*. I have then tallied my findings from the period of the first eleven Imāms, with research on the same topic by Shī'ī theologians, such as al-Mufīd, and concluded on the contemporary Shī'ī Iranian theologian, Mehr, which I believe would allow for a vigorous analysis of early Shī'ī literature and how this understanding has remained largely consistent since the beginning of the major occultation. In this section, I will be examining each of these four general qualifications after a brief paragraph contextualizing the discussion and then looking at the inherited nature of knowledge separately from *'ilm ladunī* (divinely-inspired knowledge), before starting the discourse on the four general qualifications.[183]

The most important qualification from the four, is that the station of Imāmat is through *naṣ* meaning that it is divinely ordained (*mansūs min Allāh*). A sign of being divinely ordained is that of infallibility from violating the divine laws and committing moral indecency, as the one who represents God on earth must show the qualities of God to the people as a sign that he is from God. Even though the four qualifications go hand in hand, the first two need to be present for a divine guide to reflect the divine nature of God in creation. The other two qualifications, namely *'ilm ladunī* and spiritual superiority are directly necessary to fulfill the

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[183] In *ḥadīth* literature, there is also sections on the signs of recognizing an Imām. I believe our existing discussion will be sufficient in grasping an understanding of Imāmat without adding an extra section on recognizing the Imām. I will briefly summarize two traditions that should suffice.

responsibilities that come with the position of Imāmat. Responsibilities of an Imām are that he is protector of *sharīʿah* from corruption and misinterpretation. He must also be able to answer any religious question posed to him. Both of these responsibilities point to some form of divine ordination (*naṣ*). As difficult a task protecting the *sharīʿah* may be, being able to answer any question put forward may require some divine assistance. Thus the most important tool the Imām must possess is a comprehensive knowledge of affairs pertaining to both the physical and immaterial world, or at least have access to divine knowledge to assist in this. It is also an important qualification for an Imām to have such knowledge and it is through this qualification that the superiority of the Imām is generally recognized.

Two types of knowledge appear in the traditions compiled by al-Kulaynī – knowledge inherited from the Prophets and *ʿilm ladunī*. The knowledge of the Prophets from Adam in accordance to the traditions mentioned in *al-Kāfī* are inherited by succeeding Prophets.[184] In the case of Muḥammad, this prophetic knowledge was inherited by ʿAlī. Al-Kulaynī brings forth a number of interesting traditions to emphasis this point. On the position of ʿAlī, he mentions a tradition with a chain of narrators reaching the *sixth* Imām, in which it says: "*InʿAlī, there is the Sunnah (tradition) of a thousand Prophets. The knowledge that came with Adam was not taken away. No man of knowledge ever died along with their knowledge. Knowledge is inherited*".[185]

A clearer but lengthier tradition, this time on the authority of the *fifth* Imām concludes when the Imām says: "*everyone, listen to what he just said. God opens the ears of whomever He wants. I said to him that God combined for Muḥammad, the knowledge of the prophets and he*

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[184] There are numerous traditions in al-Kāfī, particularly found in section four of *Kitāb al-ḥujjah*, which pertains to the knowledge of the Imām. This knowledge has three main parts to it. As well as describing knowledge as inheritance and knowledge which is divinely inspired, it also addresses knowledge through the interpretation of the Qurʾān. A further element to the knowledge of the Imām is his ability to know the actions and deeds of the people. In explaining chapter 9, verse 105 of the Qurʾān, "*and say (Prophet), Take action! God will see your actions – as will His Messenger and the believers – and then you will be returned to Him who who's what is seen and seen, and He will tell you what you have been doing*" two traditions are cited on the authority of the *sixth* Imām which read "*It is the deeds of all the virtuous and the evildoing servants that are presented every morning and evening (before the Prophet)*", is what is meant by God sees your actions – as will His Messenger. The Imām further elaborates by defining 'the believers' as the Imāms who will also see the actions and deeds of the virtuous and evildoing servants, al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:9:186.
[185] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:32:189.

combined all of it and transferred it to Amīr al-Muʾminīn (ʿAlī) [...].[186] ʿAlī is thus regarded as inheritor of prophetic knowledge. A final tradition I would like to quote on the inherited nature of knowledge is on the authority of the *fifth* Imām again. This tradition is important on two accounts - firstly in its universal aspect, that Islām is very much engrained in the Abrahamic tradition, and secondarily, that Islām and by its very nature, its Prophet and his successors are also inheritors of the biblical tradition.[187] The *ḥadīth* reads:

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[186] *Ibid*. 190.

[187] It is also worth noting a tradition from the *sixth* Imām, which interestingly uses the analogy of David and Solomon, kings of Israel to Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Though the outward meaning of the tradition refers to inherited knowledge, the inner meaning, it can be argued, also consists of material inheritance due to the very nature of the comparison made to two kings. The possibility of a dual meaning is likely as Islām would also recognize these two kings as Prophets and as the tradition itself does not specify what the inheritance is, it can be read in its complete format. The *ḥadīth* reads, "*Solomon inherited from David. Muḥammad inherited from Solomon and we (Imāms) inherited from Muḥammad. We have the knowledge of the Torah, and the Gospel, the Pslams, and the explanation of what the tablets contained*" (*ibid*. p.191). Though in order of succession, there were multiple Prophets who came in between Solomon and Muḥammad, I believe this comparison was made for a number of reasons. In its more apparent sense, the Imām is not just a spiritual leader, but also as God's vicegerent, is a social and political leader, and as the successor to Muḥammad, would also inherit governance over *dar al-Islām* (the Islamic territories). Thus the Imām has a mandate to govern in the way demonstrated by Solomon and later Muḥammad. By delving deeper into the tradition, there is a relationship between Solomon, the Torah, the Tablet and the Pslams. I would infer that this is a subtle reference to the Temple of Solomon and all that it contained. The Imām is not only the inheritor, but also the successor to the realities and secrets surrounding the Temple of Solomon. As the inheritor to the Prophets, it is the Imām who is the keeper of the prophetic relics including the content of the Ark of the Covenant. Time and again, Shīʿī literature is found to present quotes on the authority of the Imāms, who in turn quote Muḥammad describing ʿAlī as the Aaron of the *Ummah*. The famous *ḥadīth al-manzilah*, found in both Sunnī and Shīʿī traditions, describes the position of Muḥammad and ʿAlī to that of Moses and Aaron. ʿAlī Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. 919) in his *Tafsīr al-Qummī* on a number of occasions, describes the Bani Isrāil when mentioned in the Qurʾān, as code for the state of the Shīʿa, especially in the era of occultation. This is significant as al-Qummī contributed to traditions found in *al-Kāfī* and was himself a contemporary of the eleventh Imām. Therefore the analogy given in the tradition quoted above (in relation to David and Solomon) is not solely in relation to spiritual or temporal power, but it is as such encompassing of messianic undertones. Thus the use of the term 'Gospel' in the tradition above, on a esoteric level is very much symbolic of Jesus and his position as the Messiah. A profound comparison to the family of Muḥammad is found on the authority of ʿAlī, referenced in Sunnī texts, such as Ibn abī Shaybah, *al-Kitāb al-Muṣnaf fī al-Aḥadīth wa al-āthār*, Maktab al-Irshād, (Riyadh, 1408 AH/1987), VI, 372, where Muḥammad is quoted as saying that the example of the *ahl al-bayt*, is the example of '*bāb al-ḥiṭah*'. In the Islamic tradition, *bāb al-ḥiṭah*, is referred to as *bāb al-ḥiṭah banī Isrāil*, as it represents the main doors, the twelve tribes would enter the promised land through. In fact, after forty years, and under the leadership of Joshua, did the children of Israel succeed in entering Jerusalem. It was then when the Qurʾān says that the children of Israel were asked to give thanks and repent before entering into Jerusalem. The placer where they entered through or the twelve doors/gates that were later constructed is what is referred to here as *bāb al-ḥiṭah*. This is very symbolic, in so much as to emphasis that the promise of God can only be achieved through the *ahl al-bayt*. The Imāms by association have always been the Imāms from the *ahl al-bayt* and leaders of the *ahl al-bayt* or in turn the patriarch of the family of Muḥammad. To find examples comparing the Imāms or *ahl al-bayt* to the promised land, the children of Israel and their struggles in the *ḥadīth* literature is very symbolic. It promotes the Imām as the fulfillment of God's promise, the savior of God's people and the door to salvation. Examined in light of the tradition pertaining to Solomon mentioned above, the Imāms enshrine the mystical and hidden nature of prophecy. Above all, when reading traditions which compare the Imāms to stories, events, or Prophets of Israel, it should be read as fully saturated in symbolism. If

The first successor and executor of the will on earth was 'Ḥibatu Allāh' (gift from God –
Shīth), the son of Adam. No Prophet has ever left this world without first leaving behind one
who would execute his will. The Prophets were one hundred and twenty thousand persons.
Five of them were *'ulu al-Azm*, like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. 'Alī Ibn
Abī Ṭālib was the *'Ḥibatu Allāh'* (gift from God) for Muhammad. He inherited the knowledge
of the executors of the wills of the Prophets and the knowledge of those before him […].[188]

The reason why such knowledge is possessed by the Imām is that if an Imām is unable to
respond to a question posed to him, it would put his Imāmat in doubt. Al-Sadūq in chapter
sixty-five of his *Kitāb al-tawhīd* mentions a tradition by the *eighth* Imām in which he says to
one of his companions: "*O Nawfalī! Do you fear that they will defeat my arguments?*" To
which the reply is "*I have no worries about you*". Here the Imām is really asking the question
as to whether Nawfalī doubts in his divine nature, to which Nawfalī swiftly replies in the
negative. The tradition continues by the Imām saying, "*when he hears me argue with the
people of the Torah quoting their own Torah, with the people of the Gospel quoting their own
Gospel, with the people of the Psalms quoting their own Pslams, with the Sabians in their own
Hebrew language, with the Zoroastrian priest in their own Persian, with the Romans in their
own Latin [...]*".[189]

The Imām here demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of not just religions, but languages.
By such traditions being mentioned, it is suggestive of the perennial nature of Shī'ism. Not
only does it emphasis the Imām as inheritor of prophecy, but such traditions, when read in its
entirety, portrays Islām as a completion of the one truth as opposed to a negator of all that
which went before it. If we take the above-mentioned religions as divinely prescribed, then

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the Jewish nation is to be taken as code for the Shī'ī community, the domain and function of the Imām becomes
very much important in the foundations and later survival of Shī'ī Islām.
[188]Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:33:191.
[189]Al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, The Saviour Foundation – Jamkaran publication, (Qum, 2009), translated by Ali
Raza Rizvi, .818.

the Imām is an inheritor of all of these divinely prescribed religions. The Imām is in fact an 'inheritor' of a perennial wisdom that is rooted in the very core of the Adamic reality. The Adamic reality is a primordial reality and is the epicenter of humanity. It contains a single metaphysical truth through which both esoteric and exoteric knowledge flow from. As the intrinsic nature of the human being is based on the divine disposition, it can be argued that the 'inheritance' is the complete reality of existence found in the Adamic reality. The Qur'ān mentions *dīn al-qayim*[190] encapsulating this essential truth or Adamic reality. The *dīn al-qayim* is the original *dīn* (religion), which is part of the intrinsic natural of human beings and is found as core to all divinely revealed faiths. Perhaps for this reason it has been quoted in prophetic tradition that all newborns are born on Islām.[191] Here Islām representing the original *dīn* is in fact pure monotheism, and consists of submission to the primordial truth. In the mystical sense, Adam is the divine mirror reflecting the divine names and qualities of God. For this to happen, the 'inheritor' must be pure, with the 'mirror' of his heart being clean from any form of blemish and disfigurement. It is not just infallibility that keeps the mirror pure, but pedigree is also of importance. In the famous *ziārat al-wāritha* (which is read as an official greeting when visiting the grave of al-Ḥusayn), it begins by addressing the Imām with the words: "*Peace be upon you, O inheritor of Adam […] peace be upon you, O inheritor of Noah […] peace be upon you, O inheritor of Abraham […] peace be upon you, O inheritor of Moses […]*" and in this sequence continues to Jesus, Muḥammad, 'Alī, Khadijah and Fāṭimah. As part of the greetings, it states: "*I bear witness that you were from the sublime loins and purified wombs, the impurities of the age of ignorance could not tarnish you, nor could it dress you in filthy clothes […]*". This is indicative of the purity of the line of the Imām, be it maternal or paternal. The Prophet whilst talking. To 'Alī said:

> We were silhouettes of light until God wanted to create our form; He transformed us into a column of light and hurled us into Adam's loins; then He caused us to be transmitted through the loins of fathers and the wombs of mothers without our being touched by the filth of

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[190] Qur'ān, 30:30.
[191] Refer to the tradition "all newborns are born on the *fitrāh*, which is Islām, it is their parents who make them Jews, Christians or Sabians […]", *Ṣaḥih al-Muslim, Kitāb al-Qadar*, *ḥadīth* 4/ *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, Abwāb al-Qadar*, *ḥadīth* 3.

associationism or any adultery due to unbelief […] Thus, this light will be transmitted from Imām to Imām until the Day of Resurrection".[192]

The Imām inherits both physical purity as is expressed by the terms 'sublime loins' and 'purified wombs', as well as untarnished qualities maintained over time, indicated by the term, 'the impurities of the age of ignorance could not tarnish you […]'. The 'inheritance' of the Imām therefore is not limited to just knowledge, but also brings together purity of the being and soul. The body becomes a vessel through which light is transmitted until the last Imām. For the light to pass, requires both physical and spiritual purity. It couples with all those qualities that make for a Prophet of God, despite the Imām not being a Prophet. The discourse on knowledge would not be complete without a mention of the second type of knowledge. It will be presented in detail under the second of the four qualifications needed in an Imām, namely *ilm ladunī*. Before concluding this subchapter, it is worth emphasizing that the Imām is the inheritor of prophecy in its absolute nature. The *sixth* Imām emphasizes the physical inheritance when quoted as saying: "*In the legacy that the Prophet of God left were a sword, a coat of arms, a spear, a saddle and a grey mule. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib inherited all of them as his legacy*".[193] When explaining the relics of the Prophets, the Imām says: "*The tablets of Moses are with us. The staff of Moses is with us. We are the heirs of the Prophets*".[194] A final tradition is on the authority of Mufaḍal bin 'Umar (d. 148 AH/ 765),[195] which is extremely descriptive in forging the narrative that the Imām is the physical, as well as the spiritual inheritor of the Prophets.

> I heard Abū 'Abd Allāh (*sixth* Imām) say: "Do you know what the shirt of Joseph was?", I replied: "I do not know". The Imām said: "When the fire was set for Abraham, Gabriel brought him a dress from paradise and made him wear it. With that dress on him, nothing of the cold or heat could harm him. When Abraham was about to die, he placed it in a covering and affixed it upon Isaac who affixed it upon Jacob. When Joseph was born it was affixed upon him and he had it on his shoulder until the event of what happened to him. When Joseph took it out of its

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[192] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, 159.
[193] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī,* I:38:199.
[194] *Ibid.* 197.
[195] A prominent companion and student of the *sixth* Imām.

covering in Egypt, Jacob felt its fragrance as he said: 'I smell Joseph's scent. I hope that you will not accuse me of being senile' (Qur'ān 12:94). It was the same shirt that was sent from paradise". I then said: "May God keep my soul in service for your cause, to whom did that shirt go thereafter?". The Imām replied: "It went to its owner (Prophet). Every Prophet who inherited knowledge or other things, all ended in the possession of family of Muḥammad".[196]

It is important at this juncture to examine the four qualifications of an Imām, however I will conclude by summarizing the three traditions mentioned immediately before on the physical inheritance from a explanation by the *sixth* Imām that just as in the case of those who inherited the Ark of the Covenant, the Armaments of the Muḥammad hold the same precedence. In the case of the Israelites, whosoever possessed the Ark of the Covenant received prophecy. In the case after Muḥammad, whosoever possessed his armaments receives the Imāmat and was vested with knowledge.[197]

6.1 Infallibility (*'Iṣma*)

'Iṣma or infallibility as it is commonly translated to, is a doctrinal tenet upheld by the Shī'ī school for both Prophets and Imāms. Infallibility similar to both prophecy and Imāmat, is perceived as having come as a result of divine grace.[198] Just as guidance is paramount, so too is the guide needing to be free from error whilst delivering God's message to the people. The word *'iṣma* comes from the root *'a-ṣ-m,* which means abstinence or immunity.[199] In the given context, it is abstinence or immunity from sin. In fact it can be described as preventing oneself from sin,[200] which would indicate a form of free-will, as opposed to an inability to commit sin due to predestination. Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044) describes infallibility as: "*a deliberate abstinence from committing sins, because of divine benevolence bestowed upon one particular person*".[201] What this does not do is curtail the infallible's free-will. It does however give the

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[196] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī,* I:37:197-198.
[197] *Ibid.* 201-202.
[198] Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Rasā'il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā*, (n.d., n.p.), 326.
[199]Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, online resource.
[200] Dhikhudā, *Lughatnāmih*, online resource.
[201] Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Rasā'il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā*, 326.

infallible awareness and an understanding of the consequences of sin on the human soul. The Imām is also aware of the divine punishment awaiting someone who sins. Sin comes from a lack of goodness and as the Imām is a source of goodness in creation, it is against his innate nature to sin. Part of the effect of infallibility is a lack of desire or motivation to sin.[202] Furthermore, as divine punishment is also relative to the awareness and understanding of a sinner, thus sinning would put the Imām in an unprecedented position, because the Imām is a recipient of divine knowledge and understanding.[203] An example to best illustrate what this means is that of Satan. Despite the faithful regularly sinning and making mistakes, it took a sole act by Satan for him to become accursed. It can be argued that as a recipient of a form of divine grace, the consequences of one who knows is not the same as one who has incomplete knowledge.[204] Satan had witnessed the glories of God in the heavens and the earth and therefore his one action became his downfall. The Imām as a medium between the divine and creation is in a position far loftier and therefore anything less than being a divine medium would naturally bring dire consequences. Being a medium does allow the Imām to be constantly in union with the divine. The divine being the source of all goodness and the Imām being a medium for that goodness to manifest itself in creation would naturally mean that the Imām would be repulsed by the evils of sin due to his very status, understanding, knowledge and disposition. This subchapter will briefly look at four sets of verses explaining the prophetic disposition in relation to infallibility, followed by an analysis of the famous *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* (tradition of the two weighty things), concluding with two traditions by al-Kulaynī, one on the authority of the *eighth* Imām and the other on the authority of the *sixth* Imām describing the nature of an Imām's infallibility.

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[202] 'Alī as has been transmitted in *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 140, states: "The inability (lack of motivation) to commit a sin is a form of infallibility".

[203] For a detailed understanding, refer to Al- Ḥillī's *Kashf al-murād*, p.494, [online resource].

[204]The vast majority of human beings will at some point in their lives commit a sin. Their fate is not immediately that of Satan. This could be due to a number of reasons, some of which are a lack of comprehensive or complete knowledge, understanding and faith. In the same light, divine judgment too is not the same for everyone, even if an act may be perceived to be the same. Experience, knowledge, understanding, upbringing and other such factors would all play a role and therefore divine judgement would not be the same but unique for each individual.

There are four important sets of verses in the Qur'ān that deal with the prophetic disposition in relation to infallibility. As the Imām is the successor and inheritor of the Prophets, so too will the consequences of these verses act upon him. The first verse is: "*We did not send any Prophet, except so that he may be obeyed by the will of God*".[205] From this verse, it is very clear that the Prophets have be chosen to be obeyed without disobedience. For God to give a person such a responsibility would mean that he must be free of sins and mistakes, for otherwise any shortcoming would cast doubt on the divine nature of he who has been sent to the people. If there was a mistake in his decree, this would ultimately lead to followers questioning whether his message was free of error. The second verse which may be considered even more authoritative is: "*And whoever obeys the Prophet has actually obeyed God*".[206] Unless the Prophet was infallible, it would not make sense to equate following the Prophet as following God, who by virtue of being the absolute and the source of all goodness is free from sin and error. The third set of verses are in fact very clear in reminding the faithful not to obey those who are sinners, liars, trouble-makers, the ungrateful and those who transgress their limits,[207] thus raising the standard of qualification required to be followed. The reasoning is a simple case of the fact that Prophets and by extension, the Imām needs to be obeyed unconditionally, thus the message delivered; be it verbal or its the physical enactment, must be purified from error or sin. The final set of verses are ones which are used to articulate authority and superiority. The first of these verses state: "*O you who believe, Obey God and obey the Prophet and those in authority from among you [...]*".[208] In this verse, the term obey has come twice, but for three people. Obey God has come once, and obey again for the second time has appeared in relation to obeying the Prophet and those vested in authority. This places the position of those vested with authority in terms of obedience the same as the Prophet. Either way, obedience to God and His Prophet has been commanded, however, those vested with authority appears to be an extension of the Prophet by the very structure of the verse. As the verse is clear in its unconditional obedience to God, the Prophet and those vested with authority, it can logically be inferred that there must be some form of infallibility common

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[205] Qur'ān 4:64.
[206] *Ibid*, 4:80.
[207] *Ibid*, 68:8-10, 76:24, 25:151.
[208] *Ibid*, 4:59.

between the Prophet and those vested with authority, for otherwise knowingly or unknowingly, contradictions may occur in what God wants, to what the message that is being conveyed is. In Shī'ī theology, those vested with authority have categorically been regarded as the Imāms.

The final of the four sets of verses is the famous verse of purification (āyat al-taṭhīr). The verse reads: "[…] *God only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O ahl al-bayt, and to purify you a thorough purification*".[209][210] In coming to understand what the term purification or purify means, it is from the root *ṭa-ha-ra* and it means to be clean from all impurities. The famous Sunnī scholar of the Qur'ānic exegesis and Arabic language, al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, states that purity in this context is two-fold. The first is physical purity and the second is spiritual purity, to which these verses allude to.[211] Spiritual purification means being clean from vice and sin. Thus the *ahl al-bayt* are regarded as purified both physically and spiritually from sin.[212]

Coupled with the four sets of verses discussed, is a famous prophetic tradition known as *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* (the two weighty things),[213] which quotes Muḥammad on more than one occasion saying that I am leaving behind for you two weighty things – the book of God (*kitāb Allāh*) and my family and that they will not separate from each other until they reach the pool

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[209] *Ibid*, 33:33.
[210] There are two types of divine will or desire. One is general (*tashri'ī*), the other is specific. Due to its very nature of being specific, it becomes inevitable (*takwīnī*). In this verse, there is an over-emphasis on the term purification, stressing unconditional purification. Except for Shī'i claims as to who these infallibles are, no other denomination has suggested any other personalities for infallibility. The wives of the Prophet may have been suggested as being part of the *ahl al-bayt* due to their mention in the first part of the verse (31-32), however, they have not been regarded as infallible. When addressing the wives of the Prophet and their homes, the term used is *buyūt-kuna*, 'your houses' (all female verb). When a male is present, the verb becomes masculine. The term *ahl al-bayt*, or 'People of the House' is not only singular, as opposed to houses of the wives of the Prophet, but it also has males in it. As the Qur'ān already speaks to the wives of the Prophet as *buyūt-kuna*, it can reasonably be inferred that *ahl al-bayt* are other than *buyūt-kuna*.
[211] Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Mufradāt al-fāẓ al-qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam, (Damascus, 1412 AH/1991), 525.
[212] This particular verse requires an extensive discussion, both theological and semantic.for the purpose of our current discussion, that has been discussed is sufficient.
[213] There are in access of 20 chains to this one tradition, making it one of the most authentic traditions found in Islamic literature. The tradition is therefore *mutawātir*.

(in the celestial world). In other variants of the same tradition, Muḥammad was quoted as saying: "*so look after how you will behave with them after me […]*",[214] or "*indeed I am leaving two things among you, to which if you hold on, you will never stray*".[215] Central in this tradition is the analogy of the Qur'ān and *ahl al-bayt* being compared as equally weighty and it is as a result of this tradition that a number of key points can be extrapolated. Significant is that as the Qur'ān is infallible from error and mistake, so too are the *ahl al-bayt*. As there is no denying ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn from being a part of the *ahl al-bayt*, the first three Imāms can be considered infallible. Furthermore, the Qur'ān was revealed to Muḥammad to pave a pathway of guidance from the darkness into light. In the very same way *ahl al-bayt* too were responsible in guiding the faithful towards the light. Al-Kulaynī when explaining the verse: "*So believe in God, in His Prophet, and the light We have sent down […]*",[216] quotes a tradition from the *fifth* Imām, who gives an esoteric interpretation of this verse saying the light sent down are the Imāms from the Family of Muḥammad. They (the Imāms) are the light of God in the heavens and earth and it is the light of the Imāms that shines brighter in the heart of the faithful than even the sun.[217] What this implies is that the connection a faithful has to their Imām is cemented through divine light. As light represents guidance, to truly be guided is to build a connection with the Imām and to believe in him. Sunnī commentaries unanimously describe the light as being the Qur'ān, though it can also be understood as referring to divine guidance.[218] Shīʿī commentaries would refer to the light in its exoteric form as the Qur'ān and esoterically as the Imām, completely harmonizing with the tradition of the 'two weighty things'. The function of the Qur'ān and *ahl al-bayt* are similar, though one is 'silent' and written, whilst the other 'talking' and the embodiment of the written word. A point that requires clarification is who the *ahl al-bayt* constitute. Al-Ṣadūq compiles two traditions from the *sixth* Imām where the Imām elaborates on the different terminologies addressing the Family of Muḥammad. When asked who *āl* (Family) of Muḥammad are, he replies that they

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[214] *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥābah*, *ḥadīth* number 2408 (online search resource)
[215] There is another variant of this tradition which refers to the two weighty things being the Qur'ān and Sunnah (prophetic tradition). This particular *ḥadīth* was originally found in the *Muwaṭā* of Mālik bin Anas (d. 795), where the *ḥadīth* was perceived to be incomplete in its chain of narrators and therefore not as reliable as the original.
[216] Qur'ān 64:8.
[217] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al-ḥikmah,* Dār al-Ḥadīth,(Qum, 1427 AH/2006), I, 232.
[218] *The Study Quran*, HarperCollins Publishers, (Italy, 2015), 1380.

are the descendants of Muḥammad (through Fāṭimah), but when asked who the *ahl al-bayt* are, he differentiates by saying that they are the Imāms from the Family of Muḥammad. He then interprets the Qur'ānic verse; "[…] *āl Firoun* entered severest chastisement"[219] by stating: "By God, there is no meaning to *āl* but the daughter".[220] In a separate tradition, this time speaking to his close companion and confidant Abū Baṣīr (d. 767), the Imām adds that the Imāms are successors when asked about who *ahl al-bayt* are. A further question is then asked as to who *'itrat* (descendants) are, to which the Imām replies that they are *āl 'abā* (a term generally used for Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭimah and their two sons. It was coined whilst they were under the cloak of the Muḥammad,[221] followed by the verse of purity being revealed).[222][223]

Traditionally, theologians from the Sunnī school did not uphold infallibility of the Imām, with the exception of the Mu'tazilah, who similar to early Shī'ī theologians, argued the doctrines of inherent good and evil, and the principle of divine grace. Most Shī'ī theologians from the period of the Imāms, upheld an idea of infallibility for the Imām, however, interpretations differed as to what infallibility entailed. Before examining two traditions; one from the *eighth* Imām and the other from the *sixth* Imām, in wanting to clarify the doctrine of infallibility, it is worth noting that scholars such as Al-Ṣadūq as an example, was of the opinion that the Prophets and Imāms were able to make a mistake, though upholding the infallibility of the Prophets and Imāms from sin. Hossein Modarressi[224] in his *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam* radically moves away from the traditional narrative of infallibility and brings forward examples of personalities, contemporary to the latter Imāms who perceived the Imāms as 'virtuous learned men' (*ulamā' abrār*), as opposed to infallible Imāms.[225] This would have meant that not all who followed Imāmat understood it in the same light. The spectrum of belief in the Imām ranged from complete infallibility to fallible

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[219] Qur'ān 40:46.
[220] Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma'ālī al-akhbār*, Intishārāt Armaghān Ṭūsī, (Qum, 2015), 189.
[221] The incident of the cloak (*kisa'*) has been captured in the famous *ḥadīth*, known as *al-kisa'*.
[222] Qur'ān 33:33.
[223] Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma'ālī al-akhbār*, 189.
[224]Reformist thinkers such as Mohsen Kadivar (1959-) have also presented the theory of the *'ulamā' abrār* in Iran with major refutations by Hasan Ansari (1970-).
[225] Modarressi. H. *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam,* The Darwin Press, INC. Princeton, (New Jersey, 1993), 29.

righteous scholars who were able to commit sins, but refrained from committing them due to their piety. Those who upheld the notion of the Imāms being '*ulamā' abrār* still committed themselves to the belief of absolute submission to the Imāms as an article of faith. According to Modarressi, what differentiated those Sunnī who followed the Imāms as '*ulamā' abrār* to those Shī'a who held similar beliefs was that the Shī'a would have considered following the Imāms to be religiously binding by prophetic designation.[226] This would mean that Modarressi, though not negating that the belief in infallibility was upheld by many followers of the Imāmat, would argue that infallibility was not a condition of faith for all followers. As the schools of Baghdad and Qum[227] developed from the period of *sixth* Imām, so did differences in belief pertaining to the Imāmat.[228] With the onset of the major occultation,

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[226] Perhaps this viewpoint may not be accurate when evaluating it in the light of the early developments of Ṣufīsm. Early *ṣufī* and later established spiritual order, claiming at the very least to be Sunnī, upheld the belief in total submission to the Imāms due to their spiritual status as either a *murshid* (spiritual guide), or *ṣāḥib wilāyah* (possessors of guardianship). This *wilāyah* was of course transmitted from the *murshid* to his successor in the form of naṣ, and so it would have been transferred as part of an unbroken spiritual chain transferring through the Imāms to Imām 'Alī and concluding on the Prophet. Following the Imām therefore would have been considered to be by prophetic design, as it was the Prophet who had chosen and transferred his *wilāyah* to his spiritual successor. Where Shī'ism recognizes the Imām to possess complete *wilāyah*, meaning political and spiritual, Sunnī *ṣufīs* would at the very least uphold the spiritual *wilāyah* of the Imāms. Not all the orders that followed may have incorporated all of the twelve Imāms in their spiritual lineage, however, it can be argued that not all Shī'ī sects believed in the all twelve Imāms. Those Imāms who were followed as Imāms were then submitted to as if submitting to the will of God on earth.

[227] By the end of the third century, Qum had become recognized as a Shī'ī city. Its inhabitants were predominantly Arab as opposed to Persian, and its ruling class were Shī'a in faith. It was in contrast to other cities where Shī'as resided in concentrated pockets under Sunnī patronage. They were scattered across parts of Iran, not to mention the Hijaz, Baghdad, Kufa, Sāmarrā and Basra. Iran itself was not the easiest place to live for the Shī'a as second and third century Iran was very much staunch Sunnī, and perhaps even anti-Shī'a in the advent of multiple Zaydī uprisings that had taken place in the third century. Third century Iran witnessed much unrest, and it was in this period that saw the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* make its presence felt too, first starting in Rayy and Kulayn and expanding to Nishapur by the latter part of the third century [see al-Najāshī. A, *Rijāl al-Najashī,* Mu'assat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, (Qum, 1407 AH/1986), 377-8 and al-Ṭūsī. M, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī,* (Najaf, 1380 AH/1960), 495-6].

[228] Historically the School of Qum expounded of the theory of *ulamā' abrār*. This was in direct opposition to what they believed as extremist views on the Imām which were developing. Modarressi writes, "The scholars of Qum began to declare anyone who attributed any sign of super-humanity to the Prophet or the Imāms as extremist and to expel such people from their town. Meant of the transmitters of *ḥadīth* were banished from Qum for transmitting reports that contained that genre of material during the first half of the third/ninth century", Modarressi. H, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam,* The Darwin Press, INC. Princeton, (New Jersey, 1993), 35. A handful of members of the School of Qum were known to deny *'ilm ladunī*, upholding that the Imām was similar to other *'ulamā'* in their acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, the Imām was similar to any other jurist in that he too needed to extract a religious ruling through the process of *ijtihād*, from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* literature. In fact there were also subgroups to this group. One group believed that before a ruling reached the heart of the Imām, he was in fact ignorant of the issue and actually ignorant of most issues concerning *sharī'ah*. He like others would need to read and learn the issues, similar to how other *'ulamā'*. The process of *'ilm ladunī* would allow the Imām to be inspired with knowledge when needed and this inspiration would descend on his heart. This this case, the Imām's heart so the same as any other.

belief in the virtuous learned men began to disappear, with the last prominent Shīʿī theologian to uphold such a view being Ibn Junayd al-Iskāfī (d. 987/ 377 AH). This is not to say that the doctrine of the virtuous learned men ceases to surface in history, but that after al-Mufīd's standardization of the tenets of belief, a belief in other than infallibility of the Imām became scarce. With that said, coming back to our two traditions, we will start by examining the first tradition narrated by al-Kulaynī[229] on the authority of the *eighth* Imām followed by a tradition on the authority *sixth* Imām.

Al-Kulaynī narrates a tradition from the *eighth* Imām in which numerous qualities and characteristics of the Imām are listed. Part of these qualities are the following that "the Imām is clean of sins (*al-dhunūb*), free from faults (*al-ʿuyūb*), possesses special knowledge (*al-makhsūs bil ʿilm*) and is distinguished in forbearance (*al-ḥilm*)".[230]

The word *ʿuyūb*, used in the tradition above, is plural for *ʿayb*. This word supersedes committing a mere mistake, but encompasses all defects and deficiencies. Thus for those coming across this particular tradition, would have upheld the Imām as completely infallible and numbered complete infallibility from sin and any form of defect as a qualification of the Imām.[231] Although there were differing opinions surrounding the parameters of *ʿiṣma*, as previously mentioned, the post-Mufīd era did witness a standardization of belief which

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[229] Muḥammad ibn Ya ʿqūb al-Kulaynī, as indicated by his surname was born in Kulayn. Kulayn was a village some 40 km away from Rayy, which is today part of modern day Tehran. The distance between where al-Kulaynī resided and Qum would have been some 140 km. Although proximity is no indicator that al-Kulaynī had been directly influenced by the debates taking place in Qum, it can be safe to say that he must have been aware of the early discussions on infallibility. Having spent the last thirty years of his life in Baghdad, al-Kulaynī when compiling *al-Kāfī*, did take much of his *ḥadīth* sources from Qummī transmitters. As al-Kulaynī does have sections on both infallibility and *ʿIlm ladunī*, it does beg to ask the question as to whether it is easy enough to suggest or generalize that the the School of Qum rejected these two qualifications as a whole, as is in part indicated by Modarressi. Further to this, the book *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, considered to be one of the oldest compilations of Shīʿi *ḥadīth* literature, brings extensive traditions describing the supernatural disposition of the Prophet and the Imāms.

[230] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:15:167.

[231] One must bear in mind that as the Islamic world had grown rapidly in the first two hundred years since Muḥammad, so did pockets of Shīʿī communities, who spread to remote parts of the empire to take sanctuary against aggression by the State. It is completely viable that not all oral and written traditions may have reached all followers across the empire, also taking into consideration the social and political atmosphere.

included the concept of complete infallibility from sin and mistake as part of standardized dogma.

The first major rational argument that Shī'ī theologians from the time of al-Mufīd use to support the claim of 'iṣma is that as the Imām is divinely appointment, he must therefore be infallible in all aspects of the faith. Islām as a way of life covering both material and spiritual aspects, necessitates that the Imām must be infallible in both of these aspects. The four main duties of an Imām as previously mentioned are explaining the Qur'ān, interpreting and explaining the divine laws, answering questions and protecting the faith from distortions or alterations.[232] The Imām therefore must be infallible in all these aspects, for if there were to be any mistakes, it would put a question mark on his ability to correctly execute the post of Imāmat. Furthermore, as the Imām is divinely appointed as a guide, a fallible guide would bring doubt unto the divine message being delivered. The reasoning behind this is that as the Imām is the ḥujjah (proof) of God on earth, a mistake or a sin would imply that his words and actions cannot be a proof of God over the people. With the words of the Imām following from divine speech, the position of the Imām as a medium whom God works through becomes central. If the Imām was regarded as unrefined and fallible to sin or error, he would not be a perfect guide to facilitate human development towards the Absolute, nor would he be in a position to signpost the faithful towards human perfection. An Imām who is in need of refining his character would not be in a situation to refine the character of others, but would require an Imām himself. As the divine message is free from error and sin, so too is the Imām.

The thirteenth/fourteenth century Shī'ī theological authority, 'Allamah al-Ḥillī (d. 1325),[233] summarizes on the reasoning provided by his predecessors, in particular al-Ṣadūq, that the

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[232] In a tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām, al-Kulaynī narrates: "We are the commentators of the will of God, we are the people of infallibility", Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, VII, 436. We can infer from this statement that for one to interpret or commentate on the divine will, which also includes the Qur'ān, as the Qur'ān is the greatest of divine wills, that the commentator will be of the people of infallibility. Again the same argument applies, that the commentator of the divine will should be a pure vessel, without error or sin.
[233] Al- Ḥillī is an important figure in the Imāmat discussions and its evolution in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due to his position as the main jurist of his time. He was able to capture existing discourse from the time of the major occultation. This is also fundamentally important, as he was a contemporary of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), adopted son and in many ways heir to Ibn 'Arabī. Moreover, he was commentator and

Imāms, similar to the Prophets are infallible from childhood to death. Al-Ḥillī then goes on to state that this is the traditional opinion of the Shīʿī theologians, because the Imām is the protector of *sharīʿah* (divine law) and it's implementor.[234] This summary is extremely important, as by the beginning of the fourteenth century, al-Ḥillī's concise summary of the seminal works of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274/ 672 AH) the famous Persian polymath who authored *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* (regarded as the most important seminal text in Shīʿī *kalām*), had become standard dogma among Shīʿī communities. In essence, it was an extension and commentary on al-Mufīd's discourse.

Coming to the second tradition by al-Kulaynī on the authority of the *sixth* Imām, we find that it has two layers to it. The first is infallibility and the other is protection from indecency. The tradition is as follows: "When describing the Imām (the *sixth* Imām said) – (the Imām) is infallible from error (*zalālat*) and protected (*maṣūnan*) from all indecency (*al-fawāḥsh*)".[235] By contextualizing this tradition, it is reasonable to conclude that the Imām is not only sinless, but his infallibility encompasses error too. The second part of the tradition is interesting as the term 'protection' almost comes across as a barrier or a 'shield' to protect the Imām from indecency.[236] In commenting on Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī,[237] al-Ḥillī mentions four 'favors' by God on the Imām. The first is that his body or soul possesses a characteristic which prevents the possessor from committing a sin.[238] It can be described as a guardian angel (*malak*) of some sort, however the crucial point is that there comes across an understanding that the Imām has a 'protective mechanism' when faced with sin or indecency, protecting him from spiritual and physical impurity. From the two traditions mentioned and in light of the verses of the Qurʾān looked at, it would be reasonable to conclude this subchapter by describing *ʿiṣma* as *a form of*

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compiler of some of the books attributed to Ibn ʿArabī, with the oldest copy of the *Fūsūs* beginning with the prologue by Qūnawī.

[234] Al-Ḥillī, *Nahj al-Ḥaq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq*, Dār al-Hajrah, (Qum, 1407 AH/1986), 164.

[235] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* VII, 436.

[236] Interestingly Ibn ʿArabī in *al-Futūḥāt*, in defining an elite group from among the family of the Prophet, describes them in an extremely unique way that had not been used by any Sunnī scholar up to this point. He calls them *al-maʿṣūmīn al-maḥfūẓīn* (the infallible, the protected). With will be further addressed in the section on Ibn ʿArabī.

[237] Ṭūsī for a period of his life had been a contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī. It is safe to infer that both would have been exposed to similar discourse on the nature of divine leadership.

[238] Ḥillī. J, *Kashf al-Murād*, https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol-15-no-4-winter-2014/allamah-al-hilli-imamate-his-kashf-al-murad-part-1-jamal

infallibility which prevents the infallible from committing a sin or error both in its spiritual and physical contexts and it was this very definition that would have been familiar to Shī'ī communities in the time of Ibn 'Arabī.

6.2 Divinely-inspired Knowledge ('Ilm Ladunī)

The second qualification of an Imām is that he possesses a special type of knowledge inaccessible to others. This special knowledge which is by its very nature divine knowledge is what is referred to as *'ilm ladunī*. The primary purpose of it is to be at the disposal of the Imām in administering the affairs of the community. This includes having complete knowledge of the Qur'ān and its secrets, having a perfect understanding of the *sharī'ah* and its principles in Islamic law, being able to reply to skepticism and doubt that may come from the people and the ability to answer any question posed to him, be it regarding religion or otherwise.[239] From what can be extrapolated from *ḥadīth* literature is that there are three main sources of knowledge that the Imām possesses; the Qur'ān, inheritance of prophecy (as previously discussed) and inspired knowledge (be it in the form of a medium such as the Holy Spirit, or divine inspiration upon the heart of the Imām). In this subchapter, we will look at each of these three sources of knowledge before moving onto the third qualification of the Imām, which will be spiritual superiority.

6.2.1. Qur'ān

The Qur'ān when describing its function states:

> The day will come when We raise up in each community a witness against them, and We shall bring you (Prophet) as a witness against these people, for We have sent the Scripture (Qur'ān) down to you explaining clearly everything (*tibyānan likuli shayin*), and a guidance (*hudan*),

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[239] Reference to scientific discussions that the Imāms had can be found in Islamic literature. Shaykh Sadūq in his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, narrates a variety of traditions where the *eighth* Imām is witnessed as commenting on issues pertaining to geography, philosophy, the sciences and sociology. The *sixth* Imām too, became famous for his discourses in astrology, medicine and philosophy. The famous medieval scientist, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (d. 815) was a student of the *sixth* Imām. In the *Nahj al-Balāgha* there are quotes and sections in sermons either dedicated to explaining or making reference to what today would be regarded as sciences such as astrology, biology, cosmology, sociology, politics and mysticism.

and a mercy (*rahmatan*), and a good news (*bushrā'*) for those who devote themselves to God (*muslimīn*).[240]

Thus the function of the Qur'ān is as a guide, a mercy and good news for those who are devoted. Yet this particular verse is far more important than just explaining the functions of the Qur'ān. There are two further components to the verse. The first is that it refers to Judgment Day, which is a belief that all human-beings will return back on a prescribed day after they die to be judged. On that day they well be held accountable for what they did on earth. In the process of being judged, the second part of this verse emphasizes two witnesses who will witness against the people. The reason for these two witnesses is that God has sent the Qur'ān to the people as a guidance, mercy and good news. Therefore, whosoever does not follow it, for them there are two witnesses in the court of God to witness against them. The first is the Prophet and the second is from amongst the people. Both of these two witnesses are connected to the Qur'ān by virtue of being mentioned in the verse. For them to become witnesses against those who have not followed the Qur'ān means that they are cognizant of what guidance, mercy and good news entails and how it applies in the Qur'ān. They also witness the deeds of people to be able to fulfill their function. These three functions of the Qur'ān (guidance, mercy and good news) are of course umbrellas that encompass daily actions from how well the *sharī'ah* was observed to every other part of life. Essentially the two witnesses brought by God on Judgment Day are the guardians[241] of the Qur'ān, whose purpose is to explain it so that there is no ambiguity as to what the Qur'ān is expressing.[242] If there had

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[240] Qur'ān 16:89.

[241] In a dialogue that takes place between the *sixth* Imām and his student, the student asks the Imām who the guardian and supervisor of the Qur'ān is. To this the Imām replies that he knew of no one from the companions of the Prophet but 'Alī who knew the whole Qur'ān. The whole Qur'ān in this context does not imply memorization of it, but the eternal knowledge of the Qur'ān. It is then that the companion acknowledged that there was no guardian or supervisor of the Qur'ān but 'Alī and that obedience to him is obligatory, Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:1:133-134.

[242] Hishām ibn Ḥakam (d. 795), the famous student of the *sixth* Imām narrates a tradition which explains the function of the Imām and divine guidance as follows: "[…] It is a fact that this Creator is All-wise and Most High. His creatures cannot see, touch, associate and directly communicate with Him. It proves that His deputies and ambassadors who speak to people for Him and provide them guidance to protect their interests; to tell them what is beneficial to them and what are the best means of survival and what may cause their destruction. This proves the presence among the people of those who convey the commandments of the Creator, who is All-wise and All-knowing God, the Most Holy, the Most High, to them. Such people are the Prophets, and the chosen ones from among His creation. They are the people of wisdom, disciplined with wisdom and sent to the people with wisdom. They are different from other people – although like them in physical form and shape […] receiving

been ambiguity then it would have been unjust for God to hold accountable those who have not truly comprehended the Qur'ān as a guide, mercy and good news. The first witness as mentioned is the Prophet, however the second from amongst the people who are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān are the Imāms.[243][244] Al-Kulaynī mentions a tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām explaining the dynamics of how the process of witnessing will occur: "*[…] in every generation of people, there will be an Imām from our family who would bear witness over their activities and Muḥammad himself will bear witness over us*".[245] The Imām is a medium or gateway between the Creator and created, whose function is to explain pure monotheism as is required in recognizing the true nature of God. The Imāms in their position as successors to the Prophet, will provide evidence or stand as witness for any transgression made by the people.[246] However, the function of an Imām does not stop here, the linkage between Imām and the Qur'ān has a further dimension, with the Imām being commentator and 'translator' of the Qur'ān. In traditions, the term *tarājimatu waḥy Allāh* is used, which literally means translators of the revelation of God'.[247] This implies that aside from the apparent meaning of the Qur'ān, there is a hidden meaning that requires 'translating'. The Imāms are the translators of the Qur'ān because they are 'the treasurers of the knowledge of God' and the 'repository of the revelations of God'. They are the deputies of God '*khulafa' Allāh*'[248] and by affiliation as deputies, are responsible for the word of God on earth. As the Qur'ān is a book of guidance, mercy and good news, it is the Imām as the deputy of God who translates this on earth and becomes the embodiment of guidance, mercy and good news.[249]

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direct support from God. This also proves their presence among the people in all times to ensure the availability of the people with Divine Authority on earth who have the kind of knowledge that establishes their truthfulness and proves them to be the people who possess the noble quality of justice", Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:1:133.

[243] Al-Qummī, A.I. *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, Intishārāt Bīdār, (Qum, 1364 AH/1944), I, 388.

[244] For a witness to do his or her function properly, requires for the witness to have actually witnessed the actions of those he or she is witnessing. As previously mentioned in footnote 40, the actions and deeds of the people are presented to the Prophet and Imāms every morning and evening.

[245] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:9:155.

[246] *Ibid.* 159.

[247] *Ibid.* p.158.

[248] I*bid.* p.159.

[249] Amir-Moezzi has in a number of works and speeches mentioned that the current Qur'ān is at best incomplete and that the '*Kitāb 'Alī*' or the Qur'ān that 'Alī had compiled differed to the Qur'ān that is in present day use. He mentions a number of primary traditions to enforce this. I will mention four such traditions; the first from Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī* on the authority of the *fifth* Imām which states: "No one can claim that he possesses all of the Qur'ān, its exoteric form and its esoteric dimension, except the legatees (*awṣiyā'*)". He has also reported a tradition on the same authority which reads: "No one has ever claimed that he collected the Qur'ān in its entirety

as it was revealed, except a liar; and on one collected it and memorized it as it was revealed by God, the Exalted, expect 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the Imāms who came after him". These two traditions imply that understanding or knowing the Qur'ān without the guidance of the Imām is not possible. As the *Kitāb 'Alī* was rejected by the people, we can reasonably presume that the true meaning of the Qur'ān was never openly accessible, but until the return of the Mahdī. Following on from this, I will now present two traditions that could imply the Qur'ān being distorted. Sayyid al-Khu'ī (d. 1992) mentions two traditions, one on the authority of al-Ṣadūq, with a chain of transmission going through Jābir al-Ju'fī (d. 745) to the *fifth* Imām where he says: "As for the Book of God, they have altered it; the Ka'ba, they have destroyed; and the family (of the Prophet), they have slain. All these trusts of God they have abandoned and from them they have rid themselves". Similarly taking from ibn Qūlawayh (d. 979) in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, the *sixth* Imām mentions that when you enter the shrine of the third Imām, you should recite: "O God curse those who falsified Your Prophet, and those who destroyed Your Ka'ba, and those who corrupted Your Book", Al-Khu'ī. S. *Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2000), 157. These two traditions appear explicit in that distortion of the Qur'ān had taken place, which is also an argument presented by Amir-Moezzi. I believe when Amir-Moezzi argues about distortions, additions and subtractions in the Qur'ān, he fails to contextualization his arguments, nor does he cross-reference his arguments with the Qur'ān itself. He tends to take solitary traditions, similar to what I have just done and fails to examine it in light of the whole corpus of *ḥadīth* literature, whilst dismissing just over a one thousand years of Shi'ī scholarship on the subject. Due to the scope and limitations of this thesis, I will only briefly touch on the topic to present a counter-narrative to the opinion of the Qur'ān being distorted. In regards to the above tradition that reads: "No one has ever claimed that he collected the Qur'ān in its entirety as it was revealed, except a liar […]", the following points need to be taken into consideration to contextualize the tradition; that 'Alī's compilation had been rejected and that there is evidence to show that its order may have differed from the existing one. It can also be argued that there is enough evidence as mentioned in the case of Amir-Moezzi that the Qur'ān or Kitāb may have been bigger than it currently is, however what he has not analyzed with the same vigor, are that the terms *ta'wīl* for interpreted and *tanzīl* for revealed, did not hold the same technical significance as what they do today. Furthermore, as the Imāms present the 'translation' of the Qur'ān, the exegesis in the form of interpretation would have also been revealed. Not everything revealed by revelation became part of the body of the Qur'ān. Al-Ṣadūq mentions in his *Kamāl al-Dīn*, transmitted through 'Alī: "No verse of the Qur'ān descended upon God's Prophet save that he taught me its recitation, dictated it to me as I wrote it by my own hand, and taught me its interpretation and explanation, its abrogating and abrogated, its clear and its ambiguous, its general and its particular, and asked God to grant me understanding thereof and to remember both (the verse and its meaning). I have not forgotten a single verse of God's Book, nor any knowledge which (the Prophet) dictated to me and I wrote since he made this prayer for me […]", al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn,* Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, (Tehran, 1975/1395 AH), 284. It is not just the Qur'ān therefore that 'Alī had knowledge of. It is reasonably assumed that knowledge aside from the letter of the Qur'ān which was given to him by the Prophet was there to be passed on and not for 'Alī to keep for himself. It can also be inferred therefore that the terms *kitāb* or *muṣḥaf* of 'Alī were used for where this extra knowledge was housed. In addition to this, there is no reliable tradition that mentions the Imāms actually advocating for distortion to have taken place. The only two places found are either in the book of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyārī or 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Kūfī, both of whom are considered liars*,* Al-Khu'ī. S. *Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 155. With regards to the last two traditions I have mentioned concerning 'corrupting' or 'corruption' of the book, a final tradition to help contextualize these traditions is from the *sixth* Imām which reads: "The speakers of Arabic altered the Speech of God from its original", Al-Khu'ī. S. *Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 157, to which al-Khu'ī adds that doubt in the reading occurred due to there being seven types of readings. A reading would alter in relation to the positioning of the vowels. The traditions that mention the name of 'Alī in the Qur'ān would have been part of the revealed exegesis. Not everything revealed became part of the Qur'ān itself. The final point is that there has been explicit consensus from the time al-Ṣadūq that the existing Qur'ān was neither distorted or corrupted, meaning the body of the text. The topic prior to al-Ṣadūq had not explicitly come up to be discussed in such fashion. A further look at this topic will take place under the subsection *'Alī and the Qur'ān.*

When addressing the question of 'the knowledgeable', the Qur'ān itself mentions two types of people. The first type are the people of remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*)[250] and the second type are referred to as the people firmly grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūna fī al-'ilm*).[251] The Qur'ān directs the faithful to both of these groups for those things that the faithful do not know and for the interpretation of the Qur'ān. In both cases, Kulaynī mentions traditions from the *sixth* Imām to confirm that in the case of both of groups, the Qur'ān is actually referring to the Imāms.[252] In two different traditions, remembrance (*dhikr*) has been described as either the Qur'ān or the Prophet. The people of the Qur'ān or Prophet are the Imāms.[253] In similar fashion, the Qur'ān and its verses are found in the hearts of those who have knowledge or who are firmly grounded in knowledge.[254] It can be understood from the title given and description presented in the Qur'ān, coupled with traditions on the inner commentary as explained by the Imām, that the Imām has complete knowledge[255] of the Qur'ān which is bestowed as opposed to acquired. The interwoven nature between the Qur'ān and 'Alī as the Imām is assumed due to parallels made by Muḥammad on occasions, where the comparison is so acute that separating one from the other is tantamount to causing distortion to the essence of the Qur'ān. In an esoteric tradition Muḥammad is quoted as explaining to 'Alī that his example in the *ummah* is that of the chapter of *Tawḥīd*, whosoever reads this chapter once, it is as if he or she has read a third of the Qur'ān, if read twice, it is as if two-thirds of the Qur'ān has been recited and the reward for reading this chapter three times, is the reward for the whole Qurān. Muḥammad then continues to say that whosoever affirms their love for 'Alī verbally, is as if they have completed a third of their faith (*īmān*), and whosoever proclaims their love both verbally and in their heart, they have completed two-thirds of their faith. Muḥammad then

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[250] Qur'ān 16:43.
[251] Qur'ān 3:7.
[252] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 178-180
[253] *Ibid*. 178-179.
[254] *Ibid*. 181.
[255] This is further emphasized by a tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām stating that in front of him, it is Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('Alī) who has complete knowledge of the Qur'ān. Hr then goes onto explain that the difference between a person who has some knowledge from the Qur'ān and complete knowledge of the Qur'ān is like the difference between the moisture on the wings of a fly to the ocean. Here he is comparing 'Alī's complete knowledge to that of Āsif ibn Barkhiā who through partial knowledge of the Qur'ān, had brought the throne of Sheba for Solomon before he could blink, Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, Mousasah Farhang Nashr Ḥāthq, (Qum, 2007), I, 197. Partial knowledge of the Qur'ān also implies some understanding of the greatest name of God, through which unnatural abilities can be gained.

concludes by saying that if a person professes their love verbally, in their heart and by their hand (enacting that love), their faith is completed and they will not enter the fire (of hell). The tradition itself finishes by God saying to Muḥammad to tell ʿAlī that those who follow his *wilāyah* and love him will not face divine torment, whereas his enemies will not receive divine mercy.[256] The example to the chapter of *Tawḥīd* is important in underlining the position of ʿAlī, as this chapter summarizes the concept of monotheism in Islām. Belief in monotheism is the foundation of faith in Islām. From the tradition, it can be inferred that both monotheism and the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī go hand in hand[257] as foundational tenets of faith.

ʿAlī in describing his lofty position in relation to the Qur'ān has been quoted as saying: "Everything in the Qur'ān is in the Opening (*al-Fātiḥa/al-Ḥumd*) chapter and that which is in the Opening, is gathered in the *Bismillah*,[258] and that which is in the *Bismillah* is found in the *bā'* (of the *Bismillah*) and all the secrets of the *bā'* is in the *nuqṭah* (dot) and I am the *nuqṭah* under the *bā'*".[259] ʿAlī and by extension his eleven descendants are the *nuqṭah*, which represent the essence or the seed through which the Qur'ān evolves from. The Imāms are therefore not just integral to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, but actually embody its very nature. It is the *nuqṭah* that the *bā'* is manifested from and determined, in the same fashion as when writing, it is from the dot that the *bā'* is produced. Al-Mustanbiṭ (d.1979), a classical scholar, specializing in early mystical traditions pertaining to the *ahl al-bayt*, comments that it is the *bā'* of the *Bismillah* which brings into existence all existents and it is the *bā'* that is in

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[256] Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 225-26.

[257] In a famous tradition referred to as *Silsilat al-dhahab* (Golden Chain), the *eighth* Imām on his way to Merv, is reported to have said on the authority of his father, who narrated from his father and he from his father, a chain of Imāms going back to ʿAlī, who had heard from Muḥammad, who in turn heard from Gabriel that God had said: "The proclamation, '*There is no god but God*' is My fortress (*ḥiṣnī*). Whoever enters My fortress is safe from My wrath ('*athābī*)". The Imām then waited for a camel to pass and continued the tradition by stating: "That is subject to conditions (*shurūṭihā*) and I am among its conditions". Al-Ṣadūq mentions this tradition in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, in the first chapter, *ḥadīth* 23. The importance of this tradition is that the basic proclamation of faith has conditions of which the Imām is one. Belief in the Imām and his *wilāyah* is deemed a part of faith, hence Imāmat is doctrinal in Shīʿism.

[258] Aside from chapter nine of the Qur'ān, all a hundred and thirteen of a hundred fourteen chapters begin with the phrase '*Bismillah*', meaning in the 'Name of God'. In fact chapter twenty-seven mentions the phrase *Bismillah* twice.

[259] Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 177. There is another version of this tradition mentioned by Sayyid Niʿmatullah Jazāirī (d. 1700) in his book *al-Anwār al-Nuʿmānīyah*, where it adds the following to the beginning of the tradition that: "The knowledge of everything that was and is to be is in the Qur'ān […]".

between (*bayn*) the Creator (*Khāliq*) and created (*makhlūq*).[260] Suhrawardī whilst writing on the *bā'* in his mystical treaties, quotes 'Alī in his capacity as the *nuqṭah*: "Whatever became, became through me, and whatever will become, will become through me",[261] as it is the *bā'* which contains the secrets of creation and its essence is found in the *nuqṭah.* Although considered as an esoteric commentary, commentaries such as these were not foreign to students of Qur'ānic hermeneutics. Symbolism found in such discourses were important to unveil the position of 'Alī in Islamic mysticism, be it in Sufism or later Shī'ī *'irfān*. By their very nature, mystical commentaries are esoteric and seldom, if at all touch on the political dimensions of the position of 'Alī. Those that do are so discrete, that without prior understanding, it becomes difficult to understand what is being conveyed. Early commentators may well have chosen this particular methodology to discuss the position of 'Alī, as any political discussion could well have been met with unpleasant consequences from the ruling elite. What it did do was combine the Qur'ānic disposition to the primordial nature of the Imām and his pre-existence. For those who upheld governance of the heart, the heart being the true house of God, above governance of the material world, gave little attention to matters of political succession, but continued to discuss 'Alī and the consequent Imāms, as spiritual masters guiding hearts back towards God. Perhaps this is why seventy-two men were willing to sacrifice their lives in Karbalā' for a battle (680/ 61AH) which was perceived from the start a lost one, is to this day deeply symbolic in Shī'ism.

6.2.2 Inherited Knowledge

Earlier in this section entitled 'Conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī Thought', a brief discourse on the inheritance left by the Prophets, and the Imāms as their inheritors was undertaken. This subchapter will therefore be limited to a few points. Three types of books emerge in *ḥadīth* literature inherited by the Imām which signals him having been chosen as an Imām. These

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[260] Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 178.
[261] Suhrawardī. S, *The Shape of Light, Hayakal Al-Nūr*, Fons Vitae, (Louisville, 1998), 4.

three books are the *jafr,*[262] the *jāmiʻah* and the *muṣḥaf* of Fāṭimah.[263] Abū Baṣīr (d. 767) a close student of the *sixth* Imām quotes the Imām in describing what these three books represent. He documents a lengthy tradition beginning by him asking a question to which the Imām corrects him as to the nature of what ʻAlī as the first Imām had inherited from the Prophet: "I said: 'May God keep my soul in the service of your cause, your followers say that the Prophet taught ʻAlī a chapter of knowledge and from this chapter there opened a thousand chapters'. The Imām replied: 'The Prophet of God taught ʻAlī a thousand chapters from each of which there opened a thousand chapters'". The incident itself took place when the Prophet was about to pass away. The tradition then continues when Abū Baṣīr asks about the *jāmiʻah*. The Imām replies: "It is a parchment seventy yards long by the yards of the Prophet of God. It contains his dictations that were recorded in the handwriting of ʻAlī. It contains all the lawful and unlawful, and all matters that people need. Even the law of compensation for scratches caused to a person". The Imām then goes on to describe the *jafr*: "It is a container made of skin that contains the knowledge of the Prophets and the executors of their wills. It is the knowledge of the learned in the past from the Israelites". When asked about the *muṣḥaf* of Fāṭimah, the Imām remarked: "The *muṣḥaf* of Fāṭimah is three times bigger than your Qur'ān. I swear by God, not even a single letter therein is from your Qur'ān". Finally the Imām concludes by saying: "With us there is the knowledge of whatever has been, and the knowledge of everything that will come into being until Judgment Day".[264] A further analysis

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[262] There are two parts to the *jafr*, the white *jafr* and the red *jafr*. In this context, what is meant by *jafr* is the white *jafr*. The white *jafr* contains the psalms of David, the Torah, the Gospel of Jesus, the scrolls of Abraham and the laws that explain that which is lawful and unlawful. The red *jafr* contains the armaments of the Prophet, Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:40: 204.

[263] Later theologians such as Sayyid Muḥsin Amīn (d. 1952) in his book *Aʻyān al-Shīʻa* has argued that in fact there were two *muṣḥafs* belonging to Fāṭimah, one dictated by Gabriel and the other by the Prophet. In part this is because in certain traditions there is reference of Gabriel and in others there is reference of it coming via a messenger of God. To resolve this, it is easier to analyze a tradition by the *sixth* Imām on the authority of one of his close companions, Muḥammad ibn Muslim (d. 767): "Fāṭimah left behind a *muṣḥaf*, which is not a Qur'ān, rather, it is a part of God's speech which He sent down to her wit the dictation of God's messenger and (was written) in the handwriting of ʻAlī", al-Qummī. M, *Baṣāʼir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrza Muḥsin Kūcheh Bāghī, (Qum, n.p., n.d.), *ḥadīth* 14, p.155. By the very nature of the tradition, God's messenger is Gabriel and not Muḥammad. Had it been Muḥammad, it would not have read that it was a part of God's speech sent down to her, rather it would have been as has been narrated in other traditions, that it was told to her by her father the Prophet. Thus there is no contradiction between those traditions that mention Gabriel and those that mention a messenger from God. Furthermore, the *muṣḥaf* is not a Qur'ān and nor does it contain any laws or guidance for the faithful, but it contains for the possessor of the *muṣḥaf* knowledge of what will be, Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:40:204.

[264] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:40:202-203.

of traditions concerning the *muṣḥaf* of Fāṭimah indicate that it contained specific details given by Gabriel to console Fāṭimah after the death of her father, on how her father was in the next world and information of what was going to take place to her children. The *sixth* Imām is quoted famously referring to the *muṣḥaf* during the period of civil war between the Umayyads and the Abbasids. When the Abbasids had approached the descendants of the *second* Imām, asking them for help and in return promising the caliphate to them, the *sixth* Imām replied that he had looked into the *muṣḥaf* and did not find the names of the descendants of al-Ḥasan in the list of rulers to come.[265] Al-Ṣadūq has compiled a number of traditions on the authority of Jābir b. 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī (d. 697) where Jābir visits Fāṭimah and finds her in the possession of a tablet (*luḥ*). This tablet may have been the *muṣḥaf*, or a separate relic, however she would use the tablet to inform Jābir of the twelve Imāms:

> I went to visit Fāṭimah, the daughter of the God's Prophet. There was a tablet in front of her. It was so brilliant that it was about to blind my eyes. Twelve names could be seen; three names on the tablet, three names on the back, three names on the end and three names on the side. I counted them. There were twelve of them. I asked: 'Whose names are these?' Fāṭimah replied: 'These are the names of the Heirs (*al-awṣiyā*). The first of them is my cousin ('Alī) and the rest are from my progeny. The last one of them is the one who will rise (*al-Qā'im*)'.[266][267]

The tablet could well have been separate from the *muṣḥaf*, but with the function of acting like a written investiture as evidence to authenticate to the faithful who the next Imām and heir to the legacy of both Prophecy and Imāmat was. What also makes the Imām an heir is the Muḥammadan light that flows through him. The Muḥammadan light represents the first act of God as Creator, with the primordial light coming to represent both Muḥammad and 'Alī. Every Prophet throughout history had an heir, however the heirs to Muḥammad are considered superior. In explaining his sacred status and that of 'Alī, Muḥammad said:

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[265] *Ibid.* 205.
[266] Al-Ṣadūq, *'Ayūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2006), I, 78.
[267] Similar traditions by Jābir, following the quoted tradition adds the following "[…] There was a tablet in front of her in which there were the names of the Heirs. There were twelve names; the last one who was *al-Qā'im*. Three of them were Muḥammad and four of them were 'Alī" (three of the Imām's names begin with Muḥammad and four with 'Alī).

I am the master (*sayyid*) of the Prophets and my heir (*waṣiyī*) is the master of all the *waṣiyyūn* […] and the '*ulamā*' (which if read according to its general meaning would imply Islamic scholars, but if interpreted according to the context of the tradition could also mean the Imāms) of my nation (*ummah*) are like the Prophets of the Israelites.[268].

It is not just wisdom or prophetic secrets that the Imāms inherited, but part of inheritance are also miracles performed by the Prophets of Israel. As the comparison given in the tradition is straightforward, this would imply the ability for a literal interpretation. Thus if we were to revisit the whole tradition, it is not that the Imām is equal to the Prophets of the Israelites, which may be inferred by the term 'like', but in fact as the term 'master' used for both Muḥammad and 'Alī at the beginning of the tradition, it would suggests superiority to the Prophets of Israel.

With an ability to perform miracles, naturally the most important inheritance and is that of the greatest name of God (*ism Allāh al-aʿẓam*), as it is through parts of this name that the Prophets were able to perform miracles. Knowledge too is related to the greatest name. It is through the manifestation of the names of God that the world of being ('*ālam koun*) appeared. The greatest name of God is that which effectively controls the world of being. It allows for the holder of the greatest name to overcome the natural laws in all its forms and bestows on the holder extraordinary powers. According to Shīʿī tradition, the greatest name of God has seventy-three letters. In *ḥadīth* literature the true nature of these letters are kept abstract, however, each of the letters have their own properties. In the case of Jesus, he was given two letters and he was able to perform miracles as referenced in the New Testament and Qur'ān. Moses possessed four letters, so he was able to part the Red Sea, and turn his rod into a snake in front of the magicians. Noah had fifteen and Abraham was given eight. Āsif (mentioned in the Qur'ān,[269] for having brought the throne of Sheba in a blink of an eye) only had one of these letters. Muḥammad and the Imāms that followed are said to have seventy-two of these letters,

[268] Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, (Qum: 1985/1405 AH), 211-12.
[269] Qur'ān 27:40.

where one is reserved only for God, which makes seventy-three.[270] It is possible to infer that either these letters are partially inherited or are inspired, as in the case of Muḥammad, no Prophet prior to him possessed seventy-two letters. The Imāms would have inherited these letters from Muḥammad.[271]

6.2.3 Inspired Knowledge

The nature of inspiration is that it is either communicated from God through an angel, as was the case of the *muṣḥaf* which was communicated to Fāṭimah, or it is knowledge inspired on the heart of the Imām. An example of the latter is when the *sixth* Imām was asked if the Imām knows what is hidden (*ghayb*), to which he replied that he does not know the hidden, but if he wants to know it, then God would grant him such knowledge.[272] Important to understand is what *ghayb* signifies. What it may not imply are events of the future, as the Imām is aware of his own future and moment of death.[273] In fact as discussed in the section of inherited knowledge, the Imām has the tools to know future events through the books given to him. Thus it is not that the Imām is completely omniscience, but that the Imām is given knowledge as and when he requires it. There are various types of knowledge attributed to the Imām, from the occult to the 'Knowledge of Happiness and Misfortune, and the Genealogy of the Nations' ('*ilm al-manāyā wa al-balāya wa al-ansāb*).[274] He has the ability to read consciences and souls, where no secret is kept from him. He possesses the art of speech, the ability to communicate with animals and spirits and physiognomy.[275] Furthermore, the knowledge of the

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[270] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 196.
[271] Within Jewish mysticism, especially the Kabbalah, there is reference to the seventy-two names of God, which in similar fashion as to the letters mentioned in Shīʿī literature are organized in a particular formula. The seventy-two names are each three-letter sequences which relate to a specific reality in creation. Rav Philip Berg (d. 2013), a famous expounder of Ashlagian Kabbalah says that the combination of letters (Hebrew) form the seventy-two names of God. In his writings he states: "You are about to learn how to arrange those letters for specific purposes, how to scan them for effect, and how to meditate upon them for healing and travel through space. You are about to learn how to roll any entity or situation back from its 'real' to its potential state, to eradicate any evil aspect that might be invading your life", Berg. P.S, *Taming Chaos*, The Kabbalah Centre International Inc, (LA, 2003), 42. This is very similar to how the names of God can be used in '*irfān*. However, there is no claim in '*irfān* or Ṣufīsm of there being access to the seventy-two letters that the Prophet and Imāms possess. What is mentioned is that the greatest name of God is a state of being (*ḥāl*) as opposed to just a lettered formula.
[272] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī,* I:45:22.
[273] *Ibid.* 222.
[274] al-Qummī. M, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, 266-69.
[275] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*, State University of New York Press, (Albany, 1994), 93.

Imām only continues to increase[276] and is assisted through various supernatural means. To truly be a 'proof' over creation requires the Imām to witness the actions of the people. For this purpose, when an Imām dies, God creates a pillar from light (*'amūd min nūr*) through which the succeeding Imām observes the deeds of the people and therefore becomes a witness or 'proof' over them.[277][278]

In regards to knowledge transmitted through angels, the Imām is a *muḥaddith*, which means that he is of those who the angels speak to. A third type of communication, differing from inspiration onto the heart and communication through an angel, is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When a Prophet or an Imām passes away, the Holy Spirit transfers to the succeeding Imām. The Holy Spirit then remains with the Imām until his death. In the Qur'ān, under the chapter known as *Qadr* (Destiny), the angels and the Holy Spirit both descend upon the Prophet on the night of destiny (*laylat al-qadr*), when the commandments of the whole year are destined.[279] As the night of destiny is every year, the Holy Spirit and the angels then come to the Prophet's successor and Imām of the time[280] with the affairs of the coming year. In short, it is possible to conclude this section on knowledge of the Imām with a tradition by the *sixth* Imām:

'Our knowledge consists (of the knowledge of the things) of the past, of the written nature, that which is dotted in the hearts and that which is resonated in the ears'. He then said, 'Of the past, it is that which we know of the past. That which is written is the kind that will come in the future. That which is written in the hearts is the inspired kind and that which resonated in the ears is the communication of the angel'.[281]

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[276] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī,* I, 218.
[277] Shirazī. M. *Payām-e-Qu'rān*, IX, 132.
[278] There are sixteen such traditions found in volume 6 of *Biḥār al-anwār* and multi traditions of the same nature in relation to the Imām knowing the deeds of the people in volume thirty-three of the same book under the title, '*arḍ a'māl'*.
[279] Qur'ān 97:4.
[280] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, VI:4:209-210.
[281] *Ibid.* 227.

6.3 Spiritual Superiority

In Shī'ī theology[282] it is understood that the Imām in his position as a divine guide is commissioned to return the faithful back onto the path of God. For this purpose, it is necessary the Imām be spiritually superior to others. Had this not been the case, an Imām would have been required to help the first Imām in gaining spiritual superiority. Islām as a religion, has a responsibility to take care of both the physical and spiritual needs of the faithful, be it this life or life after death. As an Abrahamic faith, Islām upholds the idea that humans are soul and body and therefore possess both a spiritual and a physical dimension. To nurture both is to fulfil the needs of the faithful. Every action, prayer or obligation prescribed in Islām is performed with the intention of gaining closeness to God. The ultimate role of the Imām therefore is to guide the faithful towards gaining closeness to God. On this journey towards God, the faithful will be required to fulfil the tenets of *sharī'ah*, but would also be required to work on refining his or her moral character and relationship with others.[283] The Imām through his guidance is sculpting and refining the faithful both physically and spiritually by offering a roadmap in attaining human perfection if followed properly. By human perfection, what is meant is that within each person's unique confines of space, time, situation and circumstance, the individual achieves to their capacity, ethical, moral and spiritual balance. A key tenet of spiritual superiority is *akhlāq*, which would be described as ethics, morals, manners and decency. For this reason, the translation of *akhlāq* (character/ ethics)[284] which is commonly used may not always give its fullest meaning. The Imām must possess the highest character as he represents the Prophet. In a famous tradition quoted by all denominations of Islām, the Prophet exclaims that he was only appointed as a Prophet to perfect moral character.[285] The

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[282] Having discussed the knowledge of the Imām, his understanding of the Qur'ān and he being the deputy of God on earth, any form of spiritual deficiency would undermine the position of the Imām as the chosen one of God and from God.

[283] In a prophetic tradition it is narrated that being good to others/ showing a high level of moral character when dealing with others (*ḥusn al-khulq*) is half of faith, Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, III, 473. The Imām would therefore require exceptional moral character to be able to help others compete half of their faith. There are similar traditions in *ḥadīth* literature to emphasize the importance of high moral character. To mention two more traditions from *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, the first from the Prophet states that the first deed to be put of the scales of judgment on judgment day will be high moral character. The second tradition is from the *sixth* Imām which mentions the love God has for how high moral character is only second to observing the obligatory rituals, *ibid.* 476.

[284] Qāsimī. J, *Farhang Iṣṭilāḥāt Falsafah, Kalām wa Mantiq*, Intishārāt Āstān Quds Raḍawī, (Mashhad, 2006), 17.

[285] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, III, 478.

term *makarām al-akhlāq* which is mentioned in the prophetic tradition for moral character literally means sublime character and so it could be read as the purpose of being appointed as a Prophet was to help human beings perfect their moral character and attain sublimity. The Qur'ān confirms this tradition through a verse in relation to the Prophet: "*And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime character.*"[286] With numerous traditions in *ḥadīth* literature putting emphasis on the need for the faithful to uphold high moral character, it is reasonably understood that the Imām must possess superior qualities, otherwise it just would not be possible to guide others to those very qualities the Imām himself is lacking.

6.4 Divine Appointment (*Naṣ*)

The final of our four general qualifications is that the Imām is chosen exclusively by God, which is in contrast to how historically leaders have been chosen. In fact Islamic history is witness to the fact that there has been no one particular method of choosing a leader. Muslim lands have witnessed selection, appointment and even civil wars to decide on who should lead. Shī'ī theology avoids all of these methods and defines leadership as God-given. The prophetic tradition of the twelve caliphs succeeding Muḥammad itself expresses a divine method that Muḥammad had left for the faithful.[287] If the prophecy was to be fulfilled, it required there be twelve caliphs or leaders only after Muḥammad. By taking into consideration the very nature of the prophecy, Shī'ī theologians unanimously argue that God had limited the number of leaders to twelve, hence the belief in the twelve Imāms. There are two verses of the Qur'ān which are used to emphasize the need for the appointment being from God. These two verses have previously been alluded to and therefore only a brief reference will be made to them. The first verse describes God communicating with the angels (in relation to Adam): "[…]*Only I*

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[286] Qur'ān 68:4.
[287] "There will be no honor in Islām but for the twelve caliphs", Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, (Beirut, 1401 AH/1981), VI, 23. What is interesting about this tradition is that the opposite of it is that there is no respect or there is dishonor for Islām without the twelve caliphs. Fāṭimah in her famous sermon on *Fadak*, which was delivered in the Mosque of her father in protest at the first caliph for taking her lands, in relation to the ahl al-bayt says: "the obligation to obey us (*ahl al-bayt*) has been prescribed to set up order in the community, and our authority (Imāmat) has been prescribed to save the people from differences (splitting)". It could be inferred that the sanctity of Islām rested on the Imāmat of 'Alī and obedience to the *ahl al-bayt*, which by even taking a narrow interpretation, were 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

am going to place on earth a caliph".[288] The second verse is from the same chapter, but this time in relation to Abraham: "[…]*'Only I will make you an Imām of men'. Abraham said: 'And of my offspring?' He (God) said: 'My covenant does not include the unjust'*".[289] In both cases, be it the first caliph on earth, or the first mentioned Imām in the Qur'ān, the overarching principle is that appointment to lead is only by virtue of divine appointment. God whilst declaring the appointment of a caliph or an Imām begins by using the words 'Only I" (*innī*). This is significant in setting a precedence for any leader claiming to represent or speak on behalf of God to be by divine appointment. From the second verse it is inferred that Imāmat will continue after Abraham, but only in his progeny and for those who are not of the oppressors from amongst them. As was well known among the faithful, Muḥammad and his progeny were not only from the children of Abraham, but the example of Muḥammad and his family in Islām, is that of Abraham and his.[290] He and his family were the fathers of the nation. To clear any ambiguity, there can only be one Imām at any given time. Immediately following the death of Muḥammad, there were potentially three Imāms in one household, namely 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. In clearing this potential predicament, the *sixth* Imām explains that there can not be two Imāms in any given time, but that one is inactive (*ṣāmit* – meaning to observe silence).[291]

As Imāmat is from divine grace, therefore part of this grace necessitates appointments also being from God. The main purpose of divine grace in this context is to guide the people and provide for them a map towards God. The process of moving towards God would consist in explaining to the people how to attain the best of character, understanding the nature of the Qur'ān, explaining the *sharī'ah*, uncovering the divine realities of creation and so forth. The only logical process to fulfill the given responsibilities is if God chose for the people an Imām, in the same way as He chose Prophets to fulfill similar responsibilities. Theoretically, this would also prevent conflict, injustice, domination, civil wars and immoral behavior which

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[288] Qur'ān 2:30.
[289] Qur'ān 2:124.
[290] The blessing which are asked in prayer for Muḥammad and his family consists of the line "*as you blessed Abraham and his family*". An explicit parallel is being made between these two Islamic Prophets and their families.
[291] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I:5:142.

may come with lust for power and position. What divine appointment does is it puts the onus back on God to provide the people with a leader, in the same way as He provided books, laws, social structures and numerous Prophets to guide people. There is no doubt when reading early Shī‘ī literature that the Prophet and his twelve successors had been chosen by God before appearing in creation. Their being is the epitome of creation, not restricted to time and space. As time itself is considered created, at least in the scientific sense, coupled with speed and distance, the Imām as the *'bāb Allāh* and divine medium supersedes time. ‘Alī’s superiority to the rest of creation is such that he is the proof of God upon all creation, the light (*nūr*) of God on all lands,[292] and trusted with the knowledge of God, that whoever recognizes ‘Alī (as Imām) will not enter the fire (of hell) even if he be a sinner. For those who reject the position of ‘Alī, however, even if they worship God, will not be granted paradise, as ‘Alī has superiority over all bodies (*ajsād*), souls (*anfūs*) and spirits (*arwāḥ*).[293] Under the chapter of 'exceptional traditions', al-Ṣadūq quotes a tradition on the authority of the *eighth* Imām, which becomes important due to its detailed symbology. The tradition begins with the Prophet saying to ‘Alī that God has not created anyone more nobler and honored than them, to which ‘Alī asks if this also included Gabriel. The Prophet replies that the Prophets are loftier in status than the angels and that he is loftier than all of the other Prophets. At this point the Prophet continues:

> O ‘Alī, He has made you and the Imāms after you the noblest after me. O ‘Alī, the angels are at
> our service and at the service of those who love us […] were it not for us, God would not have

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[292] The Qur’ān states that God is the light of the heavens and the earth (24:35). It is through the illumination of the light of God that creation on both the immaterial and material plains are brought into existence. The heavens are symbolic of the immaterial plain, whereas earth symbolizes the material realm. ‘Alī as 'the light of God on all lands' can be interpreted as ‘Alī being the original prime matter or in this case medium that God works through to give life, by way of the light of ‘Alī to all creation. As ‘Alī is light, he is in himself evident and makes others evident. As the light of God is the source of existence itself, ‘Alī as its first manifestation, becomes that first cause in creation, through which the rest of creation are an effect and benefit from. This of course tallies with the famous tradition referred to as *al-Kisā’* (the Cloak), where God addresses Gabriel by saying: "By My Honor and Glory, O My angels, O residents of My heavens, verily I have not created the erected Sky, the stretched earth, the illuminated moon, the bright sun, the rotating planets, the flowing seas and the sailing ships, but for the love of these five (Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) underneath the Cloak (*al- Kisā’*)". The effect of the love of God for the *ahl al-bayt* is creation, with the five members being the original cause and locus for divine ontological love. The five in Shī‘ī cosmology represent a single light, as light is not divisible, but appears from one source. In Genesis (1:3) after creating a formless and empty earth, God said: "Let there be light", and it was from this that creation began to form.

[293] Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 182-84.

created Adam, Eve, Paradise, Hell, the heavens and the earth…we recognized our Lord earlier than they (the angels) did, we sang *Glory and Praise be to Him* and sanctified Him before them. The first thing that the Honorable and Exalted God created were our spirits, which He made declare His Unity and Exalt Him. Then He created the angels. Once the angels saw our spirits as a single light, they found it to be majestic. We sang *Glory be to God the Sublime*, so that they realize that we are creatures and that God is Exalted High above all traits. Then the angels sang *Glory be to God the Sublime* and declared Him Exalted, High above our traits. When the angels saw the majesty of our rank we testified to the Unity of God, so that the angels would know that there is no god but God, and that we are only servants, that we are not gods and should not be worshipped along with Him or besides Him. Then the angels declared that there is *no god but God*. When they saw the greatness of our position we declared *God is the Greatest*, so that the angels would know that God is Great and no one can attain a high position unless God grants him that position…Thus it was by us that the angels were led to the recognition of the Unity of the Honorable, the Exalted God, His Glory, Majesty, Praise and Exaltation. Then the Blessed, the Sublime God created Adam, placed us in his loin and ordered the angels to fall in prostration in order to exalt and honor us.

The Prophet then continues by talking about his ascension to heaven,[294] where he witnessed twelve lights on the divine Throne with a green line on each that contained the names of his twelve successors; the first being 'Alī and that last Mahdī.[295] This early tradition outlines the pre-existing nature of Muḥammad and his twelve successors, their spiritual superiority, advanced knowledge of God, that they had been chosen by God and were the cause of creation. They are the guides that complete guidance flows from. Before human beings, they were guides to the angels and indeed were an exclusive medium through whom God manifested Himself.

In concluding this section on Conditions for an Imām in Shī'ī Thought, there are some observations which would be useful to consider. The doctrine of Imāmat is not just an Islamic concept drawn up some fourteen hundred years ago, but Shī'ī tradition regards the origins of

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[294] The ascension (*al-mi'rāj*) took place in 621 from the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque (the vicinity around the Ka'ba) to Jerusalem and then from there to the heavens.
[295] Al-Ṣadūq, *'Ayūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, I, 493-4.

Imāmat as old as humanity itself. From the traditions quoted in this section, the reality of 'Alī in his position as successor to Muḥammad, is that he is from the light of God, and the light of God in the both heavens and earth. The Imām is a medium, or in the language of Ibn 'Arabi, he is a *barzakh* (both a veil/ medium) between God and creation. The Imām as the inheritor of the divine light and knowledge is the successor to a perennial wisdom connected with the beginning of creation. Thus Shī'ī Islām does affirm other faiths, scriptures and Prophets held common to the Abrahamic lineage that preceded it. Furthermore, there is scope for cross-pollination of ideas, be it through previous religions or philosophies. Early Islamic mystics and philosophers such as Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī both allude to a primordial wisdom, freely using ideas and terminology found in mystical traditions predating Islām. Muḥammad himself lived during a time where he would have come into contact with not just Jews and Christians from the progeny of Isaac, but also monotheists (*ḥanīf*) from the descendants of Ishmael to whom his clan belonged to. Thus Muḥammad and by extension Islām could very well have benefited from both Abrahamic lineages and their collective written and oral wisdoms. A dimension often missed, but has been pointed out by Margaret Barker (1944-),[296] is that a third group of people also lived in Arabia, they being descendants of the High Priests of the First Temple, who had fled to Arabia after the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (d. 562 BCE) in 586 BCE. Barker believes that a part of this early mystical wisdom may have transferred to the descendants of the High Priests who had by the seventh century settled in Madīnah and its surrounding areas. Why this is significant is that within the philosophy of Imāmat, the Imām is also an inheritor of all the collective wisdoms shared from Adam to the present. When Ibn 'Arabī expounds his mystical ideas, he too shares in the philosophy of both being chosen by God and inheriting wisdom. His spiritual endeavor appears to incapsulate the essential realities of Prophets from Adam to Jesus and concluding on Muḥammad.

In relating this chapter back to the overall theme of this thesis, which compares the Imām to the Perfect Human, the above-mentioned four main conditions; namely infallibility, Divinely-

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[296] Margaret Barker DD was elected as the President of the Society for Old Testament Study and is a founder of Temple Theology. Her conclusions were made in a private gathering in London of April 2018.

inspired knowledge, spiritual superiority and divine appointment, are mirrored in the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī, as will be examined in the second section. Interestingly, these four conditions are in fact esoteric in nature, thus proving even more important to the wider discourse across this thesis. As previous stated, the Imām is an inheritor of the perennial wisdom, bringing together not only Abrahamic wisdom, but also inherited wisdom from Adam, the human archetype. Ibn 'Arabī in his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* dresses the Perfect Human as the embodiment of the prophetic wisdom, and inheritor to the spiritual lineage of the prophets, as can be witnessed by the formulation of his chapters, each being under the name of a Prophet, as named in the Qur'ān. The Perfect Human must acquire the perfection of each Prophet listed in the *Fuṣūṣ*, to be able to actualise his or her full potential. There is an undeniable inclusivity expressed in the *Fuṣūṣ*, which is also present when examining the spiritual inheritance of the Imām. This inclusivity and pluralism is of course highlighted by the Traditionalist - Perennial School in their reading of Shaykh al-Akbar.

Before starting the next chapter on 'Alī, it may be worth drawing attention to the fact that in *ḥadīth* literature, there are traditions on how to recognize an Imām. I believe our existing discussion is sufficient in grasping an understanding how to recognize an Imām without adding an extra subchapter, however, I will briefly summarize two traditions so to supplement our existing discourse. The first tradition is from 'Alī where he highlights a number of signs that should be apparent in an Imām. The Imām should be infallible from all sins, make no mistakes in his rulings, nor should he forget and his heart should be clean from worldly attachments. He should be the most learned in *sharī'ah*, the bravest and most forgiving.[297] The *sixth* Imām presents a similar list that he should be the most knowledgeable and be the best in passing judgment with wisdom. The Imām should be the most pious, wise, brave and forgiving from all the people. He should also be incomparable in worshipping God (*a'bud al-nās*).[298]

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[297] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* I, 245-6.
[298] Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma'ālī al-akhbār*, c.f. Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* I, 247.

Chapter 7. ʻAlī: The First Imām

The postion of ʻAlī is a significant one, as he plays a central role in both Shīʻī tradition and Ibn ʻArabī's interpretation of Islām. On the surface of it, it was in fact acceptance of ʻAlī and a rejection of the leadership of Abū Bakr, which was primarily the cause behind the Shīʻī – Sunnī schism, however, ʻAlī does feature positively in parts of Sunnī tradition. It therefore may not be accurate to equate Ibn ʻArabī's reverence for ʻAlī as solely borrowed from Shīʻī tradition, or that highlighting ʻAlī's qualities as being a Shīʻī phenomenon, without analysing what Sunnī tradition actually says. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to list ʻAlī's qualities found in Sunnī tradition so as to demonstrate the existence of sources after the first Islamic century that show some reverence towards ʻAlī. This is important as Ibn ʻArabī positioned ʻAlī as the perfect man. The second subchapter will delve into ʻAlī's cosmic significance and the third part of this chapter will briefly explore ʻAlī's relationship with the Qur'an. The second and third subchapters are equally important, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, in that the Perfect Human's cosmic relationship and understanding of the Qur'an within Ibn ʻArabī's theoretical discourse is indeed very similar to Shīʻism's comprehsenion of ʻAlī's guardianship both within creation and over his followers. What is core to both doctrines is the notion of *wilāyah*. In both cases, ʻAlī's position in the hierarchy of *wilāyah* is joined to that of Muḥammad. For this reason, it is important to dig deeper into the qualities of ʻAlī as will be attempted in this chapter.

7.1 Qualities of ʻAlī found in Sunnī Tradition

Although the purpose of this subchapter is to touch upon non-Shīʻī traditions in praise of ʻAlī, it is worth noting that by no means would this have been reflective of how ʻAlī was perceived in the first three centuries among non-Shīʻas. The Umayyad period (661-750/ 40-132 AH) witnessed ʻAlī's transformation into a heretic through a process of vilification, which resulted in public cursing[299] and compilation of *ḥadīth* attacking his character.[300] The Kūfan, Sayf b. ʻUmar (d. 796/ 180 AH), is just one example of a prolific writer of that era labeling ʻAlī as

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[299] Madelung. W, *The succession to Muḥammad*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1997), 334-335
[300] An example to follow.

being in cahoots with criminals and insurrectionists.[301] It was not until the beginning of the third Islamic century that compilers of Sunnī ḥadīth literature began sifting through contradictory narratives to abrogate accounts of ʿAlī only being immoral and impious. With the ʿUthmāniyyah's gradual acceptance of ʿAlī in the latter rule of the Abbasids, a slow process of censorship began with omission of derogatory material from mainstream ḥadīth literature that had been in circulation in the first two centuries of Islām. An example of this is an early tradition originating under the Umayyads and most probably fabricated by ʿAmr b. Al-ʿĀṣ (d. 664),[302] which mentions Muḥammad as stating: "the family of Abū Ṭālib (father of ʿAlī) are no allies of mine. Rather, God and the righteous among the faithful are my allies […]".[303] This slowly became "the family of so-and-so (fulān) are no allies of mine […]".[304] Ironically both of these styles were taken from al-Bukhārī, with the first version coming earlier in history as reported by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1449/ 852 AH), and the censored version becoming more prevalent a century after the death of al-Bukhārī. Al-Bukhārī narrates three different forms of the same tradition, with the earliest containing the complete form that mentions 'the family of Abū Ṭālib', the next tradition omitting the phrase 'the family of Abū Ṭālib' with the word 'fulān' and the final tradition with a complete omission. Exactly when a complete omission of such traditions occurred from books like al-Bukhārī is difficult to pinpoint, however judging from the period Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 1258) wrote his Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, the uncensored versions that mention 'the family of Abū Ṭālib' were still available in the thirteenth century. The process of omission however must have started a generation before al-Bukhārī, for him to have narrated the variants of this tradition. Current copies of al-Bukhārī do not contain the phrase 'the family of Abū Ṭālib'. For the purpose of identifying qualities of ʿAlī in early Sunnī sources, I will cherry pick only those Sunnī traditions in praise of ʿAlī.

[301]Anthony. S.W, *The Caliph and The Heretic: Ibn Saba and The Origins of Shi'ism*, Brill, (Leiden, 2012), 82-135

[302] Ibn Ḥajar al- ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi- Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut, 1980), IV, 64.

[303] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha,* (Qum, 1983), IV, 64.

[304] Ibn Ḥajar al- ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi- Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut, 1980), X, 350-354.

A narration regarded as authentically Sunnī is the ḥadīth of 'the ten with glad tidings of heaven' (al-'ashrah al-mubashirūn bil-jannah), found in both al-Tirmidhī[305] and Sunan ibn Abī Dā'ūd.[306] Despite holding no authenticity in Shī'ī tradition, it acknowledges 'Alī as one of the ten guaranteed paradise. Furthermore, two qualities unique to 'Alī were that he was made brother by Muḥammad in the first year after ḥijrah, when Muḥammad decided to pair companions of the same qualities to each other, giving them a responsibility as the keeper of their brother.[307] The second of the two superior qualities was that he was the husband of Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭimah, who had been invested with the title of 'Master of the Women of the Worlds' (Sayyidah Nisā' āl-Ālamīn).[308] Other qualities included him being the first to embrace Islām. 'Alī has been quoted as saying that the Prophet declared Islām on a Monday and I accepted it on a Wednesday (with his age at the time reportedly being ten years old).[309] During the Battle of Tabuk (630/9 AH), Muḥammad had made him his deputy in Madīnah.[310] He was also given the standard on the day of Khaybar, when Muḥammad had told his companions that whoever is given the standard will lead the Muslims to victory.[311] In terms of his knowledge, Muḥammad is reported to have said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate",[312] with a tradition from 'Umar when requiring guidance that reads: "'Without 'Alī, 'Umar would surely have perished",[313] and a further tradition from Ibn 'Abbās who said: "By God, 'Alī has been granted nine tenth of all knowledge; and by God, he owns a share of what you own from the remaining one tenth".[314] 'Aisha when commenting on 'Alī's unique merits states: "Beware that 'Alī is the most knowledgeable among the people to the Sunnah (prophetic disposition) of Muḥammad.[315] Also whenever any verse beginning with the phrase

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[305] Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī, The Book of Virtue* (book 49), ḥadīth 4112.
[306] Ibn Abī Dā'ūd, Sunan ibn Abī Dā'ūd, The Book of Sunnah (Book 42), ḥadīth 54.
[307] Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat ibn Hishām*, Chapter 107.
[308] Qutbuddin, T. *Fatima (al-Zahra') bint Muhammad*, in *Medieval Islamic Civilization*: An Encyclopedia, Routledge, (New York, 2006), I, 249, al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* VII, translated by M.V. McDonald & annotated by W. Montgomery Watt, SUNY Press, (New York, 1987), 18.
[309]Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat ibn Hishām*, Chapter 53.
[310] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* vol. 9, translated & annotated by I.K. Poonawala, SUNY Press, (New York, 1990), 51.
[311] al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* vol. 8, translated by M. Fishbein, SUNY Press, (New York, 1997), 119.
[312] Al-Suyūṭī. J, *Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, (London, 1995/1415 AH), 186, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ḥadīth 3744.
[313] Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istiʿāb*, Maktabah Nahdah, (Cairo, 1960), III, 39.
[314] *Ibid.* p.40.
[315] Ibid. p.462.

'*O you who believe [...]*' was mentioned, the companions were told that the *amīr* (leader) of the believers was 'Alī. Furthermore, there were three hundred verses of the Qur'ān revealed in praise of 'Alī and that to look at his face is worship.[316] Muḥammad seems to have singled out 'Alī on a number of occasions, only allowing himself and 'Alī to dwell in the vicinity of the Mosque in Madīnah, whilst all others were excluded.[317] He also made clear that 'Alī is from him, and that he (Muḥammad) is from 'Alī.[318] In light of the above mentioned qualities, it is not surprising to appreciate the superiority of 'Alī, be it in his knowledge, spirituality or leadership, yet the most telling tradition is by 'Alī himself whilst quoting Muḥammad: "[...] no-one would love me except a believer and that no-one would hate me except a hypocrite".[319] Even the birth of 'Alī in the *Ka'ba* is symbolic, as there is no other source to indicate anyone else being born in it from when Abraham and Ishmael built it. The *Ka'ba*, described as the House of God and centre for monotheism, in a religion where God has no son or relative, finds itself in a peculiar situation, when a semi-miraculous birth takes place inside its walls.

A key point needing to be highlighted in this subchapter is that to love 'Alī, or to accept his superiority in matters of faith, in bravery, status or spirituality, does not automatically equate that a person be Shī'ī , at least not after the formative period of Islām. Ṣufīsm is a classic example of both acceptance and veneration of the position of the *ahl al-bayt*. First to have been called Ṣufī, according to Jāmī (d. 1492),[320] was 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanafīyah (d. 700)[321] and grandson of 'Alī. This may suggest why there has been perceived strong Shī'ī influences on the development of Ṣufīsm. In an early Ṣufī manual, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Alī Ḥujwīrī (d. 1077) addresses the superiority of the first six Imāms.[322] In outlining the role of

[316] Al-Suyūṭī. J, *Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, (London, 1995/1415 AH), 188-89. Though al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505/ 849 AH), came some two hundred years after Ibn 'Arabī, he is considered as amongst the great authorities on *ḥadīth* literature in the Sunnī world. Following the compilation of the six authenticate books, a further authentication process of primary tradition was undertaken firstly by ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), then al-Asqalānī, followed by al-Suyūṭī. Therefore, the traditions found in his *Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, are authentication from the period of the six authenticated books.

[317] Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal*, Dār al- Ṣādir, (Beirut, n.d.), IV, 329, *ḥadīth* 19502.

[318] Al-Bukharī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī, Kitāb Faḍā'il Ṣaḥāba al-Nabī*, Dār al-Islām l'Nashr wa al-Tūzī', (Riyadh, 1999), 624.

[319] Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal*, *ḥadīth* 1062.

[320] Jullundhry. R.A, *Quranic Exegesis in Classical Literature*, Institute of Islamic Culture, (Lahore, 2010), 56, c.f. Nicholson. R.A, *A Literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge University Press*, (Cambridge, 1966), 229, c.f. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*.

[321] A more detailed mention of Ibn Ḥanafīyah will come later in the subsection of *Wilāyah* and the Imām.

[322] He also has a section describing the qualities of the Rashidūn Caliphs (632 – 661).

'Alī, he quotes Junayd (d. 910) having said: "Alī is our *Shaykh*[323] in the principles (knowledge of the spiritual pathway) and in enduring affliction". Ḥujwīrī then goes on to add: "This means in regards to knowledge and enduring affliction, the Imām of the *tarīqah* is 'Alī".[324] From these earlier texts, it is clear that there is an acceptance of the *wilāyah* of 'Alī, however as discussion on the political dimensions of the *wilāyah* is not mentioned, it can be reasonably inferred that at the very least, all other components of the absolute *wilāyah* of 'Alī were acknowledged. By the twelfth century, Ṣufī orders boasted lineages traced to 'Alī through the Shī'ī seventh and eighth Imāms. Two revered masters of the twelfth century were 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (d. 1166), founder of the Qādirīyah order, with a chain going through the *eighth* Imām and the other Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī (d. 1181) from who the Rifā'ī order takes its name, with a genealogy through the *seventh* Imām. Though not all the Imāms are mentioned in most of the spiritual Ṣufī lineages, their statuses are acknowledged, which is very telling of them encompassing nature of Sufism.[325]

7.2 The Imām and Creation

Having addressed early Sunnī inclinations for 'Alī, the discussion now progresses to Shī'ī sources. There are effectively four primary sources through which early Shī'ī mystical cosmology can be derived from. Though immediately following the beginning of the major occultation, less emphasis had been given to early mystical tradition, three sermons of 'Alī incapsulate the early mystical Shī'ī position on creation, cosmology and the esoteric dimensions of prophecy and Imāmat. These three sermons have come to be referred to as *Khuṭbat al-Bayān* (Sermon of the Clear Declaration), *Khuṭbat al-Taṭanjiyyah* (Sermon of the Gulf), and *Khuṭbat al-Iftikhār* (Sermon of Glory). According to the acclaimed bibliographer and authority on Shī'ī *ḥadīth* literature, Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī (d. 1970), *Khuṭbat al-Bayān* and *Khuṭbat al-Iftikhār* were part of the same original text including *Khuṭbat al-Ashbāḥ* (Sermon

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[323] The perfect man and spiritual guide/medium whose responsibility is to guide the novice to union with God.
[324] Ḥujwīrī. A, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Intishārāt Sarūsh, sixth edition, (Tehran, 2014), 102.
[325] It is worth noting that this also applies to the Ash'arī theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) as he evolved in his own mystical practices became more accepting of ideas outside of his own theological and jurisprudential confines. There is a visible contrast between a younger al-Ghazālī when writing under the patronage of the Seljuq Sultanate and an older al-Ghazālī whilst penning *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa al-zandaqah*.

of Silhouttes) reported in the *Nahj al-Balāgha.*[326] We can therefore comfortably assume from when the *Nahj* was compiled,[327] that the three mentioned sermons were in circulation in the fourth century. This goes hand in hand with the origins of *Khuṭbat al-Taṭanjiyyah*, which according to Amir-Moezzi, can be traced to early Nuṣayrī texts dating back to the latter part of the third century.[328] The fourth and final text, housing mystical literature on the nature of Imāmat is the *ḥadīth* compilation *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt.*[329]

Taking from the mystical symbology and language found in 'Alī's sermons, prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and Imāmat are two indispensable faces of divine guidance, both fashioned from the same ilk, but with differing functions. Imāms complement the message brought by Prophets, implement it and unveil its hidden meaning to those searching for a higher purpose in life. This of course aligns with the two mystical Names of God, *al-Ẓāhir* (the Apparent) and *al-Bāṭin* (the Hidden).[330] These two Names encapsulate the divine disposition and by highlighting two antithetical qualities, which in short helps to demonstrate the completeness and perfection of God. God as the Absolute is inconceivable and unapproachable, transcending all qualifications possible to humans, as the Qur'ān states: "*There is nothing like Him, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*".[331] However, whilst He is completely transcendental, the Qur'ān also conveys to the faithful a seemly contrasting message – in so much as God is hidden and transcends, He is also apparent. The Qur'ān gives God proximity: "*[…]We are closer to him (man) than his jugular vein*".[332] In the Prophet and Imām are two manifestations of this divine reality. The Imāmat contains the hidden aspects of Prophecy. The Prophet gives a divine map to the faithful and the Imām then teaches the faithful how to use this divine map to transcend and reach the Face of God.

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[326] Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī'a*, n.p., (Tehran, 1978), VII, 198
[327] Compiled by Sharīf al-Raḍī (d.1015/ 406 AH), a prominent student of al-Mufīd.
[328] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, I.B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, (New York, 2011), 121.
[329] For more details, refer to the chapter on 'Introducing the Sources'.
[330] For further elaboration on the nature of these two Names, refer to 'Alī's sermon, known as *Khuṭbat al-Taṭanjiyyah.*
[331] Qur'ān 42:11.
[332] *Ibid.* 50:16.

To understand the closeness Muḥammad has to ʿAlī better, al-Ṣadūq bring forth a number of traditions from the compiler of *Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt*, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī. One such tradition is by Abū Dharr (d. 652), a revered companion of Muḥammad describing the beginning of creation. Pre-existing two thousand years before the creation of Adam, Muḥammad and ʿAlī existed as one light, glorifying God.[333] It was after the creation of Adam that this light was placed into the loins of Adam, later to be transferred through generations, accompanying Noah as he entered the Ark and being with Abraham as he was cast into the fire.[334] The light continued to travel until it finally reached ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of both Muḥammad and ʿAlī. It is then that the light divided into two, a part transferring to ʿAbd Allāh (Muḥammad's father) and a part entering Abū Ṭālib (the father of ʿAlī).[335] Abū Dharr then continues to say that the names given to both Muḥammad and ʿAlī were from the divine Names of *al-Maḥmūd* (The Praised One), through which Muḥammad was derived and *al-Aʿlā* (The Most High) through which ʿAlī originated from.[336] In a similar tradition, cited by al-Ṣadūq, the *sixth* Imām is quoted to have said:

> Two thousand years before creation, Muḥammad[337] and ʿAlī were one light before God…light formed from one main trunk from which sprang a shining ray…And God said: 'Here is a light from my Light; its trunk is prophecy and its branch is the Imāmat; prophecy belongs to Muḥammad, My servant (*ʿabdī*) and messenger, (*rasūlī*) and the Imāmat belongs to ʿAlī, My proof (*ḥujjatī*) and friend (*waliyī*). Without them I would not have created my creation'. This is why ʿAlī always said: 'I proceed from Muḥammad as one clarity proceeds from another'.[338]

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[333] Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIʿlal al-Sharāʿī*, n.p., (Najaf: 1966), ch.139, p.174.
[334] *Khuṭbat al-Bayān*, Al-Majlisī, *Ḥiyāt al-Qulūb*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum: 1997), 5.
[335] *Ibid.* 3, reference to the passing of light is found in al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, section of the devotional prayer when visiting the grave of al-Ḥusayn in the only surviving original manuscript written by al-Mufīd.
[336] Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, (Qum: 1985/1405 AH), I, 252.
[337] Al-Majlisī references a tradition from al-Ṣadūq, who in turn narrates it on the authority of the *sixth* Imām. He writes that the sacred light of Muḥammad was created before the heavens and the earth, the throne (*al-ʿarsh*), the chair (*al-kursī*), the divine pen (*al-qalam*), the divine tablet (*al-luḥ*) and even heaven and hell. He created this light four hundred and twenty-four thousand years before the creation of Adam. In it He formed twelve compartments. The tradition is lengthy, however the important point is that the tradition goes on to add ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were created before Adam, the heavens, earth, the sun, moon and in fact light and darkness itself, al-Ṣadūq, *Maʿālī al-akhbār*, p.36, c.f. al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn*, p. 107, Intishārāt ʿAlīmī wa Farhangī, (Qum, 2010), al-Majlisī, *Ḥiyāt al-Qulūb*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 1997), 3-4. When the term year is used in these traditions, it is indicative of stages as opposed to physical time.
[338] Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIʿlal al-sharāʿī*, (Najaf: 1966), ch.139, 174.

Although this tradition singles out the light of Muḥammad and ‘Alī, it is not just their light which is superior and holy. From the one light comes the light of Fāṭimah,[339] al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.[340] In a story of Adam, after Eve is created, the angels stand behind Adam, to which he asks God the reason for it. God replies that it is out of respect to the light of Muḥammad which has been put in his loins. Adam then asks for this light to be made apparent so that the angels can stand in line with him. At this point God manifests five lights, each appearing on one of his five fingers. God then teaches Adam the name of these fives, with the story concluding: "The beaming radiance of these lights was like the sun, so that the heavens and earth, the empyrean and throne […] were illuminated by it".[341] The point here is that Muḥammad and his *ahl al-bayt* are made from the light of God, which immediately distinguishes them from the rest of creation. Their superiority as cited by al-Kulaynī, is not just that they originate from light, but when God wished to give them form, He created them from a superior clay which came from *‘illīyīn* (the highest level of paradise).[342] In the realm of souls (before the creation of matter) and on the plain of *Alast*, Muḥammad was the first from the progeny of Adam in testifying monotheism: "God established a covenant with the Prophets and made them testify against their souls when the Lord said to them: 'am I not your Lord (*alastu be-Rabbikum*)?', they all replied: 'Yes, You are our Lord'. I was the first to answer that question positively".[343] This of course is an important declaration, as coupled with the light of Muḥammad was ‘Alī. With the creation and fall of Adam, Adam used the names of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn as intercessors to God for his repentance

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[339] Fāṭimah plays a central role in Shī‘ī cosmology with descriptions of her light mimicking that of Muḥammad and ‘Alī. I will quote a tradition on the authority of Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh to illustrate this point: "Fāṭimah was named al-Zahrā' as God created her from the glory of His light. The angels squinted as the light shone bright through the heavens and earth and went into prostration asking: 'Our Lord, our Master, what is this light?' God replied: 'This light is a light from my light that I have fashioned in My sky (heaven/ higher realm)[…]'", al-Ṣadūq, *‘I'lal al-sharā‘ī'*, I, 179, c.f. al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, II, 409. Though this tradition does not indicate that her light was the first in creation, it does highlight that her light was directly from God. There are similar traditions pertaining to the rest of the Imāms. What is important to note is that the essence of the *ahl al-bayt* is different from the rest of creation. They are described as coming from the one light, whereas the rest of creation are not made from the light of God.
[340] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 160-162
[341] Al-Majlisī, *Ḥiyāt al-qulūb*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 1997), 9, al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn*, 139-140, c.f. Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 242.
[342] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, II:1:1.
[343] *Ibid.* 9.

to be accepted.[344] It is not just the pre-existence of Muḥammad and his family, but their central role in the evolution of creation which underlines their eternal lofty status. Once the progeny of Adam began to multiply, there are incidences where the spiritual presence of 'Alī, the Imām par excellence is witnessed before his biological appearance on earth, for example a creature (not human, but possibly from the *jinn*) came to Muḥammad asking him about a particular difficult religious ruling. In the meantime, 'Alī entered and the creature on seeing him, shrunk in size. The Prophet asked why he had got scared and shrunk, to which he replied, because of the youth ('Alī) who had entered and sat to the side of the Prophet. The Prophet continued to probe as to why, to which the creature said that when the floods in the time of Noah took place, he wanted to sink the Ark, but that this very youth came striking his hand and cutting it off, thus preventing the creature from damaging the Ark.[345] Instances such as these add to the superhuman abilities made available to 'Alī and also highlights specific functions that 'Alī plays on earth. The famous *dhikr*, known by mystics as *nāde 'Alī*,[346] captures an important part of his role as helper and support for the faithful in times of worries and hardships.

Not easy to brush past is the description of Muḥammad and 'Alī being a single light preceding creation as cited by al-Ṣadūq.[347] They have been described as coming from the light of God, which in itself is the source of all lights or the Light of lights (*nūr al-anwār*).[348] Light amongst mystical philosophers such as Suhrawardī was a synonym for existence. Suhrawardī was not the founder of the Islamic School of Illumination, but at least until the seventeenth century was the primary authority on Illuminationism. The definition of existence given by early peripatetics and later existential philosophers in the Islamic world, is what Suhrawardī explains light to be: "*Anything in existence that requires no definition or explanation is evident. Since there is nothing more evident than light, there is nothing less in need of definition*".[349] In philosophical terms, light is simple, as it has no parts or components to describe it by and is not divisible. Anything that has parts through which it can be described is

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[344] Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khisāl*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2008), 438.
[345] Al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-Anwār al-Yaqīn*, p. 58, c.f. Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 181.
[346] With *dhikr* is practiced both in traditional *ṣufī* orders and amongst the Shī'ī *'urafā*.
[347] Al-Ṣadūq, *'I'lal al-sharā'ī'*, (Najaf, 1966), ch.139, 174.
[348] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 161.
[349] Suhrawardī. S. *The Philosophy of Illumination*, Brigham University Press (Utah, 1999), 76.

compound. Thus the first substance, or cause is light or in philosophical terms it can be equated to existence itself. A thing is either the source of light, giving light to another, or is dependent on receiving light. Using the same analogy as light, God the source of existence gives existence to His creation. It is through the medium of Muḥammad and 'Alī as the original cause that God creates the rest of creation. Light makes manifest, in the same way, the light of Muḥammad and 'Alī make creation manifest. As it is through illumination things are seen, thus truth can only be grasped through comprehending the first light. In the same manner, the Qur'ān regarded as the universal truth has also been alluded to as light: "*Therefore, have faith in God and His Prophet and in the light which We have sent down*".[350] Similarly, "*A proof has now come to you from your Lord. We have sent it down to you as clear light*".[351] Thus the one light, in its outward form was the first emanation through which all else flowed from and in its esoteric sense is the manifest true light of God, by which human beings are shown the universal truth. For this reason, the Qur'ān names Muḥammad a "light-giving lamp" (*sirāj al-munīrā*),[352] as he is a source of guidance that lights the path for others to follow. Muḥammad and 'Alī by originating from one light are inseparable, whilst possessing similar qualities. Ibn 'Abbās reports from the Prophet as cited by al-Ṣadūq:

> God gave me five things and gave five things to 'Alī; He gave me the most complete speech (*jawāmi' al-kilam*, indicative of the Qur'ān) and gave him the most complete knowledge (*jawāmi' al-'ilm*, implying esoteric/initiatory knowledge). He made me a Prophet and him successor (*waṣī*) to a Prophet. He offered me *al-Kawthar* and offered him *al-Salsabīl* (two heavenly streams). He graced me with revelation (*waḥy*) and him with inspiration (*ilhām*). He had me travel by night (*isrā'*) to Him and He opened the gates of heaven for him so that he saw what I saw.[353]

There is a lack of separation between Muḥammad and 'Alī, such that their essential qualities and 'gifts' bestowed by God are similar. This too indicates the similarities, as well as relationship between Prophecy and Imāmat. The closest Muḥammad got to God in terms of

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[350] Qur'ān 64:8.
[351] *Ibid.* 4:174.
[352] *Ibid.* 33:46.
[353] Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khisāl*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2008), 474.

spiritual proximity was in his night journey (*isrā'*). The station that he reached is referred to in the Qur'ān as '*Qāb Qawsayn*' (two bows length).[354] It is at this junction that God spoke to Muḥammad directly. An account of it can be found in the book *Kashf al-ghummah fī ma'rifat al-a'immah*,[355] as well as earlier accounts such as in *Manāqib*,[356] where Muḥammad is asked in which language God spoke to him. He replied in the tone of 'Alī, with an explanation that God said He is above all creation (speech being created), and there is nothing equal to Him and as He had created Muḥammad from Himself (His light), so too did He create 'Alī from the light of Muḥammad. God being aware of the secrets that lay in the heart of Muḥammad, knew that there was no one more beloved to him than 'Alī, so He spoke to him in the tone of 'Alī.[357] There are similar accounts that can be found mentioning the triad of God, Muḥammad and 'Alī in relation to their closeness.[358]

Before completing this subchapter, I will briefly touch upon the essential cause of creation. Al-Majlisī references al-Ṣadūq, who in turn narrates a tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām. The tradition is lengthy, however the Prophet is quoted as saying:

> When God willed to create us, He uttered a word from which He formed light, then He pronounced another word from which He created spirit; He next tempered the light with the spirit, and then formed me, 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and we ascribed praise to God when besides us there was not another existence to give Him glory. When God proposed to create the universe, He expanded my light, and from it formed the empyrean, my light being derived from the light of God. I am therefore more excellent than the empyrean. He next expanded the light of my brother 'Alī and from it formed the angels, consequently he is more excellent than they. He then expanded the light of my daughter Fāṭimah and formed from it the heavens and the earth, which are therefore inferior to her. Afterwards He expanded the light of

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[354] Qur'ān 53:9.
[355] This book was compiled by 'Alī ibn 'Isā al-Irbīlī (d. 1293) on the merits of the Imāms.
[356] Compiled by al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Khwārazmī (d. 1190/586 AH)
[357] Fayẓ Kāshānī. M, *Al-Ṣāfī*, Nashar Nawīd Islām, (Qum, 2008), vol.4, p.164, al-Khwārazmī, al-Manāqib, (Qum, n.d.), 87.
[358] Refer to *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*.

my grandson al-Ḥasan and from it formed the sun and moon […] Lastly, He expanded the light of my grandson al-Ḥusayn and from it formed Paradise […].[359]

This tradition complements the acclaimed *ḥadīth al-kisā'*, in so much as it emphasizes Muḥammad and his family being the substance through which the world was created and essentially answering the question as to how the world was created. *Al-kisā'* identifies why the world was created; why being a result of the love God had for Muḥammad and his family. Taking into account what has just been discussed in this subchapter, some of the traditions mentioned in previous chapters can now be reinterpreted. In reference to a previous tradition mentioning whosoever dies without recognizing the Imām of their time, dies the death of ignorance, this is because the higher purpose of existence is to gain *ma'rifah* (esoteric knowledge) of God, as He was a hidden treasure and loved to be known. If the light of Muḥammad and 'Alī is considered the first emanation, then contained within all spiritual prime matter are sparks of the Muḥammadan light. In fact as God was a hidden treasure, or beyond comprehension, it is through the first emanation that God is recognized. The Imām of the time is the inheritor of this light and therefore to know the Imām is to know the light. If one comes to know the light, it is as if he or she has understood their own essential nature, due to this light being the first emanation. Ignorance of the Imām of the time is by virtue ignorance of the self and God. As light makes things manifest, the Muḥammadan light which leads to creation becoming manifest is also the highest medium in illuminating the heart, which in turn results in *ma'rifah* of one's Lord (*Rabb*). This is in direct reference to the prophetic tradition as quoted by Ibn 'Arabī, in the *Futūḥāt*: "*He who knows himself, knows his lord*".[360] The term to know God is not used, but Lord is, due to its direct relationship with creation. *Rabb* in its basic understanding denotes a sustainer and it can be used for a creator. The Lord of the world is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of the world. All of these three names have a causal relationship with creation. To be a creator means you create a thing, similarly, to be a sustainer requires you to sustain a thing and to be master means that you have something to show

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[359] Al-Majlisī, *Ḥiyāt al-qulūb*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 1997), 4. Al-Majlisī's importance is in his sheer ability to compile *ḥadīth* from over four hundred Shī'a and Sunnī primary sources with chains of transmission reaching early narrators of the second and third century of Islām.
[360] Found in volumes 2 & 3.

mastery over. In all these cases there is a direct two way causal relationship. *Al-Rabb* itself comes under the divine names of action. The one who knows himself knows his Lord, his Creator and Sustainer, but not God as the Absolute, infinite and immutable being. God as Absolute or in terms of His essence, can not be known, but it is through His names of action and attributes that He comes to be known. Thus, the tradition previously quote from the *sixth* Imām[361], that had it not been for the Imāms, God would not have been worshipped or known, complements the fact that the Muḥammadan light and by extension the light of the *ahl al-bayt*, are all lenses through which God is recognized correctly. True monotheism is only understood as a result of the Muḥammadan light and thus its inheritors. The Perfect Human is the complete divine mirror through whom the names and attributes of God are known. The process of knowing oneself is to also come to know the perfect man, due to him being an intricate part of humanity. In Shī'ism the Perfect Human would be Muḥammad and the twelve Imāms that succeed him.

7.3 'Alī and the Qur'ān

There are complex discussions in Shī'ī Qur'ānic exegesis and hermeneutics on 'Alī's contributions to this study. Previously mentioned are traditions to underline the superiority of 'Alī in relation to knowledge of the Qur'ān and its commentary. These skills, which include both exoteric and esoteric meanings were then passed to key members of 'Alī's family and trusted companions. He was of course in a unique position to have lived and experienced the Qur'ān as it was revealed: "Verily God has distinguished me ('Alī) amongst the Companions of Muḥammad with knowledge of the abrogating and the abrogated, the clear and the ambiguous, the general and the particular, and that is one of the blessings God has granted to me and His Prophet […]",[362] as cited by al-Ṣadūq. In relation to the Prophet, 'Alī describes himself in the following way: "I followed him (the Prophet) as a baby camel follows its mother"[363] (a tradition also found in Sunnī literature, such as in the commentary of the *Nahj* by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd). Thus as a result of his closeness to the Prophet and the Qur'ān, he would say: "Ask me before you lose me, for by God there is no verse of the Qur'ān save that I know

[361] Refer to page 28.
[362] Mahdavirad. M.A, History of Hadith Compilation, ICAS Press, (London, 2017), 394.
[363] *Ibid.* 393.

about whom it was revealed, where it was revealed- whether on a plain or a mountain. Indeed my Lord has granted me a heart that applies reason and a tongue that pronounces (the truth)",[364] as cited by al-Balādhurī (d. 892/ 278-279 AH). Furthermore al-Ḥakim al-Ḥaskānī (d.1096/ 409 AH), quotes a tradition in reference to 'Alī as saying: "There is no verse in the Qur'ān save that I recited it aloud to God's Prophet and he taught me its meaning".[365] The purpose of quoting 'Alī consecutively is to present in his own words a clear and unbroken connection that he had with Muḥammad and the Qur'ān. It is evident that 'Alī had been chosen to undergo what appears to be some sort of formal training under the tutelage of Muḥammad in grasping the essence of the Qur'ān. This training was reserved only for 'Alī. There are added traditions to indicate that just before Muḥammad's death, he presented 'Alī a book, which he referred to as the 'Book of God' and that 'Alī then went about compiling it.[366] Two questions immediately arise; the first is that if the Qur'ān was already in book form, why did early Muslims not come directly to 'Alī for it and secondly, what was 'Alī compiling after the death of Muḥammad if not the Qur'ān? Traditions on 'Alī and his compilation suggest that what is meant by compiling may well have been ordering verses chronologically, interpreting the verses in detail, arranging other dictations by Muḥammad on the verses, clarifying both the ambiguous verses from the clear ones and arranging the abrogated verses from the abrogating ones. He would have also added the reason why certain verses were revealed and for whom they were revealed. Suffice it to say, early scholars of *sīrah* (biographies of Muḥammad) such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 741/ 124 AH) have written: "Were the *muṣḥaf* (of 'Alī) found, it would have been most useful and plentiful in knowledge",[367] as it was 'Alī who has been quoted as saying: "If I wished, I could have laden seventy camels the commentary of the *Opening* (chapter of the Qur'ān)",[368] as cited by Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 1192/ 588 AH). Further to the quote by al-Zuhrī, the term *muṣḥaf* indicates a supplement to the Qur'ān, which was other than the text of the Qur'ān. The purpose of this subchapter is to exhibit 'Alī's eminence of the

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[364] Balādhurī. A, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, Dār al-Ma'āif, (Cairo, n.d.), II, 99.

[365] Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, (Mu'assasat al-Ṭib' wa al-Nashr al-Tāb'at Lūzārah al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Islāmī, (Tehran, 1990), I, 43.

[366] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, al-Ḥaidarīyah, (Najaf, 1956/1376 AH), II, 50.

[367] Al-Sahālawī al-Anṣārī al-Lucknowī, *Fawātiḥ al-Raḥmūt Besharḥ Muslim al-Thabūt*, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Ilmīyah, (Beirut, 2002), II, 12.

[368] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, al-Ḥaidarīyah, (Najaf: 1956/1376 AH), II, 43.

Qur'ān, thus reasonably indicating that after Muḥammad, responsibility for guidance was passed to 'Alī due to his comprehensive understand of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān as a book of guidance and word of God delivered to Muḥammad was left with 'Alī to interpret. In *Khuṭbat al-Bayān*,[369] 'Alī is quoted as saying: "I know the hidden meaning of the Qur'ān and I am master of all previously revealed scripture. I know the rightful interpretation of the Qur'ān and I am the face of God in the skies and on the earth […]". To conclude on the words of the *sixth* Imām: "God has made of our *wilāyah*, we the *ahl al-bayt*, the axis (*quṭb*) around which the Qur'ān gravitates".[370]

In both Shī'ī theology and Ibn 'Arabī's mystical philosophy, 'Alī's role is central in the overall understanding of both the Imām and the Perfect Human. Whether discussing 'Alī in terms of *wilāyah*, creation or the Qur'ān, the importance of such themes cannot be underestimated. Though theological in nature, the mentioned themes are also of esoteric importance in Shī'ism. Similarly *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* is instrumental in demonstrating a similar emphasis to the importance of 'Alī and his cosmological relationship to both the Creator, religion and creation. It can be inferred that Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of 'Alī is not only philosophical in nature, but incorporates a theological angle, the nuances of which, as described in this chapter, could only be found in Shī'ism up to life and times of Ibn 'Arabī.

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[369] One of four mystical sermons of 'Alī as mentioned in the subchapter of 'Imām and creation'.
[370] Fayẓ Kāshānī. M, *Al-Ṣāfī*, c.f. Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, 241.

Chapter 8. Wilāyah and the Imām

Any discussion on Imāmat would be incomplete without an analysis of what *wilāyah* entails. This term is commonly found in both Shī'ī and Ṣufī literature holding similar meaning to its adherents. Deeply embedded in the works of Ibn 'Arabī is the theme of *wilāyah* and it is through his works that has made the discourse on *wilāyah* a relatable one amongst generations of Ṣufīs who succeeded him. Shī'ism in many ways owes a debt to Ibn 'Arabī and his teachings for having created awareness in non- Shī'ī circles on the spiritual dimensions of what *wilāyah* encompasses. This allowed for later Shī'ī thinkers to have an existing template through which they could further develop such discussions without fear of having to dedicate efforts in laying a foundation so not be misinterpreted by non- Shī'ī thinkers. The term *wilāyah* comes from the root *W-L-Y*. The root word is mentioned in various forms in the Qur'ān; a hundred and twenty-four times in noun form and a hundred and twelve times in verb form. Its literal meaning as it appears in the Qur'ānic lexicon *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* is: "situating something beside something else, in the sense that there is no separation between them", thus the meaning has come to represent special or spiritual proximity. It has also come to mean 'intimacy', 'friendship', 'being in charge', 'being in control' as well as other not so well known meanings which have developed over time. *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* in connection to the two words *walāyah* and *wilāyah*, describes the former as meaning 'assistance', whereas the latter refers to as 'being in charge' and 'person of authority in a certain matter'. Both words are also used interchangeably as meaning: 'being in charge and having authority'.[371] To know what a particular meaning is in a verse of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* requires contextualization, for example in the Qur'ān it says: "And the believing men and the believing women, are *awliya'* (plural for *walī*) of one another; they enjoin in good and forbid the evil"[372]. Here the term *awliya'* implies friend or keeper. Suffice it to say, *wilāyah* traditionally held, administrative, social and religious definitions, later developing its on context and spiritual meaning as witnessed in Ṣufī literature. Amir-Moezzi has a fair description of the

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[371] Muṭahharī. M, *Wilāyah, The Station of the Master*, WOFIS, (Tehran, 1982), 23-24.
[372] Qur'ān 9:7.

term in context to early Shī'ism, describing it as having two interdependent and complementary meanings:

> Applied to the Imāms of different Prophets, it refers to their ontological status or their sacred initiatory mission; several nuances of the root *wly* are found in this meaning: the *walī*-Imām is the "friend" and the closest "helper" of God and His prophet; he immediately "follows" the latter in his mission; he is the "chief", the "master" of the believers par excellence. In this acceptation, *walī* is a synonym of *waṣī* (the inheritor, the heir […] or the *mawlā* (applied to the Imām, this term means master, the guide, the protector, the *patronus*). Applied to the faithful of the Imāms, *walāya* denotes the unfailing love, faith, and submission that the initiated owe it their holy initiating guide; in this acceptation, the term becomes the equivalent of *tawallī* (being the faithful friend or the obedient protégé of someone); the "true Shī'ites" are called the *mutawallī* of the Imāms.[373]

The Qur'ān and early Shī'ī sources, such as *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* and *al-Kāfī,* recognize two types of *wilāyah*; *wilāyat tashrī'ī* and *wilāyat takwīnī*.[374] The first type encompasses guardianship over administration and governance. It also includes absolute political and social leadership, as well as being the final authority on interpretation of law and *sharī'ah*. In fact in terms of its technical definition, *wilāyat tashrī'ī* means to interpret and implement *sharī'ah*. The possessor of this type of *wilāyah* would be guardian over *sharī'ah* and final authority on any decision pertaining to it. *Sharī'ah* can also grant a type of social *wilāyah*, for example to a father or paternal grandfather, giving them *wilāyah* (guardianship) over young children, so as to make decisions for them, before they come of age. The second type, referred to as *wilāyat takwīnī*, is that a person is bestowed by God the ability to control the world of creation and influence causality. To further explain this delicate point, *wilāyat takwīnī* will be categorized into four branches, thus allowing a better understanding of the types of *wilāyah* demonstrated in the Qur'ān.

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[373] Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*, SUNY Press, (New York, 1994), 159.
[374] Though *wilāyah* and its description are present in early sources, the terminology and naming of the particular types of *wilāyah* are found with the rationalization of Shī'ī *kalām* from the post al-Mufīd period.

The first type is 'creative' *wilāyah*, which may be described as an ability given by God to a person, or in some instances an angel to become 'creator'. An example of this is the light of Muḥammad (*nūr Muḥammadī*) being a primary cause through which other things have been created.[375] In addition, the Qur'ān gives a clear example of creative *wilāyah* through the story of Jesus, when it states: "*[…] I gave to you a sign from your Lord; I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird […]*".[376] Furthermore, Abū Baṣīr gives a vivid account of how the *sixth* Imām whilst demonstrating his creative *wilāyah* summoned a silver vessel (*safīnah min fiḍḍah*, literally meaning a boat made of silver) which then became a vehicle for them to travel to the celestial world where tents of silver (*khiyām min fiḍḍah*) housing the deceased of the *ahl al-bayt* were pitched.[377] The second type of *wilāyah* is that the possessor becomes a medium through which God helps the faithful, or showers the faithful through the possessor of *wilāyah* with mercy and blessings. The existence of an Imām on earth is regarded as the biggest blessing. When the *sixth* Imām was asked if the earth can remain without an Imām, he replied that the inhabitants of the earth would be obliterated without there being an Imām present at all times. Similarly were there to remain only two people on earth, one would be God's Proof (possessor of *wilāyah*) over the other.[378] Both of the above-mentioned traditions by the *sixth* Imām have been cited by Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī and al-Kulaynī. Interestingly this particular tradition and such traditions describing 'Alī's supernatural existence are prevalent in books of *ḥadīth* compiled in the Ṣafavī period dating 1501-1736. In relation to earlier compilations, the two important mystical works are *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, and then *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn*, by Rajab al-Bursī (d. 1411). There are also important works by non-Persian scholars, who were able to influence key Persian scholars of the Ṣafavī period, such as Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī (d. 1696). His book *Madīnat al-muʿājiz* is extremely informative in looking at the miracles and supernatural abilities of the Imāms. The value of this book lies in that Baḥrānī authenticates his traditions through an unbroken chain reaching back to al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣadūq and al- Ṭusī. Both *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn* and *Madīnat al-muʿājiz* are extremely precious in exploring

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[375] Refer to footnote 292.
[376] Qur'ān 3:49.
[377] Al-Qummī. M, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, *ḥadīth* 5, 405-6.
[378] *Ibid*. 144.

early traditions on the mystical nature of the Imāms, especially in light of the destruction of Shī'ī libraries with the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century and sectarian communal violence of the twelfth century that resulted in the burning of many primary sources.

Part of creative *wilāyah* is for its possessor to gain help from 'Alī, whose archetypal being is a medium for God's special assistance. In this regards a story of Solomon is found in early sources which sheds light on 'Alī's role in the process of creative *wilāyah*.[379] A creature (potentially a specie of Satan) once came to Muḥammad. Whilst he was in conversation with him, a youth ('Alī) entered, to which the creature reacted by shrinking and then asked Muḥammad to help him from this youth. On witnessing this, Muḥammad asked him what the youth had done to him. He replied that once he had rebelled against Solomon. Solomon sent a group of *jinn* to stop him, but he overpowered them. The creature then says that a horse-rider came and imprisoned him, causing him injury.[380] This particular tradition and similar traditions work to outline a part of 'Alī's *wilāyah* as a timeless helper of the righteous. Muḥammad has been quoted as saying: "O 'Alī, surely God has said to me: 'I have chosen 'Alī to be with all the Prophets in a non-apparent state (*bāṭinan* – referring to his archetypal form) and with you (Muḥammad) in apparent form (*ẓāhiran* – meaning in physical form)".[381] Similarly with the previous tradition, this one too refers back to a chain of transmission presented by Baḥrānī.

The third type of *wilāyah* is that of healing and raising the dead. This of course is self explanatory and incidences of such miracles are recorded in the Qur'ān: "*[…] I will heal the blind and leper, and bring the dead back to life, with God's permission […]*".[382] The final type of *wilāyat takwīnī* is acceptance of prayer (*istijābat al-da'wa*). There are numerous traditions to indicate that this is not solely reserved for Prophets or Imāms, but through possessing

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[379] Though being a human who lived on earth between 601-661, 'Alī in mystical traditions found in *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, also exists as an archetypal being who has been coming to the aid of the faithful from the beginning of time.

[380] Al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn*, p. 58, c.f. Al-Mustanbiṭ. S.A, *Al-Qaṭrah*, I, 181.

[381] Jazāirī. S.N, *al-Anwār al-nu'mānīyah*, Mu'assasat al-a'lamī l'l-Maṭhū'āt, (Beirut, 2010), I, 30.

[382] Qur'ān 3:49.

partial knowledge of *ism al-aʿẓam*,[383] saints who have been bestowed *wilāyah* too can fulfil the desires of a seeker, such as in the case of Āsif b. Barkhiā, who brought the throne of Sheba faster than a blink of an eye lid.[384] To attain this spiritual station and become a saint is to first submit to the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī. Belief in the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī has a two-fold meaning; it is to accept that ʿAlī has absolute *wilāyah* (divine authority) in creation and then to meticulously follow his teachings. Part of accepting the *wilāyah* is total disassociation from the enemies of ʿAlī and the *ahl al-bayt.* The *fifth* Imām as cited by al-Kulaynī, is quoted as saying: "Islām is based on five principles: They are the *wilāyah* (accepting the divine authority of the Prophet and Imāms), prayer, *zakat*, fasting in the month of Ramaḍān and the *ḥajj*".[385] In a similar tradition by the *fifth* Imām, he concludes by adding: " […] The call to none of the other principles has been so emphatic as it was for the *wilāyah* on the day of *Ghadīr*".[386][387] He has also been quoted as saying that from the five principles, *wilāyah* is the most superior and it is a key to the other four, with the possessor of *wilāyah* (Imām) being the guide to these principles".[388]

An important verse of the Qur'ān mentioning *wilāyah* is verse fifty-five of chapter five. It reads: " Your only *walī*[389] (guardian) is God and His Prophet and those who believe, keep up prayer and give zakat whilst bowing (in prayer)".[390] A tradition cited from *al-Kulaynī*, on the authority of the *sixth* Imām, explains who are meant by 'those who believe'. He begins by initially saying that the *walī* has greater claim over a person's life, property and affairs (similarly the Qur'ān states: "The Prophet has greater claim (*awlā* – from *wilāyah*) on the believers than they have on themselves […]").[391] After explaining this, the Imām concludes by

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[383] Refer to the subchapter on 'Inherited Knowledge'.
[384] Qur'ān 27:38-40.
[385] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī,* II:10:18.
[386] The day of *Ghadīr* works the completion of faith with the appointment of ʿAlī as *mawlā*, implying a person vested in *wilāyah*. It also marks the beginning of the split theologically between the Shīʿa and non-Shīʿa Muslims. Those who accepted the absolute *wilāyah* of ʿAlī were regarded in history as Shīʿī. This will be discussed in greater detail.
[387] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, II:10:18.
[388] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, I, 228.
[389] A *walī* is one who possesses *wilāyah*.
[390] The vast majority of Qur'ānic commentators believe this verse was revealed when ʿAlī was in a state of bowing (*rukūʿ*). It was in this state that he gave his ring as zakat to a beggar.
[391] Qur'ān 3:68.

saying that 'Alī and the Imāms from his progeny are meant by the term 'those who believe'.[392] Therefore God, the Prophet, 'Alī and the Imāms from the progeny of 'Alī have greater right over the believers than they have over themselves. This is what is meant by the *wilāyah* of the Prophet and Imām over the believers. It also meant that the believer was obliged to submit to the Prophet and Imām unconditionally. If complete submission was to work, infallibility and divinely bestowed knowledge were both important components for the Imām to possess. This particular nexus of *wilāyah*, infallibility and submission as will be discussed, resonates in the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī.

Whilst *wilāyah* was a foundational belief Imāmat was built on, communicating the full functions of what it entailed was not always easy. Starting with the beginning of the Abbasid period, Muslim intellectuals had become embroiled in religious polemics. From the Imāmat period of the *fifth* Imām to the end of the Imāmat of the *ninth* Imām (680-835), a strong intellectual evolution took place, both amongst the Shī'ī faithful and within the Islamic Empire in general. The introduction of Greek philosophy by the Abbasid court, inter-religious polemical discussion as championed by al-Ma'mūn (d. 833) and a variety of diverse interpretations of both belief and jurisprudence became a catalyst to this evolution. An example of this is an insightful dialogue which takes place between the *fifth* Imām and one of his disciples, as cited by al-Kulaynī. The disciple who had come from a distance to see his Imām describes his state of confusion due to the polemical debates that were taking place. He asks the Imām a very straightforward question; what was the true faith of the Prophet and past Imāms. The Imām in a palatable way, broke down the religion of his forefathers into six major beliefs; the belief in monotheism, the belief that Muḥammad is God's servant and Prophet and that whatever he has brought to the people is the divine word.[393] The remaining three, problematic as they were under Abbasid rule due to perceived undertones of insurrection, were to love the *ahl al-bayt* and disassociate from their enemies,[394] whilst maintaining piety,

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392 Fayẓ Kāshānī. M, *Al-Ṣāfī*, Nashar Nawīd Islām, (Qum, 2008), II, 432.
393 Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, II:10:19.
394 Disassociating from the enemies of the *ahl al-bayt* is known as *tabarrī*. It plays a major rule within both Shī'ī belief and ritual practice. In terms of belief, love of the Imām has a dualist approach. It is incomplete without negation and hatred of those who harbor hatred towards the Imām. *Wilāyah* and *tawallī* (affirmation/friendship with those who accept the *wilāyah*) is inseparable with barā'a (disassociation) from the enemies of the Imām. The

humility, and awaiting the coming of 'our *walī*' vested in *wilāyah* (guardianship), who would rise (*Qa'im*).[395] A historic Shī'ī uprising led by Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 740) in 740 against the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 743), had put the Imāmat under political strain and created future sensitivities. Prior to Zayd, his wife's grandfather, Muḥammad b. Ḥanafīyah,[396] had given patronage to the revolt of Mukhtar al-Thaqafī (d. 687), against the Umayyad caliph Yazīd I. It therefore was not easy to explain certain elements of beliefs pertaining to the Imāmat openly and this may have contributed to why the spectrum of understanding Imāmat may have varied amongst the faithful. It was important not to project the Imāmat as an alternative system of governance to that of the caliphate. Just communicating the last three principles could have put the Imām into difficulty. With all these potential difficulties, the prophetic statement that God would put into hell anyone who had hatred for the *ahl al-bayt*, even if their prayed continually between the *rukn* and *makām* was well known among the faithful. [397][398] Similarly the Prophet had said that if a person performed prophetic actions of seventy Prophets, but rejected the *wilāyah* of the *ulul al-amr* (possessor of

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seventh Imām divides the Arabs into three groups, the noble of pure descent, the protected ally and the vile man of base descent. The Imāms are of pure descent, whilst their faithful are protected allies; the vile man of base descent is the enemy of the Imām. Similarly the Imām describes three category of people, the knowledgeable, those seeking knowledge and the remaining people are scum; the knowledgeable being the Imām and the seeker his faithful, whilst the rest being his enemy are equated to scum, Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khisāl*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2008), 218. Within Shī'ī devotional literature, *la'an* (disassociation by praying to God to remove mercy from the enemies of the Imām) is applied in all pilgrimage liturgy to the Imāms, especially al-Ḥusayn. The famous salutatory prayer known as *ziārat 'āshūrā'*, fuels the dualist philosophy of negation, followed by affirmation. It states: "O God remove your mercy from the first of the oppressors who have usurped/oppressed the right of Muḥammad and the Family of Muḥammad and the last who followed in the deed (oppressing)[…]". After the negation, there is affirmation, with an open display of loyalty to al-Ḥusayn (and by extension the rest of the Imāms who follow in lineage): "Peace be upon you, O Abā 'Abd Allāh (al-Ḥusayn) and upon the souls that gathered in your celestial courtyard. Peace of God be upon you from myself forever, as long as I am existent and as long as there is day and night […]". This style is very esoteric, as it follows the Muslim proclamation of faith known as the *shahādah*, which begins my negating all false gods, the affirming the one true God. The entire philosophy of Islamic belief rests on the *shahādah*; the negation of false gods, followed by the affirmation. In the school of *'ifān*, it is the negation from any attachments and then affirmation of the one Truth. In Islamic ethics, this would be the negation of vices, followed by affirmation of virtue.
[395] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, II:10: 20.
[396] Although being a son of 'Alī, he was addressed by the title 'Ḥanafīyah' after his mother Khawlah, who came from the tribe of Banū Ḥanīfah.
[397]*Rukn* and *maqām* are two points within the sacred mosque in Mecca. The *rukn* forms a corner of the *Ka'bah*, where the makām or station of Abraham is a stone that Abraham stood on whilst building the *Ka'bah*. The point in between is regarded as extremely sacred.
[398] Al-Mufīd, *al-Amālī*, c.f. Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* I, 230.

authority)from the *ahl al-bayt*, their repentance would not be accepted.[399] Prevailing persecution did not stop the Imāms from communicating with the faithful.

8.1 The Event at Ghadīr

The single most important event of the transfer of *wilāyah* to 'Alī by Muḥammad is the event of *Ghadīr*. This event took place a few months before Muḥammad's death in 632, near the pond of *Khumm*, as he was returning back to Madīnah after his farewell *ḥajj*. The date of the event was the 18th *Dhil al-Ḥijjah*, the final month of the Islamic calendar in the year 10 AH (631). It is regarded as a landmark event because for Shī'ī Muslims it was when Muḥammad formally transferred *wilāyah* to 'Alī. Parts of the historical narrative can be found in early Sunnī sources. Al-Muslim gives a brief account of the event quoting Muḥammad as follows: "'I feel in the near future I will be visited by the angel of death and will welcome his coming. I therefore leave two weighty things with you; the Book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*), where in it is light and guidance'. The Prophet gave much advise on being with the Qur'ān, then said and my *ahl al-bayt*. 'O people, please by God my *ahl al-bayt*, O people, please by God my *ahl al-bayt*, O people, please by God my *ahl al-bay*t'".[400] Al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan* adds the following to his account: "I am leaving behind two weighty things; the Book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*) and my Family (*'itratī*), my *ahl al-bayt*, those who hold on to these two will not be lead astray. These two will not separate until they reach the heavenly stream of *al-Kawthar*. Therefore be vigilant as to how you treat these two after me".[401] Although a clear narrative of the actual event where the transfer of *wilāyah* took place is not mentioned in these two traditions, what they do emphasize is the dual importance of the Book of God and the Prophetic Family. In light of both of these traditions being considered authentic as a matter of consensus by Sunnī scholars, an important question arises: Does the 'Book of God' indicate a compiled Qur'ān? If so, traditions like these complement 'Alī being left as the guardian (*walī*) and interpreter of the Qur'ān.[402]

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[399] *Ibid.* 230.
[400] Al-Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, (Bierut, 1401 AH/1981), VII, 123.
[401] Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Dār al-Fikr, (Beirut, 1983), V, 329.
[402] The *walī* has *wilāyah* from God over the Qur'ān and therefore the right of interpreting God's words. 'Alī has been quoted as saying: "[…] Ask me, by God there is nothing you can ask me that I do not have knowledge of;

The account of *Ghadīr*, including the sermon of Muḥammad whilst being lengthy, is one of the most well-referenced events in Islamic history.[403] Two important verses of the Qur'ān that were revealed for the occasion are 5:67 and 5:3, highlighting the importance of the occasion. In short the declaration of *wilāyah* was so important that had Muḥammad not delivered it, his mission would have been deemed void; "*O Prophet, deliver everything that has been sent down to you from your Lord – if you do not, then you will not have communicated His message – and God will protect you from people*".[404] It can be reasonably inferred from this verse that Muḥammad may have had reservations in delivering the divine message. In fact he may well have been worried or even scared as to how the people may react, to which God reassures him "*[…] and God will protect you from the people[…]*". The transfer was not an easy one, the Qur'ān highlights a level of unhappiness from the people in the appointment of 'Alī. In the wake of this verse, Muḥammad states that Gabriel had come to him three times giving salām from his Lord who is Himself *al-Salām*[405] whilst instructing him to declare to the people 'Alī as his brother (*akhī*), successor (*waṣī*), caliph and Imām after him and concluding that he is the *walī* (possessor of authority[406]), after God and His Prophet. Muḥammad makes clear that he is the Prophet (*nabī*) and that 'Alī is his *waṣī*. Gabriel then states that there will be hypocrites from among the people who will be unhappy, but to rely on God for protection.[407] Throughout the sermon, various Qur'ānic verses are mentioned to describe the status of 'Alī to that of Muḥammad and the people.[408] From the whole sermon, the following part is of extreme importance: "O people, who has more right over (priority over – *awlā*) the believers than they have over their own souls?"[409] To which they replied God and His Prophet know better. He

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ask me about the Book of God, by God there is no verse but that I know its revelation, be it at night or day, on the plains or mountain […]", al-Jurjānī. A, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu'fā' al-Rijāl,* I, 118.

[403] Amir-Moezzi mentions a list of references in *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, 238, which can be referred to.
[404] Qur'ān 5:67.
[405] One of the ninety-nine Names of God, commonly meaning 'peace'.
[406] There two main translations to this term given the context. Either it can be read that 'Alī is the possessor of authority or that he is your helper, after God and His Prophet. The latter does not make sense given the context. Shī'ī traditions are unanimous in outlining the first. *Tafsīr al-Qummī* can be referred to for more details, under chapter five, verse sixty-seven.
[407] Qazwīnī. H, *Ghadīr az dīdgāh ahl sunnat*, Intishārāt Salsabīl, (Qum, 2007), 182-83.
[408] For example, analogies from the Qur'ān are mentioned comparing the relationship between Moses and Aaron to highlight the position of 'Alī; "And we gave Moses the Book and We made with him his brother Aaron his minister (*wazīr*)" (Qur'ān 25:35).
[409] Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Dār al-Fikr, (Beirut, n.d.), I, 43.

then continued: "Surely God is my *mawlā* (Master – possessor of authority over me), and I am the *mawlā* of the believers and I am *awlā* (have more rights / have priority) over the believers". There he paused and declared three times: "Whosoever I am *mawlā* of, 'Alī is their *mawlā*".[410] The transfer of *wilāyah* had been completed, 'Alī had become *mawlā*.[411] The final verse cited in the lengthy sermon is: "*This day have I perfected (akmalu) for you your religion and completed (atmamtu) for you My favors and have chosen for you Islām as a religion*".[412] Immediately what sticks out are the terms *al-ikmāl*, meaning to perfect and *al-itmām*, which means to complete. Why these two words are important, is because of what they represent, with both words being quite similar in meaning. Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī says: "A thing is called perfect when it serves the purpose of which it is intended for; and it becomes complete when it reaches a stage where it does not need anything extra; a thing is called incomplete when it needs something more".[413] Read taking the definitions into consideration, it appears that the term "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed for you My favors […]" implies that something has been added to the religion, which may be a set of beliefs, ideologies or law, that has perfected it. The divine favor (*n'imat*) bestowed, which also means divine bounty, or has been used to also indicate divine grace, mandates a spiritual gift by God, without which the religion would remain incomplete.[414] Now that the divine favor had been bestowed, the result was that not only did the religion come into completion, but its effect began instantly. For those who upheld the *wilāyah* of 'Alī, the transfer saw not only Islām completed, but it began the period of divine favor upon the community in the body of the Imāmat. Muḥammad concluded the transfer by saying: "O God, be the friend of those who hold 'Alī as friend, and be the enemy of those who show enmity towards 'Alī, and love those who love him and hate those who hate him […], help those who help him and humiliate his enemies and make for the truth to go around him. Be mindful that this message reaches those who are absent".[415] Kulaynī in further explaining what the completion entailed, brings a

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[410] In some manuscripts, there is an addition of "[…] this 'Alī is their *mawlā*". Muḥammad whilst raising 'Alī's arm, referred to him as 'this' 'Alī.

[411] The terms *mawlā*, awlā and *wilāyah* are all from the same root *w-l-y*.

[412] Qur'ān 5:3.

[413] Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Mufradāt al-Fāẓ al-Qur'ān*, online resource.

[414] Ṭabāṭabā'ī. M.H, *al-Mīzān*, WOFIS, (Tehran, 2000), IX, 244.

[415] Amīnī. A, *al-Ghadīr*, Intishārāt Bunyād Bi'that, (Tehran, 2009), I, 77.

tradition on the authority of the *fifth* Imām which highlights that *wilāyah* was the final obligation from all of the obligations to be revealed and after it, no other obligation was revealed but the verse acknowledging: "*This day I have perfected your religion [...]*".[416] Muḥammad in closing the sermon has been quoted as saying: "God is greater (*Allāhu Akbar*) that He has perfected the religion (*ikmāl al-Dīn*) and completed His favor (*itmām al-n'imat*) and that the Lord is satisfied with my prophecy and 'Alī's *wilāyah*".[417] With 'Alī becoming *mawlā* and the *walī*, he became the complete guide and light of God in creation. As previously looked at, God, His Prophet and 'Alī were the *walī* of the believers. The Qur'ān says: "God is the *walī* of those who believe; taking them out of the darkness into the light [...]".[418] By extension, 'Alī became the light of guidance on earth and possessor of *wilāyah*. Both of these concepts as will be discussed in the next section, play a major role both in Sufism and the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī.

Embedded deeply in the heart of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine is the concept of *wilāyah*. This chapter should allow the reader to gain a technical insight into what *wilāyah* entails in both Shī'ī and Ṣufī literature, therefore providing the reader a more informed understanding of how *wilāyah* reflects in Akbarian teachings. Deemed essential to the discussion was its history as understood through the event of Ghadīr. The event of Ghadīr allows for one to conceptualize the position of 'Alī as the first inheritor of the prophetic *wilāyah*. Before beginning the next chapter, a final observation to make is that the theme of *wilāyah* as found in Shī'ī thought is in fact complimented in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, both in terms of its theological and mystical implications on the Perfect Human. For this reason, the chapter on *wilāyah* has been placed in the first section, allowing the reader to grasp its theological meaning, to then be able to appreciate the concept in a wider discussion on the Perfect Human, as will appears in the second section.

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[416] Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah,* I, 227.
[417] Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal*, Dār al- Ṣādir, (Beirut, n.d.)*,* VI, 489.
[418] Qur'ān 2:257.

Chapter 9. The Mahdī

Of the most important topics that allows for us to better differentiate Shī'ī thought from other schools, is that of the Mahdī. There are three main theories in Islamic theology which shed some light on who the Mahdī is. This section will briefly touch upon each theory, not to analyze which of the three are stronger or more correct, but to outline what three general beliefs exist in classical Islamic literature, as a discussion on the chain of transmitters (*rijāl*) required to weigh the strength of each claim would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Indeed Mahdī plays an instrumental part in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine and this will be discussed in due course.

Shī'ī belief is that the Mahdī is the son of the *eleventh* Imam, al-Ḥasan al-Askarī (d. 874/ 260 AH), and the *twelfth* and final Imām. The Imām is living, in occultation[419] and will return as a messianic[420] figure to fill the world with truth and justice, as it had been filled with darkness and oppression.[421] He will establish the Kingdom of God on earth and fulfill the divine prophecy as mentioned in the Qur'ān: "*It has been written in the Psalms, as We did in (earlier) Scripture: 'The righteous shall inherit the earth'*".[422] There are well known traditions attributing the Mahdī as a descendant of al-Ḥusayn and also from the heirs of al-Ḥusayn".[423] Similarly, Muḥammad has been quoted as saying: "al-Mahdī is from my progeny. His name and title is similar to mine […]"[424] and "The name of al-Mahdī's father is similar to the name of my son al-Ḥasan".[425] Mainstream Sunnī belief on the Mahdī is that he is not from the

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[419] According to Shi'ī tradition, there are two occultations, the first was the minor occultation which lasted from 874/260 AH to 941/329 AH. In this occultation the elite from amongst the Shī'ī knew the whereabouts of the Imām. From 329 AH the Imām went in to major occultation and remains in it until the last days, Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, I, 382.

[420] The term 'messiah' has been used for Jesus and there are ample traditions to indicate his second coming, Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, I, 377.

[421] Many of these traditions can be found in Shi'ī commentaries of the Qur'ān in chapter 17, verse 81: "*And say: 'The truth has come, and falsehood has passed, surely falsehood is bound to pass away'*".

[422] Qur'ān 21:105 – The Qur'ān appears to quote Psalm 37:29.

[423] Al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, c.f. al-Majlisī, *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, Ansariyan Publications, (Qum, 2003), 70.

[424] Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, (Tehran: 1975/1395 AH), 286-7.

[425] Al-Haythamī, *al- Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah*, (Cairo, 1894), 100.

progeny of al-Ḥusayn, rather his lineage is from al-Ḥasan. Muḥammad has been quoted as saying: "His name will be my name, and his father's name my father's name". Why this is significant is that the Mahdī awaited by the Shī'ī is Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, whereas in Sunnī traditions, he is Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ('Abd Allāh being the father of Muḥammad). For Shī'ī Muslims, the Mahdī is alive and in occultation, however, in Sunnī eschatology, he is to be born and that too in the last days. The third theory is that Mahdī is in fact a title which will be held by Jesus,[426] who will return at the end of time: "The Hour will not be established until the son of Mary descends amongst you as a just ruler […]".[427] Shī'ī and Sunnī literature are quite clear about the second coming of Jesus.[428]

There are a number of traditions which will be looked in more detail, found in Shī'ī , Sunnī and Zaydī *ḥadīth* literature. According to Montgomery Watt, it was only after the death of the *eleventh* Imām, that the number of Imāms were fixed at twelve and the theory of occultation was established.[429] Both arguments are easily refutable, starting with the twelve fixed number of Imāms. There are ample traditions found in Sunnī literature, from al-Bukharī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muslim, where seven companions, namely Jābir b. Samura, 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd, Anas b. Mālik, 'Umar b. Khaṭṭāb, Wā'ila b. Aqṣa', 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar and Abū Hurayra have narrated traditions on there being twelve *Amīrs*, all of whom will be from Quraysh.[430] Similarly, the terms twelve '*nuaqabā'* (leaders), twelve caliphs and twelve Imāms

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[426] The name *Mahdī* means 'the one who is guided (by God)'. It comes from the same root word as *hādī*, which means 'the one who guides'. The root word is *hadā*, 'to guide'.

[427] Al-Bukharī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, III, book 43, *ḥadīth* 656 (online resource).

[428] If the template for determining the validity of traditions were to be based on al-Khu'ī's *Mu'jam Rijāl*, both the first theories on who the Mahdī is may be deemed weaker than the third theory. That is not to say the first two theories are wrong, but comparatively weaker. According to a *rijālī* analysis and that too with reference to al-Khu'ī's *rijāl* template, the Mahdī would in fact be Jesus. The reason I mention this is that it is easy to only use one particular type of methodology. The *rijāl* methodology may be the most effective in discussions on Islamic law and *sharī'ah*, but due to the nature of some of the doctrinal discourses, a different approach may be required depending on the discourse. From a Shi'ī *kalāmī* perspective, the methodology used to prove its current position on the Mahdī requires a four step process. The first is to establish that there are twelve Imāms, the second that the Mahdī is the son of al-Ḥasan al-Askarī. The third stage would be proving his birth and the stage is that if he is still alive.

[429] Watt. M, *The Majesty That Was Islam*, 169-70.

[430] Al-Bukharī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, (Cairo, 1355 AH), IV, 175, al-Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Cairo, 1957/1377 AH), III, 190-3, al-Tirmidhī. Sunan *al-Tirmidhī,* (Cairo, 1937/ 1356 AH), IV, 501, Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal*, (Cairo, 1895/ 1313 AH), 294.

have been used, all of whom are from Quraysh.[431] The Zaydī school, although not adhering to the belief of solely twelve Imāms as upheld by Twelver Shī'ism, do have traditions from notable scholars such as the Kufan Abū Sa 'īd b. Ya 'qūb al-Rawājinī al-'Asfarī (d. 864/ 250 AH), who died before the birth of the Mahdī, but transmitted two important traditions, both with a chain going back to the Prophet on the issue of the Mahdī. The first is: "From my descendants there will be eleven noble leaders, receivers of tradition [and] possessed of knowledge, the last of whom will be '*al-Qā'im bi'l Ḥaqq*',[432] who will fill it [the world] with justice, just as it was filled with tyranny".[433] This does not mean that the Imāms are restricted to twelve, but that twelve have been distinguished, of whom the last will be the Mahdī. The second tradition looks at the esoteric status of the Imāms, effectively as central to the existence of earth. This demonstrates that it was not just Twelver Shī'īs who upheld the necessity of the Imām: "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O 'Alī, are the axis of the earth, this is, its tent pegs and its mountains, by us God has secured the world so that it will not sink with its people. For when the eleventh of my descendants has died, the world shall sink with its people without warning".[434] Shī'ī tradition on the twelve Imāms are ample as previously discussed, especially from the period of the *fifth* and *sixth* Imāms. A tradition on the authority of the *sixth* Imām begins with a conversation, his father the Imām before him, had with Jābir b. 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī. The Imām asks him about a tablet (*luḥ*) that was in the possession of Fāṭimah, to which Jābir replies that he had read it and had noted the content and that it was made of emerald and shone like the color of the sun. The Imām then asked him to produce what he had written, whilst from a distance the Imām read by miracle the content of what Jābir had written. What had been noted, were the names of the twelve Imāms and a brief description about their Imāmat. When addressing the Mahdī, the Imām read:

> One will in him be able to find the perfection of Moses, the beauty of Jesus and the patience of
> Job. My friends in his time will become weak […] they will be murdered and burned. They
> will live in fear, frightened and fearful. The earth will be stained with their blood and wailing

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[431] Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal*, (Cairo, 1895/ 1313 AH), 398.
[432] A title of the Mahdī, literally meaning 'the one who stands with the truth'.
[433] Al-'Aṣfarī, *Aṣl Abū Sa'īd al-Asfarī* c.f. Hussain. J.H, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam*, The Muhammadi Trust, (London, 1982), 20.
[434] *Ibid*, 20.

and lamentations will become widespread in their women […] through them (Imāms) shall I remove uncertainties, sufferings and shackles. These are the ones upon whom the blessings and forgiveness of their Lord descend and they are the ones who provide guidance.[435]

This solitary tradition is sufficient to highlight that there were sources on the Imāms being twelve in number during the early period before the occultation. Worth mentioning is a final tradition to demonstrate the importance of the occultation before the death of the *eleventh* Imām. The tradition is taken from the Prophet and reads: "By the one who has appointed me with the truth of delivering glad tidings, those in the time of the occultation who are firm in belief are more precious than the red sulphur (*kibrīt al-aḥmar*)".[436] There are three main observations from the discourse in this chapter; the first being that there was an understanding of twelve Imāms/ caliphs across the various faith schools in the first three centuries of Islām, with the last being the Mahdī and at least within elements of early Shī'ī literature, there was an understanding of an occultation of the final Imām to take place. The *twelfth* Imām being the son of al-Ḥasan al-Askarī was a Shī'ī belief and there is no evidence that non-Shī'as would have upheld this view in the first three centuries of Islām. Due to early Shī'ī influences in the development of Ṣufīsm, there may have been a cross pollination of ideas following the major occultation. This hypothesis needs to be further examined, however, the belief in the Mahdī as the son of al-Ḥasan and living, albeit in occultation was a very Shī'ī belief.

I would like to conclude this section on Imāmat before beginning the final section on Ibn 'Arabī, by extrapolating five key observations from early Shī'ī *ḥadīth* literature. These observations are in fact five principles which the Shī'ī understanding of Imāmat is based upon. They are that the Imām is divine chosen, that he is infallible (the definition may vary in terms of the parameters of infallibility), that they are twelve in number, that the last is the Mahdī and that he is living, but in occultation. These five principles form the tenets of belief in Imāmat found in Shī'ī Islām and so for any individual to be considered Shī'a would require these principles of belief to be in place.

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[435] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, The Islamic Seminary INC NY, (Qum, 2004), I:126:500-2.
[436] Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, c.f. Rayshahrī. M, *Mīzān al- Ḥikmah*, Dār al- Ḥadīth,(Qum, 1427 AH/2006), I, 373.

By concisely summarizing the theological position of the Mahdī in Islamic thought, a foundation has been laid to further examine the Mahdī more specifically in the second section of this thesis. The importance of having discussed key theories in regards to the Mahdī in this chapter, is that it allows for a broad understanding of the topic, as rooted in Islamic tradition. This should then enable the reader to better understand the mystical implications of the Mahdī in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine, including where similarities may be witnessed and where he may have synthesized ideas from both Shī'ī and Sunnī interpretations.

Section 2 - Ibn 'Arabī and the Doctrine of the Perfect Human

Chapter 10. Introduction

With the first section on Imāmat completed, this section will endeavor to explore a handful of themes related to the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* (the Perfect Human), with Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of the Prophet and his household, as extrapolated from his teachings. When assessing the above-mentioned themes, this section will aim to evaluate potential Shī'ī influences that may have helped in framing Ibn 'Arabī's theory on *al-insān al-kāmil*, in particular any cross-pollination of ideas with the Shī'ī tenets of *Wilāyah* and Imāmat. Whilst extensive studies on Ibn 'Arabī have taken place within a Sunnī framework in Western academia,[437] minimal attention has been given on interpreting Ibn 'Arabī from the *falsafah*-centric Shī'ī *'irfānī* tradition (with the exceptions of Henry Corbin (d. 1978) and later Hamid Algar).[438][439] Historically, explicit examples of the notion of *al-insān al-kāmil* can be found

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[437] Contemporary western scholars of Ibn 'Arabī such as Michel Chodkiewicz, Claude Addas, Caner Dagli, Alexander Knysh and commentaries published by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti solely interpret Ibn 'Arabī from a Sunnī Ṣūfī template. Their interpretations can be found in preexisting teaches of Ṣūfī masters from the Shadhilī and Khalwatī orders of the Maghreb and Eastern Europe. The North African Shadhilī influence post Henry Corbin (d. 1978) on the study of Ibn 'Arabī is considerable, primarily due to the influence of Muslim academics affiliated to the Perennial school. For example, it is no secret that Chodkiewicz was a convert to Sunnī Islām and initiated by Michel Valsan (d. 1974), a master of the Shadhilīyah, specializing in Ibn 'Arabī. Valsan himself had been influenced by René Guénon (d. 1951). Chodkiewicz's daughter Claude Addas, having greatly contributed in documenting the life and works of Ibn 'Arabī in her masterpiece *Quest for the Red Sulphuric - The Life of Ibn 'Arabi*, dedicates only a few lines in mentioning Shī'ī commentators of Ibn 'Arabī in *The Voyage Of No Return*. Dagli too a convert to Sunnī Islām studied Ibn 'Arabī under the influence the Perennial school and its interpretations. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is the only authoritative exception to a strictly Shadhilī interpretation from among the Perennialists, because of his studies with Shī'ī scholars of Ibn 'Arabī in Iran, both from the theological seminar and universities. The strongest work on the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī, its explanation and commentary is still found in Toshihiko Izutsu's Sufism and Taoism. Izutsu's command on Shadhilī interpretations, as well an Iranian mystical commentaries is apparent. In recent years, a more balanced approach has been taken by emerging scholars such as Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, Mukhtar Ali and Fitzroy Morrissey, who appear to have studied Ibn 'Arabī both from a Shī'ī Ṣūfī and *'irfānī* perspective. A perspective which still requires greater research are the commentaries of Ibn 'Arabī's works found in the Indian Subcontinent, notably in the libraries of Lucknow and Hyderabad.

[438] Please refer to *Encyclopedia Iranica*, VIII, 422-424.

[439] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi has presented a great deal of evidence in support of Shī'ī origins for much of Islamic Esotericism but his work remains neglected and his insights have not been tested through a thorough comparative study of Sunnī texts. Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad has argued that the doctrine of the Perfect Human, which seems so similar to the doctrine of the Shī'ī Imām (for both Twelver and Ismā'īlīs) and even to the theory of the philosopher king in such Shī'ī philosophers as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and […] al-Kirmānī, offers an ideal subject for investigation, *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, edited by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi, The Shī'ah Institute Press, (London, 2017), 61.

dating back to the works of Shī'ī philosopher, al-Fārābī (d. 950) and his interpretation of the philosopher-king. Where Ibn 'Arabī's *al-insān al-kāmil* stands out is that such a complex theory had not previously been articulated with such precision, although the concept was known to early Ṣūfīs.[440] The term *al-insān al-kāmil* itself was originally coined by Ibn 'Arabī and expanded on in the *Fuṣūṣ* (the *faṣ* of Adam), though reference to it can be found across his works, particularly in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. Others to have mentioned the concept were thinkers such as the Andalusian mystic Ibn Barrajān (d. 1141), who coined the term *al-'abd al-kullī* (the Universal Servant).[441] Its usage according to Nasr was most probably derived from the secretive brotherhood, known as the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*.[442] The *Ikhwān* have traditionally been linked to early Ismā'īlī *da'wah* (missionaries).[443] The teachings of the *Ikhwān* were not just popular in Iraq or North Africa (coming into prominence in the time of the Fatimids), but were well known in Andalusia, penetrating both Ṣūfī and philosophical circles.[444] This would demonstrate a possible linkage between the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* and Shī'ī philosophy, as Ibn 'Arabī would have come into contact with *Ikhwānī* thought.[445] Other notable usages of the concept can be found in Christian theologian, Ibn 'Adī's (d. 974) manual *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, where the term *al-insān al-tāmm*[446] (the Complete Human) is used,[447] whilst a similar concept appears in Maimonides' *Mōreh nevūkhīm*.[448] The approach used by both 'Adī and Maimonides is traditionally Aristotelian, which can be witnessed

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[440] Allusions to the term *al-insān al-kāmil* have also been made by Manṣūr Ḥallāj (d. 922) and al-Birūnī (d. 1050), as it was a concept familiar to the Ṣūfī tradition of the time, al-Hallaj, *The Tawasin of Mansur al-Hallaj*, translated by Aisha Bewley, Dewan Press, (Berkeley, 1974), 1-3; Kozah. M, *The Birth of Indology as an Islamic Science*, BRILL, (Leiden, 2015), 13.

[441] Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, (London, 2020), 51.

[442] Nasr. S.H, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, SUNY, (Albany, 1993), 88.

[443] For a concise understanding of this, please refer to Godefroid de Callataÿ's *Ikhwan al- Safāʾ A Brotherhood go Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam*.

[444] Addas. C, *Quest For The Red Sulphur*, The Islamic Text Society, (Cambridge, 1993), 59.

[445] This will be mentioned at later.

[446] The word *al-tāmm* (complete) in this context is not synonymous with Ibn 'Arabī's use of the word *kāmil* (perfect). Complete refers to a thing having been completed for its purpose, therefore it is not defective, but this does not mean it is perfect. A thing can be complete, but may also require further evolution to attain perfection. Perfection denotes the highest level of purpose. Muṭaharī (d. 1979) points out that Ibn 'Arabī was the first to use the term 'perfect' in Islamic literature, Muṭaharī. M, *Insān-i Kāmil*, n.d., n.p., pp.16-17. 'Afīfī further elaborates on this point: "Ibnul 'Arabī uses the term Perfect in a unique sense […] The most perfect being is God, and the most Perfect manifestation of God is the Perfect Man, a term Ibnul 'Arabī was the first to use in its particular sense", Afifi. A.E, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul Arabi*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1939), 77.

[447] Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, p.51.

[448] Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago, 1963), I, 49.

throughout 'Adī's writings regarding human completion in perfecting morals (*akhlāq*), comprehending true knowledge and sitting with those of knowledge.[449] Maimonides on the other hand, also includes the need for '*halakhic* perfection', which in the language of Ibn 'Arabī would equate to observance of the *sharī'ah* or fulfilling the divine commandments (*mitsvōt*) as a prerequisite to attaining human perfection.[450] Oliver Leaman brilliantly summarizes the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* as:

> What the perfect man symbolizes is the greatest possible human development of understanding, compassion, charity and spiritual growth, and he serves as a bridge between humanity and God. His task is to help others to span the gap which exists between this world and the next, the world of reality; and, as one might expect, the perfect man is often identified with the prophet, who has precisely this role. The perfect man represents the attributes of God in so far as humanity can accomplish this, to its greatest possible extent within the World generation and corruption. This notion is often also identified with the friends of God, the *wali* […] the friend of God, or the perfect man, is the *barzakh* between us and God […][451]

Although the term *al-insān al-kāmil*, came into prominence with Ibn 'Arabī, a term synonymous to that of *al-insān al-kāmil*, as mentioned by Leaman is 'friend of God' (*walī*). The notion of *walī* is found from the very beginning in Sufism and can represent the spiritual master (one who has completed the spiritual journey and has actualised the divine names and attributes) or a person wayfaring to union with God. In essence, there are degrees to a *walī*, similar to how there are degrees to the perfect human. In fact both terms mentioned are very similar to the doctrine of the illuminated person found in the philosophy of Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191).[452] For Suhrawardī, the prophets (*al-anbīyā'*) and the friends of God (*al-awlīyā'*) are those who have been illuminated by the divine light and therefore depending on their readiness to receive, have been endowed with levels of perfection. The difference between the former and latter he writes is:

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[449] Ibn 'Adī, *Reformation of Morals*, trans. Sidney H. Griffith, Brigham Young University Press, (Provo, Utah, 2002), 94-95.
[450] Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, 72.
[451] Leaman. O, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, Polity Press, (Cambridge, 2007), 83.
[452] Refer to the fifth discourse in second part of Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*.

There are several conditions for the prophet [Lawgiver]. He must be appointed apostle by the High Heavens, which is a condition specific to prophets. The rest of the conditions, such as extraordinary acts, foretelling visions, or learning truths without a teacher, may be possessed by other great divinely informed souls.[453] Also, it is possible that some saints and lofty humans be divinely informed.[454]

Suhrawardī divides the enlightened into three categories; prophets, and then two types of saints, the first the learned from the time of the Prophet, such as 'Alī and the second type, spiritual masters who are present in each and every era to guide the initiated. Ibn 'Arabī too, as will be discussed in due course, divides the enlightened into similar categories, with an additional branch to sainthood, adding the saints from the *ahl al-bayt*, as higher in status than the other two types of saints listed.

The only concrete theological parallel on the above mentioned theories is found in early Shī'ī mystical traditions on the reality of the Prophet, Imāms and in-general, *ahl al-bayt*, such as in the *ḥadīth* compilation *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, selected traditions in *al-Kāfī* and 'Alī's three famous sermons referred to as *Khuṭbat al-Bayān* (Sermon of the Clear Declaration), *Khuṭbat al-Taṭanjiyya* (Sermon of the Gulf), and *Khuṭbat Iftikhār* (Sermon of Glory).

The description given of the Imām in Shī'ī tradition predates both Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines of the prefect human and sainthood. The Shī'ī Imām is from the light of God and is the light of God in creation,[455] and as this light is perfect, therefore the Imām too is the perfect manifestation of God.[456] He is the interpreter of revelation and receiver of divine knowledge from the unseen,[457] who possesses the knowledge of the occult sciences and all

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[453] Hossein Ziai has translated the phrase 'Buzurgān *Ḥaqīqat*' as 'great divinely informed souls', whereas *Ḥaqīqat* here implies the final goal of Sufism, which is to know the Truth through union with God and therefore '*Buzurgān Ḥaqīqat*' would imply spiritual masters who have attained enlightenment or union.
[454] Suhrawardī, *Partu-nāmeh – The Book of Radiance*, trans. Hossein Ziai, Mazda Publishers, (California, 1998), 79.
[455] Al-Kulaynī. M.Y, *Al-Kāfī*, I, 160-162.
[456] *Ibid.* I, 160-162.
[457] *Ibid.* I, 153.

other sciences.[458] He is God's caliph on earth,[459] the pillar of Earth[460] and inheritor of the prophets, who is sinless[461] and a proof of God over the people, such that his existence is mandatory in every age.[462] The Imām is from among the children of the Prophet, with the final being the Mahdī, who will fill the world with truth and justice.[463] This description runs parallel with Ibn 'Arabī's explanation of the perfect human and for this reason, the following chapters will explain both his doctrine of the perfect human and potential Shī'ī influences.

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[458] *Ibid.* I, 158-159, 163, 165.
[459] *Ibid.* I, 159.
[460] *Ibid.* I, 162.
[461] *Ibid.* I, 167, 171.
[462] *Ibid.* I, 142-144.
[463] *Ibid.* I, 340-342.

Chapter 11. Sources

Shrouded in terminology and symbolism, Ibn ʿArabī's style of writing presents a challenge for anyone wanting to understand the nuances of his arguments. Thus it is not just a simple exercise of reading the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* or *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* and concluding on what was alluded to in the text. Ibn ʿArabī when writing embraces a complex synthesis of Islamic sciences including the study of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, metaphysics, and jurisprudence. Therefore, to benefit from his voluminous works, would be to first have a comprehensive understanding of the various Islamic sciences that may have influenced his methodology. To further complicate matters, it is not just a grasp of the Islamic sciences which are imperative, but as his main texts are mystical in nature, much of what he writes is in 'ishāra' (signs/allusion). What this means is that a reader of such a text must be cognizant of mystical concepts and language to fully comprehend what is being implied. Michel Chodkiewicz whilst explaining the complexities of Ibn ʿArabī's works, shares an interesting exchange between Reynold Nicolson (d. 1945) and Abū l-Alā ʿAfīfī (d.1966) who later edited the *Fuṣūṣ*, confessing to Reynold Nicolson: "Never before have I experienced such difficulty understanding an Arabic text".[464] It is also worth noting that both were not merely translators of mystical texts, but were also well versed in Islamic mysticism. Furthermore Chodkiewicz goes on to state that early orientalists such as Clèment Huart (d.1926) and Arthur Arberry (d. 1969) were equally perplexed by Ibn ʿArabī's "inconsistent technical vocabulary", not to mention Rom Landau (d. 1974) declaring: "his ambiguities and contradictions may drive us wellnigh to despair".[465] Finally what can be inferred is that by its very nature, mystical texts have been used to house the inner secrets of its authors and therefore Ibn ʿArabī uses the same style to encapsulate an ocean of meaning through *ishāra* alone. The use of symbolism and allusion is very important part of early Ṣūfī literature and so is the ability to decode it. Examples of decoding these allusions are found in lengthy commentaries of the *Fuṣūṣ* by students from the Akbarian

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[464] Chodkiewicz. M, *An Ocean Without Shore*, SUNY Press, (Albany, 1993), 1.
[465] *Ibid.* 1.

School.[466] It is just as important to know that Ibn 'Arabī's manuals were not for academic consumption, but were for spiritual masters and their novices to comprehend the realities of the spiritual journey.[467] These realities are not understood solely through a process of rationalizing or philosophizing, rather their understanding is through knowledge by presence (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī)*.[468] The traditional teaching methods of a text such as the *Fuṣūṣ* has been to uncover the vastness of meaning contained in the *ishara* through the medium of a spiritual master and through meditation (*murāqibah*), coupled with spiritual exercises.[469] In contemporary times, two most important scholars of Ibn 'Arabī from a Western academic perspective have been Henry Corbin and Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1993), due to their unrivaled grasp of both the Islamic esoteric and exoteric traditions. Considering the complexities mentioned, for this section, it will be important to reference early commentaries on the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī by those originating from the same tradition, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), who was his closest student and successor, 'Afīf al-Dīn Tilimisānī (d. 1291) 'Abd al-Razzaq Kāshānī (d. 1329), Jandī (d. 1292-1301/ 691-700 AH), and Dāwūd Qayṣarī (d. 1350). Each of these individuals have contributed immensely in our understanding of Ibn 'Arabī. It needs to be appreciated that there are discrepancies in early manuscripts, including original works and therefore with the help of immediate students from the Akbarian School, scholars of Ibn 'Arabī have been able to gain an understanding to his profound worldview and

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[466] What I mean by the school of Ibn 'Arabī are the direct students of Ibn 'Arabī and then from them their students, as is common in most spiritual or Ṣūfī traditions in Islām.

[467] Ibn Sīnā lays claim that the use of symbolism and signs as a mode of concealing wisdom from the uninitiated was practiced by Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras. Alluding to a conversation between Aristotle and Plato, where Plato had blamed Aristotle for divulging wisdom to those not worthy, Aristotle replies: "Even if I have done so, I have still left in my books many a pitfall which only the initiated among the wise and learned can comprehend", Heath. P, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā)*, (Philadelphia, 1992), 151.

[468] Knowledge by presence in this context is a form of knowledge without the use of a physical medium, such as the five senses, but allows for the mystic to gain a form of direct knowledge manifesting in the conscious. Further explanation of this can be found in Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037) analogy of the 'floating man' or Descartes (d. 1650) *'Cogito, ergo sum'*.

[469] There is a wonderful example of this in Suhrawardī's extortion in his *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, where he says: "I exhort you to preserve this book, to keep it safe and guard it from those unworthy of it. […] Give it only to one well versed in the methods of the Peripatetics, a lover of the light of God. Let him meditate for forty days, abstaining from meat, taking little food, concentrating upon the contemplation of the light of God, most mighty and glorious, and upon that which he who holds authority to teach the Book shall command", Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, English-Arabic text, trans. John Walbridge & Hossein Ziai, Brigham University Press, (Provo : Utah, 1999), 162.

mystical thinking. The most important expounder of Ibn ʿArabī has been Qūnawī, due to his position in relation to Ibn ʿArabī.

The two most important works by Ibn ʿArabī that showcase his doctrines are *al-Fuṣūṣ* and *al-Futūḥāt.* With regards to *al-Fuṣūṣ*, the main edition that will be used is a critical edition of the Konya manuscript of *al-Fuṣūṣ* by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, published in 2010.[470] This is due to Ahmad's extensive consultation of all existing recensions. The other most important primary source that will be referred to is *al-Futūḥāt*, which in its modern edition is an estimated fifteen thousand pages. It totals five hundred and sixty chapters and was originally over thirty-seven volumes.[471] It was formally published in 1911, with a critical edition appearing in 1970 by Osman Yahia (d. 1997) in fourteen volumes, who in turn was able to edit ten of the fourteen volumes before his death.[472] Current versions of *al-Futūḥāt* can be found in either four or eight volumes. I will in this thesis cross-reference all three published versions of *al-Futūḥāt* where necessary. Important to note is that after extensive research, Osman Yahia concluded that there were only two recensions of *al-Futūḥāt* written by Ibn ʿArabī in his lifetime that we know of. The first was straight after his mystical experiences in Mecca and for this reason his work was titled *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (the Meccan Openings).[473] The second recension of *al-Futūḥāt* was written towards the end of his life, after moving to Damascus. This second recension is referred to as the 'Konya manuscript', though it has since been moved from the library of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī in Konya to Istanbul. It was the Konya manuscript that was first published in 1911 and then in 1970. The Konya manuscript is important because it is regarded as the only complete version of *al-Futūḥāt* supposedly written in the handwriting of Ibn ʿArabī.[474] Though Osman Yahia does make reference to the first manuscript written in Mecca, the original version is now presumed lost. In recent times, there

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[470] Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010).
[471] Chittick. W, *Ṭarīq ʿirfānī maʿifat,* Jāmī, (Tehran, 2011), 36.
[472]*Ibid.* 36.
[473] A proof for those Shīʿī scholars who have claimed Ibn ʿArabī to be a Shīʿa is the first version of *al-Futūḥāt*. This version appears to be more in line with Shīʿī belief, as will be discussed in the thesis. A question that can arise is why was there a more apparent move towards Sunnī belief in the second version. Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Tustarī (d. 1610) in his *Majālis al-Mu'minīn* answers this question by alluding to the atmosphere of Damascus at the time, which was vehemently anti- Shīʿa. Therefore Tustarī believed that Ibn ʿArabī was practicing *taqiyyah* in order to save his life.
[474] There are visible omissions in the body of the work which may not have been by Ibn ʿArabī.

have been published other critical editions of *al-Futūḥāt*, based on the Konya manuscript ,
such as by Ahmad Shamsuddin in nine volumes. The critical edition of Osman Yahia
however, remains the most thorough and well researched due to his wider consultation of at
least three different recensions – the first being as mentioned, the *Konya* manuscript, an
autographic manuscript containing the entire text of *al-Futūḥāt*.[475][476] The second being the
Beyazit manuscript in four volumes, which is a copy of Ibn 'Arabī's own first recension of *al-
Futūḥāt*, written in the handwriting of a number of his students and available in the Beyazit
library in Istanbul, hence its name. This particular manuscript Osman Yahia claimed has Shī'ī
tendencies, due to its compatibility with both the Shī'ī doctrine of Imāmat and primacy of
'Alī.[477] The third manuscript he references is known as the *Fatih* manuscript housed at the
Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi in Istanbul, which is in the handwriting of Ibn
Sawdakīn (d. 1248-49), a student of Ibn 'Arabī and remains incomplete.[478] Thus currently *al-
Futūḥāt* in its complete form only exists in two recensions, the *Konya* and *Beyazit* manuscripts,
neither of which Osman Yahia believed to be the actual *Futūḥāt*.[479]

 With these challenges, it is not surprising that scholars of Ibn 'Arabī have relied on
commentaries where reference has been made to the first manuscript, such as in *al-Yawāqīt wa
al-jawāhir*.[480] Important too is to explore other treaties of Ibn 'Arabī, such as *Risalah al-dur
al-maknūn wa al-jawhar al-maṣūn*, where discussion on the knowledge and inheritance of 'Alī
can be found. In reference to the first manuscript, Sha'rānī (d. 1565) writes: "In several places
of *al-Futūḥāt* I came across points that were not in agreement with the view of the Ahl al-
Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. That is why I excluded them from this summary […]".[481] He later goes
on to state: "[…] Nonetheless there are some parts of *al-Futūḥāt* that I do not understand. But

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[475] Osman Yahia in the introduction to his critical edition does make reference to omissions in the Konya
manuscript.
[476] This autograph manuscript was completed two years or so before the death of Ibn 'Arabī in 1238. As
previously mentioned, it consists of thirty-seven volumes.
[477] Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, ed. Osman Yahia, II, 227.
[478] *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, edited by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi,
The Shī'ah Institute Press, (London, 2017), 60.
[479] According to Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad's conversations with Osman Yahia whilst studying with him in
Cairo.
[480] A further explanation will follow in the next paragraph.
[481] *Mukhtaṣar al-futūḥāt*, c.f. Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, translated by Tawus Raja, ICAS Press, (London,
2017), 482.

I have still brought them here so that Muslim scholars may read them, use that which is correct, and reject anything this is incorrect".[482] Though there is an apparent change of mind as to what to include in his summary, Sha'rānī identifies an acute problem of distortion to original sources. Currently the solution lies in researching wider material in ascertaining the most accurate account. For this reason, Shī'ī mystics have relied on the first version of *al-Futūḥāt*, the *Fuṣūṣ*, and its commentaries, whilst cross-referencing other works of Ibn 'Arabī to reach their conclusions. As the purpose of our discourse is a comparison with Shī'ī Imāmology, this section will only analyze those texts of Ibn 'Arabī where he has either alluded to or directly mentioned 'Alī, the *ahl al-bayt*, the Mahdī or the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil*[483]

As has been mentioned previously, due to the complexities of the style in which Ibn 'Arabī writes in, it will be important to explore the works of his closest disciple Qūnawī, in particular his *Kitāb al-Fukūk*, which is a short commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, as well as *Kitāb al-Nuṣūṣ* and select correspondences that he had with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, author of the seminal work *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*. Important will also be commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* by Tilimsānī, Kāshānī, Jandī and Qayṣarī. References will also be made to *Tamhīd al-qawā'id* by Ibn Turka Isfahānī (d. 1427/ 830 AH), a polymath and occultist, descending from the School of Ibn 'Arabī, whose treatise allow for the reader to better understand the concept of *al-wujūd* (being/ existence), a central theme in the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī. Coupled with *Tamhīd* is *al-Yawāqīt wa al-jawāhir* by al-Sha'rānī (d. 1565), which is a convenient yet concise summary of *al-Futūḥāt*. The vast majority of commentators and teachers of *al-Futūḥāt* after al-Sha'rānī, have tended to use his commentary, especially as a method of identifying what the original versions of the two manuscripts of *al-Futūḥāt* may have looked like. Finally from modern commentators of Ibn 'Arabī, who have been able to capture the nuances of his doctrine are Ḥasanzada Āmulī from the Persian tradition, and Corbin and Izutsu from a Western academic perspective. These three thinkers will also be referenced where a clearer understanding of the text or doctrine is required.

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[482] Shar 'rānī, *Al-Yawāqīt wa al-jawāhir*, I, 16.
[483]Though Ibn 'Arabī mentions the term *al-insān al-kāmil*, it was however first explained, giving it its own focus by the mystic-theologian 'Abd al-Karīm Jīlī (d. 1424) in his book entitled *al-insān al-kāmil*. He through his own admission was trained in the School of Ibn 'Arabī, Jīlī. A, *Marātib al-wujūd wa ḥaqīqat kul muwjūd*, Maktab al-Jandī, (Cairo, n.d.), 8-9.

Chapter 12. The Life and Times of Ibn ʿArabī

These next two chapters will chronologically highlight key aspects in the life of Ibn ʿArabī, followed by an analysis of his Perfect Human doctrine, which have allowed him to be remembered with great enthusiasm by Muslim and more recently non-Muslim thinkers alike. Born in the year 1165 in Mursiyah, a city in eastern Andalusia, and buried on the outskirts of Damascus in Ṣāliḥiyya on the 24th March 1241, Ibn ʿArabī's legacy has become as influential as it is controversial. Known by his admirers as *Muḥyī al-Dīn* (Reviver of the faith) or *Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master), he has also been referred to as *Mumīt al-Dīn* (Killer of the faith) by his opponents.[484] Opposition to ideas championed by Ibn ʿArabī can be found in the edicts of acclaimed scholars ranging from the Shīʿī jurist-mystic Muqaddas Ardabīlī (d. 1585), to the very much anti-Shīʿī Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). Though opposition has been forthright, so too has support from prominent Shīʿī and Sunnī personalities, such as the philosopher-mystic Sayyid Hayder Āmulī (d. 1385) or even the famous Ṣūfī poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). Rūmī according to the twentieth century Shīʿī mystic Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī (d. 1995), whilst observing ascetic practices at the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī wrote: "*In Mount Ṣāliḥ there is a mine of treasure that's why Damascus we're immersed in pleasure*".[485][486] Furthermore, in claiming Ibn ʿArabī, dervishes from the Nūrbakhshī order[487]

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[484] Muṭaharī. M, *Majmūʿa āthār Shahīd Muṭaharī*, Intishārāt Ṣadrā, (Tehran, 1989), XXIII, 59-60.

[485] Rūmī, *Dīvān-i Kabīr*, *ghazal* 1493, c.f. Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, trans. Tawus Raja, 452.

[486] Ṭihrānī was a prominent student of acclaimed philosopher, exegete and mystic, ʿAllāma Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981). Ṭihrānī quotes this ghazal from the works of the late Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Khalkhālī (d. 1889), author of the famous *Sharḥ-i Manāqib Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿArabī*, which is itself a commentary on the *Manāqib* of Ibn ʿArabī (a text dedicated to the twelve Shīʿī Imāms). In turn Khalkhālī quotes his teacher Sayyid Abu l-Ḥasan Jilwah (d. 1896) in identifying who Rūmī was referring to. Jilwah was an authority of his time on this subject and had copies of all known recensions, with its commentaries on the *Dīvān-i Kabīr* of Rūmī. He was also referred to as one of the four philosophers of Tehran (*al-Ḥukama al-ʿarbaʿa*) in the Qajar period. His personal library containing books of philosophy, mysticism and *dīvāns* were the most extensive in that period. After the 1979 revolution in Iran, over two hundred and five volumes of Jilwah's personal collection were purchased by the Library of the Majlis and National Council in Tehran.

[487] The Nūrbakhshī order is a Shīʿa Ṣūfī order taking its name from its founder, Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 1464), who was a disciple of a student of Mīr Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī (d. 1384), the famous saint of the Kubrawīyah order.

as part of their symbolism and secretive rituals would say: "*If a Sufi shaykh claims that he has seen Khiḍr or that his cloak traces back to him, then he is essentially saying that he is a Shi'a and is pointing to his belief in the imamat*".[488] More explicit in his claim of Ibn 'Arabī's leanings towards Shī'ism was the late Shī'ī biographer, Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī (d. 1896) author of *Rawḍāt al-jannah,* who wrote:

> He is a pillar in the chain of mystical, and a pole (*Quṭb*) among the masters of spiritual unveiling and purity. He was a contemporary of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥasanī al-Jīlānī, whose tomb is well-known in Baghdad. In fact, he was a contemporary of a wide range of prominent masters of spirituality in different cities, with the difference that among the Sufi masters of his time, he is the only one who is viewed by some as an Imāmī Shi'a".[489]

In summary, Ibn 'Arabī has either been claimed by both elite Shī'ī and Sunnī scholars, or has been denied by members of the same elite fraternity as being a heretic.[490] He has over the centuries been referred to as *nāṣibī[491]*, a puritanical Sunnī[492], Sunnī but with Shī'ī tendencies, and Shī'ī .[493] A reason for this was not just the complex style in which Ibn 'Arabī wrote, but it was also partially to do with highlighting a field of study that had traditionally been secretive and experiential. What is known is that as part of his legacy, Ibn 'Arabī can be merited for having changed the course of mystical discourse in Islamic literature, having written such detailed mystical philosophy unparalleled before or after by any other Islamic thinker. What he was also able to do was to lay a foundation to a number of important schools of philosophical thought that came after him, such as that of Mulla Ṣadrā (d. 1640), who frequently quotes Ibn 'Arabī in his writings.[494] Undoubtedly there has been considerable influence on Shī'ī thought, reflected by the fact that Ibn 'Arabī is to this day taught in the theological seminary of Qum.[495] Common belief denotes that Ibn 'Arabī was Sunnī in

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[488] Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, trans. Tawus Raja, 456.
[489] *Ibid*. 453.
[490] As per the *fatwā* (legal opinion) of Ardabīlī and his followers.
[491] A person who has enmity for 'Alī and the rest of the Imāms.
[492] In this context, a person who does not tolerate any other denomination.
[493] Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shī'a Khālis*, (Mashhad, 2020), 36.
[494] Leaman. O, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, 97.
[495] The current masters of the school of '*irfān* prevalent in Qum takes its lineage from Sayyid 'Alī Qāḍī (d. 1946), who is quoted as saying: "Muḥyī al-Dīn is from those who have spiritually perfected themselves, and there are

practice, however gave due emphasis to the twelve Imāms, thus making him as acceptable to a wide range of Shī'ī intellectual circles.[496] As the twelve Imāms had previously not been mentioned so openly by any other Sunnī scholar, the debate as to whether Ibn 'Arabī had been influenced by Shī'ī theology still rages on in Shī'ī circles. Such reverence to 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*, coupled with the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* had not previously been explored by any of Ibn 'Arabī's predecessors and thus the question at least needs to be asked as to whether Ibn 'Arabī had been influenced by Shī'ī thought whilst formulating his theories. The purpose of this chapter will be to briefly look at the life and times of Ibn 'Arabī and determine influences as a result of his teachers or people he may have come into contact with in his extensive travels.

The early part of Ibn 'Arabī's life, until the age of thirty was spent in Andalusia. Andalusia until the middle of the eleventh century had been ruled by the Umayyads, who after having been overthrown by the Abbasids in 750, migrated to Cordoba and established what came to be known as the Emirate of Cordoba (756-929). Though in the tenth century the Emirate faced a threat of invasion by an expanding Shī'ī Fatimid Caliphate, the local fiefdoms were able to quash this threat. Ibn 'Arabī was born a century after the demise of the Umayyad dynasty, however the culture and intellectual atmosphere of the dynasty still remained. There is little evidence if at all to suggest that at least whilst in Andalusia, Ibn 'Arabī would have come into contact with Shī'as. He was officially initiated into a *tarīqah* (Ṣūfī order) at the age of twenty by Abū Ja'far āl-'Uryabī, who also became the first of a host of spiritual masters that Ibn 'Arabī came to benefit from[497] (his spiritual openings had started much earlier at the age of fifteen).[498][499] Ibn 'Arabī in his youth would have encountered two main Ṣūfī pathways; the first which came to be known as the School of Almeria, was more prevalent in Andalusia, and

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many proofs for his Shī'ism in his *al-Futūḥāt*, as well as many points that contradict some of the most established principles in Ahl Sunnah", Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Rūḥ al-Mujarrad*, Intishārāt 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾi, (Mashhad, 2006), 342.

[496] Nasr. S.H, *Sufi Essays*, Kazi Publications, (Chicago, 1999), 116.

[497] Addas. C, *Quest For The Red Sulphur*, 49.

[498] *Ibid*. 44.

[499] Though there is debate as to whether Ibn 'Arabī was fifteen or twenty when the famous meeting with Ibn Rushd took place, from the historical narratives found on the meeting, it would suggest that Ibn 'Arabī had gained fame at a young age for his spiritual insight and openings. According to Jandī, this was after a nine month *khalwa* (retreat) that he undertook, Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*, ed. Ashtiyānī, n.p., (Mashhad, 1982), 109.

its key master whose teachings had impinged upon the minds of both al-'Uryabī and by extension Ibn 'Arabī, was Ibn al-'Arif (d. 1141). Ibn 'Arabī would later quote the mystical ideas of Ibn al-'Arif in his works.[500] He also came to address him with the revered title of *Shaykhunā* (our Master).[501] The second pathway was less a school and more based on three important personalities, the last of whom was Abū Madyan (d. 1198), a Ṣūfī saint who arguably became one of the most famous saints in the Maghreb with at least eight direct disciples who later taught Ibn 'Arabī.[502]

Ibn 'Arabī continued to study in Andalusia for the next ten years. At the age of thirty, he would leave for the Maghreb (North Africa) and it can be supposed that his first exposure to Shī'ī Islām if at all, would have been through Fatimid culture and intellectual heritage left by the Shī'ī dynasty that had ruled over the Maghreb until 1171. Throughout his life, Ibn 'Arabī appears to have benefited from a host of teachers, gaining both written and oral *ijāza* (certification/ license) in a variety of traditional Islamic sciences that if not for his mystical teachings, would have been sufficient in recognizing him as a highly capable and well-decorated Islamic scholar. In focusing on the Qur'ān, its commentaries, styles of recitation, the study of *ḥadīth*, *Sīrā* (the prophetic biographies), jurisprudence and ethics, it can be reasonably inferred that Ibn 'Arabī was a very strong scholar of Sunnī Islām.[503][504] Perhaps this is why he has been quoted as saying: "Whoever wishes to see three hundred men in one man has only to look at me, for I have followed three hundred teachers and from each of them I have derived a quality".[505] Though one's teachers may not always reflect an individual's belief, it can however in most cases be a reliable indicator. The other indictor can be the school of law that he belonged to, which to this day is still a point of contention. Chodkiewicz whilst discussing this point writes:

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[500] Chodkiewicz. M, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 127.
[501] Addas. C, *Quest For The Red Sulphur*, 53.
[502] *Ibid.* 311.
[503] An account of his *ijāzāt* and teachers can be found in *al-Futūḥāt, Rūḥ al-quds and Sufis of Andalusia*.
[504] I have used to term Sunnī Islām, as all of his known teachers were identified as Sunnī.
[505] *Rūḥ*, p.27, c.f. Addas. C, *Quest For The Red Sulphur*, 67.

A brief parenthetical statement must be made here on the subject of the relations of Ibn ʿArabī with the (today no longer extant) Madhhab Ẓāhirī school founded by Dāwūd b. Khalaf (d. 270/884). Arab authors, and subsequently Goldziher, have habitually connected the author of the *Futūḥāt* with this school. The influence of the Ẓāhirī school on Ibn ʿArabī's thought in matters of law is of course undeniable […] But in the eyes of the attentive reader, Ibn ʿArabī is not more Ẓāhirī than he is Mālikī or Hanbalī: he is a perfectly autonomous *mujtahid* or-perhaps, the founder of a *madhhab akbarī* […] In a number of cases his preferred solution has not been the Ẓāhirī solution, especially concerning the major issue of reasoning by analogy (*qiyās*) […][506]

Chodkiewicz basis his analysis in the above passage on two poems of Ibn ʿArabī which reads: "I am not of those who says 'Ibn Hazm said," or 'Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal) said', or "al-Nuʿmān (Abū Hanīfa)" and from the following poem: "They have made me a disciple of Ibn Hazm. But I am not one of those who says: 'Ibn Hazm said'". I believe that Chodkiewicz's analysis from these two poems is inaccurate. Though Ibn ʿArabī's opposition to *qiyās* is well known, the Ẓāhirī School, unlike the other four schools of law, were known for their opposition to *qiyās*. Ibn ʿArabī writes: "[…] as for ruling by *qiyās*, I do not practice it, and I do not follow anyone in it whatsoever".[507] The statement: "[…]In a number of cases his preferred solution has not been the Ẓāhirī solution, especially concerning the major issue of reasoning by analogy (*qiyās*) […]", is inaccurate as both the Ẓāhirī School and its practitioner, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) were against the use of *qiyās*. The book titled *Ibṭal al-qiyās* authored by Ibn Ḥazm is an example of this. It is also important to note that there were more than just four schools of law[508] and that a number of them may have existed in the lifetime of Ibn ʿArabī, which over centuries became extinct, such as the Ẓāhirī school itself.[509] Both the Ẓāhirī School and Shīʿī school are well known for their opposition to the use of *qiyās*. In *bāb* three hundred and eight of *al-Futūḥāt*, titled: 'Concerning the abrogation of the Muḥammadan and non- Muḥammadan

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[506] Chodkiewicz. M, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 55.
[507] *Al-Futūḥāt* II, 164-165.
[508]The four schools which survive today were official schools, given patronage in the time of the Abbasids. This patronage was not based on merit, rather patronage was paid. Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044) too tried to patronize the Shī ʿi school of law, but fell short in acquiring the necessary payment, Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shīʿa Khālis*, 136.
[509] For a in-depth list of schools, their founders and origins, please refer to *Tawḍīḥ al-irshād* by Āqā Buzorg Ṭihrānī.

laws as a result of personal objectives (may God protect us all from them)', in relation to *ra'y* (personal opinion), which is the basis for *qiyās*, Ibn 'Arabī appears to mount an attack on scholars of the official court (effectively the four official schools), where he believes *ra'y* had originated from:

> You must know that as desires and interests overcame their souls, and as the scholars sought official positions with the kings, they forsook the bright path, and inclined instead toward far fetched interpretations in order to live up to the objectives of the kings and satisfy their selfish desires. They wanted to back the wishes of the kings by religious rulings, even thought they may not have believed in these rulings as jurists [...][510][511]

Chodkiewicz then mentions opposing views Ibn 'Arabī may have had to certain *Ẓāhirī* rulings, finally concluding that Ibn 'Arabī may have been an autonomous jurist. From an Islamic legal basis, opposition to a popular edict does not mean that an individual is out of the folds of that particular school. There is always room for interpretation and contextualization. Examples of reinterpretation through contextualization can be found in the Shī'ī school of law, which to this day is open to *ijtihād* and therefore produces autonomous *mujtahid* (jurists) engaged in deriving jurisprudential rulings. Similarly modern day Salafī interpretations of Islamic law too are open to contextualization and therefore reinterpretation of laws, though in matters of theology they are known to be literalists. Traditionally no one jurist from among the traditional schools of law interpret law in exactly the same way, but that their differences are mostly accepted and would their edicts would still be recognized as appearing under the umbrella of their particular school. The reason for difference is that primarily sources of law and jurisprudence provide a jurist both with principles and as a result of these principles, the ability to contextualize where required. Where there is no fixed prescription but room for contextualization according to time and place, jurists may reach independent conclusions and

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[510]*Al-Futūḥāt* 3:69-70, c.f. Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, trans. Tawus Raja, 462-463.
[511]Ibn 'Arabī's opposition to scholars from the court of the Caliph, the usage of *ra'y* and *qiyās* and his reverence for 'Alī and the ahl al-bayt have lead to scholars such as Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī (d. 1692) and Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan Jilwah (d. 1896) using this as proof of Ibn 'Arabī's Shī'i tendencies, Mūsawī Khalkhālī, *Sharḥ manāqib-i Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Arabī,* 22-23.

therefore seemingly varied edicts. Thus if Ibn 'Arabī had differed in certain aspects of the law, this does not necessarily push him out of the folds of the *Ẓāhirī* School. A final point worth mentioning in reference to the poem: "I am not of those who says 'Ibn Hazm said," or 'Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal) said', or "al-Nu'mān (Abū Hanīfa)" and from the following poem: "They have made me a disciple of Ibn Hazm. But I am not one of those who says: 'Ibn Hazm said'", is that unlike the other names mentioned, Ibn Ḥazm was not the founder of the *Ẓāhirī* School, and therefore negating him does not necessarily bring the whole school into question. What can be extrapolated from the writings of Ibn Ḥazm is that theologically he was extremely orthodox (or in the modern context, puritanical), polemical, and intolerant to other denominations. Ibn 'Arabī on the other hand was rather more tolerant and encompassing of difference. Therefore his poem could be read as opposition to Ibn Ḥazm's worldview and theological beliefs, as opposed to opposition to the school of law he adhered to. What it can also suggest is Ibn 'Arabī emphasizing himself as a qualified theologian and jurist, well-versed in the Islamic sciences and therefore able to present his own opinions through a process of extracting rulings or principles from primary sources; this being the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. It is a known practice among Islamic jurists to negate or question opinions of learned scholars in demonstrating one's own ability to present an opinion. Furthermore, he would also have been well aware of the opinions of previous authorities and scholarly consensus, for instance the *Ikhwānī* notion of *al-insān al-kullī* (Universal Human) as the most perfect in creation, the microcosm – macrocosm doctrine and the Ṣūfī concept of *insān al-kabīr* (the Great Man).[512] Due to Ibn 'Arabī's extensive reading of sciences other than traditional Islamic subjects, he is able to pool together a broader understanding, whilst giving a refreshing opinion on various topics. In addition, it is vitally important to recognize the immense influence Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī (d.1111)[513] and al-Suhrawardī's[514] philosophies would have had on the intellectual and mystical circles of Andalusia. The philosophical language and technical terminology coined

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[512] Nasr. S.H, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, SUNY, (Albany, 1993), 66-69
[513] Both Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī's full range of works would have been available in Andalusia due to its philosophical climate at the time of Ibn 'Arabī. The atmosphere was a polemical one, with agreements and refutations on the texts of both Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī.
[514] Within his Illuminationist Philosophy, al-Suhrawardī not only uses, but explains terms used by Ibn 'Arabī, such as *dhawq* (taste), *al-Ḥikmah al-dhawqiyyah* (wisdom by spiritually tasting the truth), and *'ilm al- ḥudūrī* (knowledge by presence). His *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* would have been well known, where the above mentioned concepts arise.

by Ibn Sīnā, is evident throughout Ibn ʿArabī's discourse in both the *Fuṣūṣ* and *al-Futūḥāt*.[515] Ibn ʿArabī was also well versed in astrology, mathematics, philosophy, and the occult sciences, as indicated through his works. For instance, though Ibn Rushd's philosophical leanings may have been prevalent in Andalusia due to his formal position at court, a great chunk of Ibn ʿArabī's philosophical worldview was not purely Aristotelian or Neoplatonic, but as pointed out by ʿAfīfī, was 'borrowed'[516] from the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, such as matters relating to the nature of the soul.[517] This example has been used to demonstrate Ibn ʿArabī's sincerity in wanting to extract the truth regardless of its source. Through his writings, it is possible to identify him as a free thinker, divorced from any loyalty to a school or a particular thinker. His fusion of a variety of ideas has left readers with an inability to grasp his religious orientation. This has nevertheless worked in his favor, arousing the curiosity of a wider audience, attentive to his thoughts and ideas. As we conclude this chapter on the life of Ibn ʿArabī, the next chapter will analyze the idea of the Perfect Human and how it plays a pivotal role in gelling together Ibn ʿArabī's ontological and cosmological theories.

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[515] Nearly all surviving philosophical and theological literature in the Islamic intellectual world that came after Ibn Sīnā, use the philosophical terminology presented by Ibn Sīnā. Though there were additions over time, the template has remained much the same.

[516] The word 'borrowed' may not be accurate. I would use the phrase in line with the teachings of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*.

[517] Afifi. A.E, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul Arabi*, 121.

Chapter 13. The Perfect Human

Though the concept of a Perfect Human finds its roots in Ṣūfī metaphysics prior to Ibn ʿArabī, an in-depth theoretical discourse on the term *al-insān al-kāmil* first appears in Ibn ʿArabī's opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, titled '*Faṣṣ ḥikamat ilāhiyyah fī kalimat ādamiyyah*' (The Bezel of Divine Wisdom in the Word of Adam), becoming the *locus classicus* to Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil*.[518] The term *al-insān al-kāmil* is mentioned exactly seven times in the *Fuṣūṣ*, which itself is highly symbolic,[519] whilst first appearing to describe Adam as 'the great man' (*al-insān al-kabīr*), God's Vicegerent (*khalīfah*) and the seal (*khatm*) of God that protects the cosmos, in the same way that a seal is placed on the treasury of a king with the intention of safeguarding it from others.[520] Adam as the first human, also becomes the first prototype of the Perfect Human, encapsulating both creation and the Sacred. The story of Adam finds its roots deeply embedded in both Islamic and the Judeo-Christian tradition, with each faith deriving a unique yet fascinating understanding of events which lead to the 'fall' or descent of Adam to the manifest world of multiplicity. Within variations of the story of Adam, rests a number of profound lessons, from human moral fragility, as witnessed in the Christian tradition, to completion of the created world as perceived by Ibn ʿArabī. For Ibn ʿArabī the story of Adam is guised with symbolism, identifying Adam as invested with three spiritual stations that are intertwined and reflect his superiority over all of creation. These three

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[518] The term also appears in *al-Futūḥāt*, but in lesser detail.

[519] Throughout his major works, Ibn ʿArabī pays intricate detail to symbolism, which comes from the idea of using *ishāra* to convey inner meaning to the trained reader. He also has treatise dedicated to both symbolism and the occult, such as *Risalah al-Dur al-maknūn*. The number seven is of deep importance to the Ismāʿīlīyah and can be found in the teachings of the Brethren of Purity, to whom Ibn ʿArabī would have had contact with.

[520] The second time *al-insān al-kāmil* is mentioned is in the story of how God fashioned Adam with His 'two hands' symbolizing the Divine Attributes of Majesty (*al-Jalāl*) and Beauty (*al-Jamāl*). A third time is when Ibn ʿArabī proclaims that none can truly be God's Vicegerent but the Perfect Human, quoting a tradition in which God declares that He becomes the sight and hearing, in this case of the Perfect Human. By the fourth time, Ibn ʿArabī states that the Perfect Human is the epitome of existent beings. Ibn ʿArabī then goes on to describe the heart of the Perfect Human as the locus of manifestation of the Divine Names, when he mentions the term *al-insān al-kāmil* a fifth time. The sixth and seventh mention is to further elaborate on the fact that is the heart of the Perfect Human that encompasses all the infinite Divine Names, differentiating between 'Animal Man', who despite being created in the image of God, has not realized his potential, and the Perfect Human, who has not only realized his potential, but also actualized it. For a detailed breakdown of these seven mentions, please refer to *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shīʿah Islam*, The Shiʿah Institute Press, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 42-43.

spiritual stations can be labeled as the station of the Perfect Human, the Vicegerent of God (*khalīfat Allāh*) and the Comprehensive being (*al-kawn al-jāmi'*). Adam as the pinnacle of creation receives the Divine Breath (*nafkh*), is taught the Names, and becomes the focal point to whom the angels prostrate towards. In this chapter we will endeavor to provide a brief overview of the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, with reference to Adam's relationship to the angels and concluding on the Divine Breath. Before this however, it will be important to give a brief outline of the nature of the Absolute and Divine Names in Ibn 'Arabī's ontological hierarchy.

13.1 The Absolute and Divine Names

Ibn 'Arabī's entire ontological structure rests on the concept of the 'divine manifestation' (*tajallī*) or theophany (*ẓuhūr*) of the Absolute through His Divine Names. If this philosophy is to be summed up, central to grasp is the process of divine manifestation. As God is one, hidden and unknowable in His absolute form (otherwise known as the level of His Divine Essence (*dhāt*)), the Absolute must go through a process of self-manifestations to come to be known in a fixed form. For this to occur requires a process of self-delimination / determination (*ta'ayyun*) which literally means to make oneself a particular or individual entity for the reason of being known. The emergence of the Absolute into the world of creation therefore requires both divine manifestation and self-delimination, which can only be understood through a series of emanations[521], describing the various degrees of existence (*marātib al-wujūd)*. Though the degrees of existence appear loosely Neoplatonic, Ibn 'Arabī uses the term 'presences' (*ḥaḍrāt*),[522] to describe the degrees of existence. From the writings of Ibn 'Arabī a series of emanations broken into loosely five or six 'presences' can be inferred. The presences are also referred to as 'worlds' (*'awālim*) or in its singular is called world (*'ālam*). Qayṣarī states that the word *'ālam* is derived from the word *'alāma*, which signifies "that through

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[521] Though the word *tajallī* (manifestation) has also come to be used as a synonym for emanation (*fayḍ*), emanation in the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī differ from the Plotinian usage of the word. In Plotinus' thought, the theory of emanations represents a chain, where the second stage flows from the first and then the third stage from the second. In Ibn 'Arabī's cosmology, his theory of emanations equates to the Absolute itself appearing in the various stages through different degrees of self-determination. The first stage of emanation is referred to by Ibn 'Arabī as the 'most holy emanation' (*al- fayḍ al-aqdas*). This is then followed by the 'holy emanation' (*al- fayḍ al-muqaddas*) at the stage of the Unity of the names and attributes (*al-waḥidiyyah).*
[522] The term 'worlds' (*'awālim*) is used as a synonym in parts of Ibn 'Arabī's discourse.

which something is known", and in its technical meaning implies "everything other than Allāh".[523] Qayṣarī goes on to explain: "This is because what is known through it is Allāh, with respect to His names and attributes, since through each individual in the world a name among the divine names is known, because it is a locus of manifestation of a specific name among them".[524]

A key question in determining the number of presences is whether the Divine Essence can be considered as the first presence due it's absolute hidden nature.[525] If we are to take the Divine Essence as the the first presence, it must be understood that the Divine Essence is nothing but a single Reality (*'ayn*), which is none other than the Absolute and is free of limitation and qualification. It is at this stage that the Divine Essence is free from all self-manifestation and is separate from both the world of creation and of a state of potentiality or becoming. For this reason it has been referred to as 'the unseen of the unseen' (*ghayb al-ghayb*), which pertains back to the tradition of the 'hidden treasure'. In this state the Absolute remains a mystery, fortified if it can be said by veils of darkness and light,[526] to which Ibn 'Arabī alludes:

> God describes Himself with reference to (concealed by) veils of darkness, which are the natural bodies, and veils of light, which are the subtle spirits, for the world is made up of the gross and the subtle; it is its own veil over itself. It's perception of itself does not comprehend the Real. it shall ever be within a veil that shall remain unlifted, even with its knowledge that it is distinguished from its Existentiator by reason of its needfulness. Indeed, it has no share in that necessity of the Essence which belongs to the existence of the Real. It will never perceive

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[523]Qayṣarī. D, *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, Spiritual Alchemy Press, (London, 2012), 118.

[524] *Ibid*. 118.

[525] As Ibn 'Arabī has not explicitly numbered the stages of emanations, what is of greater importance is to grasp the process itself.

[526] In reference to the tradition: "God hides Himself behind seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. If He took away these veils, the fulgurating lights of His face would at once destroy the sight of any creature who dared to look at it", c.f. Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, University of California Press, (London, 1983), 32.

God, and because of this reality, God remains unknown both to the knowledge through taste (*dhwaq*) and that of witnessing,[527] because what comes to be has no place in this.[528]

What the Divine Essence in this state symbolizes is pure Being, unqualified, simple and without quiddity, which implies that its Essence is its existence. It is what is referred to in theological discourses as the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) or Necessary through its Essence (*wājib bi- dhāt*) where everything else is contingent and reliant on it. For Ibn 'Arabī, the modes of being are three as outlined in his *Kitāb Inshā' al-dawā'ir*. These can be described as three stages (*marātib*) of being, with the first being the Absolute Being, the second a limited and determined being, with the third being neither being or non-being. The second stage is that of created beings in the material world, with the third stage being that of the immutable archetypes.[529] Therefore, even if the presences may be five or six in number, the modes of being are three, and it is these three that are the object of our knowledge.

The second stage is that of the Absolute in a state of potentiality, otherwise referred to as the level of the 'presence of unqualified oneness' (*ḥaḍrat al-aḥadiyyah)*. At this stage, self-manifestation and self-determination still do not occur, but what can be said is that the Divine Essence has made itself apparent in itself from a state of complete darkness (*ghayb*) whilst still remaining unqualified from names and attributes.[530] What this stage also symbolizes is that of the immutable archetypes (*al-'ayān al-thabitah*). The immutable archetypes can best be described as void from any external existence, but existing only in the knowledge of the Absolute, thus are intelligible. This only means that they possess no temporal or spatial existence, similar to quiddity in a human being's mind. They are also eternally fixed, due their very nature as archetypes. Izutsu describes immutable archetypes as: "That which we know

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[527] To witness or taste something can only occur through knowledge by presence, and for this to happen means actualizing in oneself that which is being known. In the case of God as the Absolute, who is hidden and remains a mystery, it is impossible to come to know Him as that which is contingent in existence and finite in form, cannot comprehend the Absolute, especially when He at that stage is a 'hidden treasure'.

[528] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 13.

[529] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 27.

[530] Al-Kāshānī whilst commenting on the *ḥaḍrāt* describes this stage as 'the manifestation of the essence alone to itself' (*tajallī al-dhāt waḥdihā li-dhātihā*), thus making a distinction between the Divine Essence as *ghayb al-ghayb* (the utterly unqualified Self) to becoming manifest to itself, al-Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. A. Shāhīn, Dār al-Manār, (Cairo, 1992), 173.

best about the archetypes is their ontologically intermediate status. Briefly stated, the plane of the archetypes occupies a middle position between the Absolute in its absoluteness and the world of sensible things".[531] They can be both universal, similar to quiddity, but also consist of an essential identity referred to as ipseity (*al-hūiyyat*).[532] To explain further, though the immutable archetypes are universals in the knowledge of the Absolute, they are also the essences (*a'yān*) of possible existents (*mumkināt*). Ibn 'Arabī describes the immutable archetypes in the following manner: "The essences of the possible things (i.e. permanent archetypes) are not luminous because they are non-existent. Certainly they do have permanent subsistence (*thubūt*), but they are not qualified by existence, because existence is Light".[533]

The third stage is that of Qualified Oneness (*al-waḥidiyyah)*, also referred to as the Presence of the Attributes and Names (*ḥaḍrat al-ṣiffāt wa al-asmā'*) or Divine Unity (*al-aḥadiyyah al-ilāhīyyah*). This implies the qualification of the Divine through names and attributes in the state of unity. What this means is that the stage of Divine Unity is the stage of the name 'Allāh', as all the names and attributes are 'gathered' or found in a state of unity.

The fourth stage denotes that of the Divine Names and actions. For this purpose it has been referred to as the Presence of Actions (*ḥaḍrat af'āl*) or the level of lordship (*al-rubūbiyyah*), as it is at this stage that independent self-determinations occur, splitting from the stage of Divine Unity. Every Divine Name possesses a form/ immutable archetype in the knowledge of the Absolute, but its external form corresponds to its particular manifestation in the world of creation. There are also degrees of manifestation and so each will have a certain degree of existence (*tashkīk*) in the ontological hierarchy. The greatest name is the name Allāh, as it encompasses all the other names and is the name of divinity (*al-ulūhīyyah*). Therefore found in the essence of all of the names and their corresponding manifestations will be the essence of the name Allāh. In creation, the greatest name (*al-ism al-a'ẓam*) is actualized in the form of the Perfect Human which is why Qayṣarī, whilst explaining the concept of the Perfect Human as it appears in the *Fuṣūṣ* states: "Because of this comprehensiveness and manifestation of the

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[531] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 159.
[532] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 78-79.
[533] *Fuṣūṣ.* 114, 102, c.f. Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 160.

totality of divine secrets in him exclusively, he deserved to be the vicegerent of God in creation".[534] Qayṣarī brilliantly goes on to encapsulate this in a poem: "*Glory be to Him who manifested humankind, concealing the piercing brilliance of His divinity. Then He displayed him in His creation outwardly, in the form of one who eats and drinks*".[535]

The fifth stage is symbolic of the unity of all self-determinations by uniting all "creaturely and possible things of the world of becoming".[536] It has also been referred to by Qūnawī as the Presence of the Images (*ḥaḍrat al-amthāl*),[537] which is both synonymous with the Realm of Imagination (*al-khayāl*) or the Intermediary World (*'ālam barzakh*).

The sixth stage is the apparent world, consisting of individuals, parts and bodies. It is referred to as 'the world of the kingdom (*'ālam al-mulk*), the world of bodies (*'ālam al-ajsām*), the visible world (*'ālam al-shahādah*) or in its technical term, the Presence of the Senses (*ḥaḍrat al- ḥiss*).

A final layer that commentators such as Qaysarī have mentioned is the stage of the Perfect Human, who is the collective of all the other worlds as a result of his all-encompassing nature.[538] It is the Perfect Human who gathers all the names and attributes onto one locus, whilst through him the name Allāh is known and manifest in creation.[539][540] The Perfect Human resides as a *barzakh* between the Absolute and the world of creation and it is he who is

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[534] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 162.
[535] *Ibid.* 162.
[536] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 155.
[537] Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, 36.
[538] In *al-Futūḥāt*, Ibn 'Arabī describes five Presences – the first being Absolute Unknowableness (*ghayb al-muṭlaq*), otherwise referred to as *'ālam lāhūt*, which is a station before any form of self-manifestation or delimitation (*lā ta'ayyun*). The second Presence is referred to as *'ālam jabarūt* or the stage of the first delimitation (*ta'ayyun awwal*), followed by the third Presence *'ālam malakūt*, otherwise referred to as *'ālam mithāl* or *khayāl*), due to there being no matter but only form at this station. The fourth Presence is called ālam *shuhūdī*, *nasūt* or world of physical being. The final Presence is the Perfect Human, who contains all the previous Presences, as he is the greatest name of Allāh, Ismail Hakki Bursevi's translation of *Kernel of The Kernel by Ibn 'Arabī*, Beshara Publications, (Roxburgh, 1997), 10-14.
[539] The name Allāh is regarded as *ism jam'*, which means a name that brings together all the other names in a state of unity.
[540] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 120.

the microcosmic universe.[541] Ibn ʿArabī describes the state of the Perfect Human as "God in this way has made man the spirit (*rūḥ*) of the universe, and made everything, high and low, subservient to him because of the perfection of his (inner) form". This is indicative of the dual nature of the Perfect Human, as in his make-up, he holds the properties of the physical world outwardly, whilst his inner nature holds the Divine nature, making him a synthesis of two distinct realities and a 'medium' between God and creation. For this reason Ibn ʿArabī mentions whilst quoting the Qur'ān,[542] that God made Adam with His two hands, symbolizing the synthesis of the two realities, the divine and created, or the infinite and finite.[543]

Each presence can be summarized as a 'book of God' (*Kitāb Allāh*), as each book represents a created reality (world). If we are to describe the emanations are five, the first would be the Absolute at the level of the hidden (*al-ghayb*), this would be followed by the World of Invincibility (*ʿālam jabarūt*), also referred to as the world of spirits (*arwaḥ*) or the Muḥammadan Spirit (*Rūḥ Muḥammadī*). It is at this level that angels and spirits are meant to reside.The third stage is that of the World of Dominion (*al-malakūt*), which is an intermediary realm before the world of form and matter. This realm contains form, similar to when an individual dreams, but has no material existence. For this reason it is an intermediary between the world of spirits and the material world. It also corresponds to the Realm of Imagination.

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[541] Qayṣarī whilst commenting on the station of the Perfect Human, quotes a poem attributed to ʿAlī which then becomes central in giving legitimacy to the description of the Perfect Human as a universe: "[…] Do you suppose that you are a small particle, while contained within you is the Great World (*al-ʿālam al-akbar*), you are the manifest book (a*l-kitāb al-mubīn*) whose letters bring forth the hidden", *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 122. The idea of man being equated to as the 'Great Universe' or the cosmos was developed before Ibn ʿArabī. The Ikhwān in their *Risalah* have delved deeply into this concept, as have early Ismāʿīlī metaphysicians, Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, p.53. Pre-Ibn ʿArabī mystics such as al-Ghazālī in his *Kīmiyā-i saʿādat* and *Mishkāt al-anwār* have also taken pains to explain Adam (man) as a 'summary form' of all the various types of creation found in the world: "And if the human form is found to have a hierarchy that takes this shape (form), then the human form is 'in the form of the All-Merciful' […] God showed beneficence to Adam. He gave him an abridged form that brings together every sort of thing found in the cosmos. It is as if Adam is everything in the cosmos, or an abridged transcription of the world (*huwa nuskhah min al-ʿālam mukhtaṣarah*). The form of Adam – I mean this form – is written in God's handwriting […]", al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Light*s, English-Arabic text trans. David Bachman, Brigham Young University Press, (Utah, 1998), 31. Though Ibn ʿArabī does not claim that his ideas and thoughts are exclusive, it is possible to witness an uncanny similarity to his spiritual cosmology in the above quote. What Ibn ʿArabī is able to do is develop ideas that were previously mentioned into a unique worldview. By starting his discourse in the *Fuṣūṣ* with Adam, Ibn ʿArabī is identifying the perennial nature of wisdom and truth. What is unique to Ibn ʿArabī therefore is how he develops these truths.
[542] Qur'ān 38:75
[543] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 21.

The fourth stage is that of the manifest and sensory world. The fifth and final stage is that of the Perfect Human, which Qūnawī whilst commenting on the *Fuṣūṣ* writes:

> Just as the Divine Presence, referred to by the name Allāh, comprises all the specific Attributes, their particular properties, and their inter-relationships, so that there is no intermediary between the Essence and the Attributes, likewise, from the point of view of man's reality and his station, there is no intermediary between man and God. His reality is such that he is the comprehensive isthmus (*al-barzakhīyya al-jāmi'a*) between the properties of necessity and possibility since he encompasses both.[544]

13.2 A Summary of the Opening Chapter of the Fuṣūṣ

The opening chapter begins by emphasizing the centrality of mankind to creation, with Adam representing mankind as a whole. Adam is the archetypal human (*Abū al-Bashar*), becoming the locus of 'divine manifestation' (*maẓhar*) for the actualization of the divine names and attributes in creation. Ibn 'Arabī's ontological worldview essentially stands on two pillars; that of the Absolute and that of the Perfect Human. The entire *Fuṣūṣ* in fact can be read as a commentary on the Perfect Human, with the doctrine of the Perfect Human effectively summarizing Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical and cosmological doctrine. The Perfect Human, in this case Adam, encompasses all the various levels of reality in existence and is the *telos* of creation, for it is Adam who is also the *Imago Dei*. In other words, Adam who represents the human specie, epitomizes the whole universe and therefore is referred to as '*al-kawn al-jāmi'*'. He is also the final destination of creation when symbolizing the Perfect Human. For this reason Ibn 'Arabī describes the birth of Adam in creation as the sum of the whole universe and its multiple properties defused into one being. This is not to be confused with a 'man' or a 'human' on an individual level, as the vast majority of human beings seldom reach their full potential of unveiling the expanse of the divine Names and Attributes that are found deeply embedded inside of them. The individual has the potential of enacting the comprehensive being, however it is the Perfect Human alone that is an actualized being with the ability of

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[544] Qūnawī, *Kitāb al-fukūk*, 185, (quote translated by Mukhtar H. Ali).

manifesting the divine in its completeness in creation. Ibn ʿArabī begins his introductory chapter by writing:

> When the Real (Absolute God) willed, glorified be He, at the level of his beautiful Names, which are innumerable, to see their identities – or if you like, to see His Identity (inner reality itself) – (actualized) in a comprehensive being, which because of it being qualified by existence[545], contains in itself the whole reality (of things), thus making manifest to Himself His own mystery. For the vision a thing has of itself is not like the vision a thing has of itself through another thing, which becomes a mirror for it.[546] Certainly, He is manifest to Himself in a form accorded by the locus (Adam) seen, which would not have manifested to Him without the existence of that locus and His self-disclosure to it.[547][548]

Encapsulated in these opening words is a brief summary on the ontology of Ibn ʿArabī. At the level of the Absolute, God is in no need to create, knowing Himself in an absolute and unqualified way. It is through a process of divine emanation at the level of the Names, that a divine wish (*mashīʿah*) for creation arises. The actualization of the Names happen through creation. The creation of the universe in itself is a manifestation of the Names, however as the name Allāh is a name that gathers together all the properties of the infinite names (*ism jamʿ*) so too does a need for the Perfect Human arise to gather together the world of creation on one supreme locus of manifestation. This allows for the Divine to know all things in a relative and qualified manner. Caner Dagli whilst commenting on the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* writes:

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[545] The term existence in this particular context is other than the Absolute. The Absolute is the giver of existence and therefore His existence is *wājib* (necessary) and other than creation. When writing about existence in reference to creation, existence here symbolizes the act of being, in other words, bringing into being, where creation is dependent on the necessary being for its existence. As creation receives its existence from the necessary being, its example is like the rays of the sun, that though the rays have an independent identity as rays, but at the same time are part of the sun, relying on it for existence.

[546] God the Absolute, at the level of His absoluteness has no need for creation, however, creation offers a relative and qualified vision of Himself. The Absolute is the only Real, and Truth, where creation has no independent reality. ʿAlī declared: "He sees, though there be no object in His creation to see", Ibn ʿArabī, The Ringstones Of Wisdom (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*), trans. C.K. Dagli, Kazi Publications, (Chicago, 2004), 3, f.n. 4.

[547] God sees Himself through Adam/ Perfect Human, similar to one seeing themselves in the mirror. The Absolute looking upon Himself is a different knowing to when He looks in the mirror. The mirror gathers all of the divine names and attributes scattered in creation and thus the Perfect Human becomes the epitome of multiplicity in a state of unity.

[548] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 9-11.

The totality and infinity of God's knowledge demands that He knows Himself in an absolute way, which is totally beyond need of the world, and also in a relative and qualified way, which presupposes the existence of the world. The vision a thing has of itself is not like its vision in another thing, and God's knowledge of Himself in Himself is not like His knowledge of Himself in Perfect Man and in all the beings of the world. The absolute is not qualified, which does not take away the absoluteness of the absolute but does place upon it the limitation of not being qualified. As Ibn al-'Arabī will have occasion to point out […] it is in encompassing both the absolute and the qualified that God is truly God.[549][550]

For God to observe creation through the mirror of the Perfect Human results in the Perfect Human becoming a medium (*barzakh*) between God and creation. Without the Perfect Human, creation has been described in the opening chapter as an 'unpolished mirror'. This suggests that without the Perfect Human, the mirror is not in a condition to be used, though at the level of the absolute, the complete mirror is in fact the Divine Self. Creation to God is like a mirror through which God sees His reflection and comes to know Himself. The Perfect Human therefore holds an integral position in allowing God to know Himself in creation. This knowing is qualified and differs from knowing at the level of being absolute and unqualified.

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[549] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 3-4, f.n. 5.

[550] In clarifying Ibn 'Arabī's ontological template, this explanation also answers the question of God's knowledge in relation to His knowledge of particulars. The discourse on the nature of divine knowledge would have been an important one at the time, with theologians such as al-Ghazālī strongly attacking Ibn Sīnā's ideas concerning God's knowledge of particulars via universals, as one of a host of topics that included God's nature and relationship to the world. The Aristotelian notion of a Prime Mover, whose knowledge is to His immediate Self, allowed for there to be an argument that God lacked knowledge of particulars in creation, which would have included God not possessing knowledge of evil in the world. Ibn Sīnā tried to rectify this by arguing that God's knowledge of particulars was through universals, as God is the principle of all existence, "the First knows the causes and their corresponding [relations]. He thus necessarily knows to what these lead, the time [intervals] between them, and their recurrences. For it is not possible that He knows [the former principles] and not this. He would thus apprehend particular things inasmuch as they were universal […]", Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, trans. Marmura, Brigham Young University Press, (Provo, UT, 2005) 288. He further concedes that as God is pure intellect and completely actualized, as opposed to pure matter and in the state of potentiality, His mode of knowing would be intellectual and conceptional, as opposed to sensory and temporal, thus being universal in nature and not particular, Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, trans. Marmura, p.284. In addition, God knows all things in one instance at the level of His essence, divorced from the limitation of multiplicity brought about by forms. Knowledge of particulars supposes that God's knowledge is conditioned by time (*ḥuduth zamanī*). If this be the case, it is changing and subject to potentiality. For this reason Ibn Sīnā argues God's knowledge of particulars via universals, but still is unable to argue God's knowledge of particulars as perceived in the temporal world. If God's knowledge is solely universal, then free will has no value, and if His knowledge is only of particulars, then He ceases to be all-knowing. Ibn 'Arabī through a mystical lens is able to unify both particular and universal knowledge through the lens of the Perfect Human. Thus the Perfect Human becomes the mirror of God in creation through whom He sees the temporal world, whilst maintaining His absoluteness at the level of unity.

For this reason alone is the Prefect Human the vicegerent of God, as he is the medium for His sight and all of His actions in creation. The Perfect Human is the 'very polishing of that mirror' (*'ayn jalā tilk al-mir'āh*) that allows for the mirror to be used, as he is the gathering of all the individual divine names and attributes. Al-Kāshānī explains the analogy of the unpolished mirror in the following light:

> Before Man, the Microcosm, was created, the universe (the Macrocosm) had already been existent due to the requirement of the Divine Names, because it is in the nature of each Name to require singly the actualization of its content, i.e the Essence accompanied by an Attribute, or an existence particularized by an Attribute, while another Name asks for an existence particularized by another Attribute. No single Name, however, requires an existence which would unify all the Attributes together, for no Name has an essential unity comprising all the Attributes in itself. Thus the universe has no property of being a comprehensive locus for manifesting all the aspects of existence in its unity.[551]

Thus the position of the Perfect Human is central in 'gathering' the Names onto one locus. Ibn 'Arabī writes: "And so the aforementioned was called Man and Vicegerent. As for his being man, it refers to the totality of his makeup and his encompassment of all realities".[552] He then goes on to describe *insān* (human) as having a dual meaning – the first as a human, and the second implying a pupil (*insān*) to the eye.[553] Hence the Perfect Human becomes to God in creation, what the pupil is to the eye – meaning the mode of vision, "and this why he has been called human (*insān*), as through him, the Real looks upon His creation giving onto them mercy".[554] The 'hidden treasure'[555] (*kanz al-makhfī*)[556] and its secrets are made apparent only through the mirror of the Perfect Human. Ibn 'Arabī describes the Perfect Human as: "He is to the world what the ringstone is to the ring, which is the place of the signet and the mark with which the king sets a seal upon his treasures. For this reason he is named Vicegerent, for

[551] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 223.
[552] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 6.
[553] *Ibid.* p.6
[554] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 13.
[555] The 'hidden treasure' being the Absolute.
[556] Alluding to the famous tradition of God being the hidden treasure: "I was a hidden treasure [*kuntu kanzan makhfiya*]; I loved to be known, so I created creation so that I may be known", Qaysarī. D, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Anwār al-Hudā', (Qum, 2002), 157.

through him the Real protects His creation […]".[557] Printed on the ringstone are all the divine names, the heart of the Perfect Human being the setting for the stone of the ring.[558] Thus the inner reality of the Perfect Human is imprinted upon all of creation, with there being two dimensions to him; his outer self, making up the realities of the universe and its multiple forms and his inner self, which is fashioned on the form of God.[559] The nature of the Perfect Human rests on duality, a synthesis of 'the world and the Real' (ṣūrat al-'ālam wa ṣūrat al-ḥaqq). In explaining this concept further, Ibn 'Arabī in al-Futūḥāt elaborates:

> When God had created the world, with the exception of the human being, that is, with the exception of His synthetic nature (majmū'ihi), He modeled his form (ṣūratahu) on the form of the whole world. Every part of the world, therefore, is in the form of the human being. And by 'the world' (al-'ālam) I mean everything other than God. Then He separated him from it after He had Organiser it. So the human being is identical to the organizing command (al-amr al-mudabbir). Then He modeled his spirit (ma'nawiyyan) on the presence of the divine names ('alā ḥadrat al-asmā' al-ilāhiyyah), which appeared in him like images in a mirror appear to the viewer. Then He separated him from the presence of the divine names, after their faculties (qiwā) had taken form within him, such that he manifested them within his spirit and inner self. So the outer aspect of the human being is created (khalq), and his inner aspect is divine (ḥaqq) […]"[560]

This is why the imprint of the Perfect Human on creation is the very same imprint symbolizing the Divine imprint. In similar style, Ibn 'Arabī again states in al-Futūḥāt that the Perfect Human is the crown of the King (tāj al-malik), which makes him the noblest of all the majestic adornments the king wears to express His kingship. Whereas the crown is symbolic for the majesty of the king, 'crowning' (tatwīj) itself, symbolizes the king's signature upon the royal document, thus bringing into the manifest world the king's decree or command.[561] It is

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[557] Ibn 'Arabī, Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, trans. C.K. Dagli, 6.
[558] Ibid, 127.
[559] Ibid. 14.
[560] al-Futūḥāt, 2:464, c.f. Morrissey. F, Sufism and the Perfect Human, 74, Takeshita, Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of The Perfect Man and Its Place in The History of Islamic Thought, n.p., (Tokyo, 1987), 110.
[561] al-Futūḥāt, 110:25-30.

therefore the Perfect Human that brings the affairs of creation out of a state of potentiality and actualizes them in the world of being (*ʿālam kawn*).

The Perfect Human becomes the microcosm, with the universe the macrocosm.[562] Ibn ʿArabī refers to the universe as the 'Great Man' (*insān al-kabīr*)[563][564], because all that which is in the Perfect Human is scattered across the universe. In order of creation, the universe comes first, defused and scattered, with Adam coming second, as the polish, unites the whole universe as a unified miniature. Here the universe also implies that part of creation which is immutable, such as the angels, as the Perfect Human encapsulates both the material and immaterial realms. In the chapter of Adam, Ibn ʿArabī refers to the antithetical qualities of God in being the 'First' (*Awal*) and 'Last'(*Ākhir*), the Apparent (*al-Ẓāhir*) and Hidden (*al-Bāṭin*), the Possessor of Beauty (*Jamāl*) and that of Majesty (*Jalāl*) as part of His 'Two Hands' that were used to create Adam. By virtue of being created by God's Two Hands does the 'Perfect Human' also contain these antithetical qualities. At this juncture, Ibn ʿArabī is in fact alluding to the divine conversation in the Qurʾān between God and Satan: "*God said, 'Iblīs (Satan), what prevents you from bowing down (to Adam) whom I have made with My two hands? Are you too high and mighty?' Iblīs replied: 'I am better than him, You made me from fire, and him from clay*".[565] Satan had only envisaged Adam's apparent form, or perhaps was blinded by the apparent form and unable to comprehend his inner reality; that being the sum manifestation of the Absolute in creation. It was due to this lack of vision that Iblīs rebelled, feeling that an injustice had been done to him. In fact it was his lack of trust in God and shortsightedness that lead Iblīs to transform into Satan.[566] So Ibn ʿArabī continues by stating:

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[562] The micro and macrocosm analogy would have been known to Ibn ʿArabī through both the mystical writings of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* and potentially through other philosophical schools, as the analogy is found in various traditions, ranging from ancient Chinese philosophy of *Chen-jen* to that of *Purusa* in the Hindu tradition.
[563] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 11.
[564] Important to note is that this term was not coined by Ibn ʿArabī, but as written in the *Rasāʾīl* of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, is a theory found in their words, amongst the sages (*Ḥukamāʾ*), *Rasāʾīl* II, 20, c.f. Nasr. S.H, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 67.
[565] Quran 38:75-77.
[566] Iblīs was a name given to Satan before he became Satan. Satan is a title which means the accursed. Iblīs was also a title and it was given after Satan demonstrated his arrogance towards Adam. His actual name has been recorded as being Ḥārith. Through extensive worship, Ḥārith was initially given the title 'ʿAzāzīl', from the word 'azīz, which in this context means the beloved to God, Āshnānī. M, Iblīs, *Dushman Qasam Khurde*, Muʾsasseh Būstān Kitāb, (Qum, 2014), 23. This in itself implies a shortcoming in creation and that is a lack of immunity to fall from grace. In the story of Adam, both Satan and later Adam (though only in his apparent context) fall from a

"[…] by reason of his (Adam) being that which unites all the realities and individuals of the world"[567], is why the Perfect Human is Perfect in nature and the Vicegerent of God in creation, "The world is visible and the Vicegerent is invisible. That is why the sultan is set under veil".[568] To recognize the Perfect Human from under the veil requires an individual to have attained a degree of perfection. Thus the Perfect Human is not necessarily the caliph of the Islamic world, whose claim is that of being the Vicegerent of God and Muḥammad, but the Perfect Human or the true Vicegerent of God is free from claim, not easily recognizable, and free of worldly position. As is witnessed in Ibn 'Arabī's depiction of the Qur'ānic story of Adam and the angels, the angels too fail to recognize the centrality of Adam to creation.

13.3 The Angels

The theme of Adam's relationship with the angels is an important one in Ibn 'Arabī's depiction of the Perfect Human. The angels by their very nature are regarded both in the Bible and the Qur'ān as celestial intermediaries between God and His prophets. In essence there are two intermediaries between God and the people; the first being angels, and the second a Prophet of God. In Hebrew the word for angel is '*mal'ākh*', similar to the Arabic word '*malak*'. The angels represent a higher level of God-consciousness and are stationed in close proximity to Him. With the fall of both Adam and Satan, it was the angels who not only remained in their divine stations, but also obeyed the will of God by bowing to Adam. If both Adam and Satan were unsuccessful in their tasks, the angels with relative ease fulfilled what was asked of them. The story of the angels in relation to Adam appears to be one of a superior in the case of Adam engaging by divine will with the angels, who appear as inferior beings. Knowing that human weakness was not hidden to the angels, God proclaimed:

position of grace. Adam is able to redeem himself by actualizing his potential as the Vicegerent of God, whereas Satan falls deeper away from completion.

[567] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 13.
[568] *Ibid.* 13.

And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place on earth a Vicegerent', they said,
'How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate
Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?' He said, 'Surely I have knowledge of what you do
not'. And He taught Adam all the names (al-ismā' kullahā), then He showed them to the angels
and said, 'Tell me the names of these if you truly [think you can]'. They said, 'Glory be to
Thee! We have no knowledge but that which You have taught us, surely You are the All
knowing and All Wise. Then He said, 'Adam tell them the names of these', [...] God said, 'Did
I not tell you that I know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you
reveal and what you conceal'.[569]

In explaining the above passage, Ibn 'Arabī comments on the superiority of Adam through
possessing that names as follows:

> Indeed, the angels were not aware of what the makeup of this Vicegerent accorded him, nor
> were they aware of the Essence worship made necessary by the presence of the Real, for no
> one knows anything of God except what is accorded him by his essence. The angels did not
> possess the synthesis possessed by Adam, and were not aware of the Divine Names by which it
> is set apart such that they could glorify the Real and proclaim Him holy through them. Nor did
> they know that God possesses Names to whose knowledge they did not attain, therefore not
> glorifying Him with them nor proclaiming Him holy as did Adam.[570]

Ibn 'Arabī likens the angels to the human sensory faculty, as Adam corresponds to a synthesis
between the created world and the Divine. The angels being pure intellect correspond to the
human intellect. Though the intellect is loyal, it is veiled by its limitations, the biggest being a
lack of divine knowledge, which is through presence (ḥudūrī) as opposed to cognitive.[571]
Within Islamic mystical discourses, it is the heart and not the intellect that is used to come to
truly know God. The angels as part of the whole makeup of the Perfect Human contain similar

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[569] Qur'ān 2:30-33.
[570] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 7.
[571] *Ibid.* 5-7.

limitations. Adam represents the full range of being, holding the various degrees and stations of existence in the ontological hierarchy. His knowledge is fully actualized, having been taught all of the names.

A final point Ibn 'Arabī mentions whilst discussing the angels is that of *adab*, [572] he writes:

> The Real related the preceding to us (story of the angels questioning God over Adam) so that we would stop and learn *adab* […] How can we presume to speak of something and apply it universally when we are possessed neither of the state nor of knowledge of it, thus exposing ourselves? This is the divine teaching, by which the Real disciplines His slaves and Vicegerents, men of *adab* and trust.[573]

There are some extremely pertinent points in this quote that require unpacking. The most apparent teaching that can be inferred is both Adam's spiritual state and knowledge were far more superior to that of the angels due to his comprehensiveness in bringing together the universe onto one locus of existence. Despite the angels holding a high rank in the spiritual realm, their example can be compared to the Qur'ānic parable of Moses when confronted with Khiḍr. Moses not understanding the nuisances of why Khiḍr performed certain acts protested at what he perceived were unjust actions. Moses in his understanding was not wrong, whilst his speaking out was genuinely to question actions which to him were unfair. This however does not mean that Khiḍr was unjust and is later explained in the parable, but that Moses had lacked the capacity to comprehend his actions. Similarly the angels in their limited capacity were unaware of the divine design of Adam's hidden nature, they may not have been wrong in their limited understanding, but in both these parables, Moses and the angels were novices who required training to be able to grasp higher secrets. It requires *adab* on the part of a novice to gain from his Master. It is not always that the novice will grasp the subtleties of the actions of his master, due to a limited understanding or state of being, but through *adab* can

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[572] *Adab* has a number of meanings ranging fro courtesy and good-manners to the proper art of interacting with another and discipline.
[573] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 8.

the foundations be laid for these subtleties to be transferred. Similarly humans too have a tendency to comment or give opinion on that which they have limited knowledge of, for this reason I believe Ibn 'Arabī in this passage is not giving a mere theoretical example, but is presenting a practical tip for novices on the spiritual path to adhere to.

13.4 The Breath of the All-Merciful

The theme of the Breath of the All-Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī)* though not explicitly addressed in the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, is central to the actualization process of the Perfect Human. Without the Divine Breath, Adam remained incomplete and without consciousness. The act of being was found in the breath and through it the Real became manifest. Therefore the breath is an extension of the Divine through manifestation, similar to immutable archetypes. In the Islamic depiction of the story of Adam, it was not the physical form of Adam that in and of itself was the motivation for God to command the angels to bow down, but it was in fact the Divine Breath blown into Adam that lead to the angels prostrating, as the Qur'ān says: "*When I have shaped him and breathed of My Spirit into him, bow down before him*".[574] It is the Divine Breath that brings a thing into the world of existence, in as much as it is the breath that carries words in speech. If all of creation is to be regarded as the speech of God, then it is the Divine Breath that is the catalyst to all created things: "the divine words (*al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyya*) are the ontological realities of creation, namely, the angels, the heavens, the earths and all that they contain. Since every form in the cosmos is an accident for Substance[575] and both Substance and accident are forms of manifestation of Being itself, it is through the entification of the Breath that these realities are formed and enter into existence".[576] It is the Divine Breath that articulates the words required to go into the books of creation, or in this case the cosmic book. The books of creation represent the degrees of created reality of which each Presence can be interpreted as a 'Divine book'. Ibn 'Arabī has

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[574] Qur'ān 15:29.
[575] Substance should not be confused with the philosophical notion of primordial matter. Substance represents an immaterial entity, simple in its makeup whilst manifesting the Divine Essence similar to how immutable archetypes are a manifestation of the Essence in the Divine knowledge. Substance through manifestation becomes united with its particulars in the material world and therefore has a relationship with accidents, whilst being simple in the immaterial world.
[576] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 275.

argued that all which the created world knows of God is the 'word'.[577][578] The one word used in the Qur'ān is the 'Be' (*kun*)[579] which bestows being (*kawn*)[580] and therefore is similar to a seed that contains all of creation.[581] Ibn 'Arabī whilst explaining 'Be' states: "All that exists was born from the hidden depths of the secret meaning of this word '*kun*'. Even all that is hidden from the eye and mind is but a result of this mysterious sound".[582] As God uttered the 'Be' in the eternal present, the effects of the word will be continuously felt throughout time (*zamān*)[583]: "The existence of the realm of being has no root other than the divine attribute of speech, for the realm of being knows nothing of God but His speech, and that is what it hears".[584] William Chittick whilst summing up a passage on the breath from *al-Futūḥāt* states: "All things are words of God, silent in and of themselves. All are modes of being, nonexistent in themselves. It is *wujud*[585] who speaks through them, hears through them, sees through them, and remembers through them. And it is *wujud* that is spoken, heard, seen, and remembered".[586]

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[577] This is very similar to the Biblical verse, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*", John 1:1.

[578] Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī Heir to the Prophets*, Oneworld, (Oxford, 2007), 58-60.

[579] "*Indeed, Our word to a thing when We desire it is but that We say to it, 'Be' and it is*", Qur'ān 16:40.

[580] Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī Heir to the Prophets*, 59.

[581] Ibn 'Arabī equates creation to a tree: "whose light of life came out of a seed shed when Allāh said *kun*! The seed of the letter K fertilized with the letter N of *nahnu* (We), created when Allāh said, '*We it is who have created you*' (Qur'ān 56:57), Ibn 'Arabī, *Shajarat al-kawn*, trans. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, Archetype, (Cambridge, 2019), 90.

[582] Ibn 'Arabī, *Shajarat al-kawn*, trans. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, 90.

[583] I feel the best way of explaining the difference between time and eternal presence is by referring to Mīr Dāmād's (d. 1631) philosophy of time. Without a philosophical explanation of the modes of time, it will be very difficult for a reader to grasp the subtleties of what Ibn 'Arabī is trying to convey. Mīr Dāmād characterizes time into three stages; the lowest stage being *zamānī*, which is created time that the physical world is subject to. *Zamān* implies movement, speed, distance, change, and all of the laws governing the physical world. The physical world has been actualized through the archetypal realm which Mīr Dāmād has classified as *dahr*. *Dahr* is independent of *zamān*, but by virtue of being immaterial is subject to a time free of movement, speed, distance and the laws of physics. Therefore time in this realm is constant and without movement. Though *dahr* is independent, it is also contingent on the first level of time known as *sarmad* and it is this time which is the eternal presence, as it is continuously at the stage of unity, devoid of the laws of creation. It is the realm of the Divine Essence. For further elaboration please refer to Mīr Dāmād's *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*.

[584] F.II.352.14, c.f. William C. Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī Heir to the Prophets*, 60.

[585] Absolute and necessary existence (*wujūd*) is God, who is the Real. It is His existence that is given to bring creation into being. The quote is reflective of the doctrine of 'unity of existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

[586] Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī Heir to the Prophets*, 60.

To refer back to Substance. Substance in many ways is an intermediary between God and creation through which existence is granted to non-existent beings. It is therefore similar to the Muḥammadan Reality, which flows from the station of *al-aḥadiyyah*, and whilst manifesting the name Allāh, possesses absolute lordship over creation because it actualizes every divine aspect in all the planes of existence. What this implies is that this Reality is the first entification (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*) and the first manifestation (*al-tajallī al-awwal*) from the Divine Essence. It has also been categorized as the first manifest light (*al-tajallī al-awwal al-nūrī*) and Muḥammadan Spirit (*rūḥ*), corresponding to a number of variant prophetic traditions that the first thing God created was the light of Muḥammad, or the first thing created was the spirit of Muḥammad, or the first thing created was the intellect (*ʿaql*), where Ibn ʿArabī has equated the Neoplatonic 'First Intellect' (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*) to the Muḥammadan Reality.[587] The Muḥammadan Reality is not an Immutable Archetype as per say, but unifies all individual Archetypes and that which the Immutable Archetypes are dependent upon. To borrow a Sadran term, the existence of the Muḥammadan Reality is both a copulative existence (*wujūd rabṭī*) and a form of bridge existence (*wujūd rābṭī*) acting as a isthmus to others. Izutsu concisely explains the Muḥammadan Reality by writing:

> Considered from the side of the Absolute, the Reality of Muḥammad is the creative activity itself of the Absolute, or God 'conceived as the self-revealing Principle of the universe'. It is the Absolute in the first stage of its eternal self-manifestation, i.e., the Absolute as the universal Consciousness […] Muḥammad, as the Perfect Man on the cosmic level, is the first of all self-determinations (*taʿayyunāt*) of the Absolute. Theologically, it is the first 'creature'[588] of God.[589]

Qayṣarī whilst elaborating on this point differentiates the Muḥammadan Reality from the person of Muḥammad, identifying Muḥammad in his humanness as the complete servant of

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[587] Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, 97-98.
[588] Alluding to the famous tradition, "The first thing God created was my light".
[589] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 236-237.

God,[590] whilst in his inner reality as the Perfect Human containing complete lordship over creation. The Perfect Human in the person of Muḥammad is in fact the actualization of the Muḥammadan Reality, superseding all Prophets and Perfect Humans due to his comprehensive nature summarized in ibn 'Arabī's words as: "Every Prophet, from Adam to the last Prophet, received from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets (*mishkāt khātam al-nabiyyīn*), even though the existence of his clay (form) came later, for he has been existent through his (Muḥammad) reality, so he (Muḥammad) exclaimed, 'I was a Prophet even while Adam was between water and clay'. There other Prophets were only Prophets when they were sent".[591] Commentators such as al-Farghānī and Qayṣarī whilst explaining Divine prophecy in relation to the Muḥammadan Reality conclude that the realities of the Prophets are specific parts of the universal Muḥammadan Reality. Thus al-Farghānī writes:

> All of these [prophet realities] are a specification of the universal Muḥammadan Reality, which encompasses all of them, and which is called 'the Reality of Realities' (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*), which flows (*sāriyah*) through its parts, and which is the original, most ancient, greatest and first isthmus (*barzakh*). Then there branches off from these specified, divine realities which arose from them, and to which are attributed the realities of all the prophets – Peace be upon them – universal, roots and categories.[592]

How this translates to in our discussion is that the Muḥammadan Reality is a isthmus between God and creation, in so much as it is a bridge between existence and non-existence. If Adam represents humanity, the most perfect potential and greatest manifestation of the name Allāh, its actualized version and ultimately the actualization of the Muḥammadan Reality is found in the person of Muḥammad. Adam is the 'human world' (*al-'ālam al-insānī*), who by his very nature is the sum of all of the universe in body-form, as represented by the fact that God

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[590] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 325-326.
[591] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 38-39. Ahmad in this critical edition makes reference to a similar tradition through al-Tirmidhī stating, "I was a Prophet even while Adam was between the spirits and body" as being stronger in Sunnī tradition.
[592] Al-Farghānī, *Muntahā al-madārik*, 39-40, c.f. Morrissey. F, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, 99.

taught Adam all the Divine Names: "*And He taught Adam all the names [...]*".[593][594] In short, Adam who is a symbol for human *qua* human is a reflection of the all of the Divine Names, having been created in His image (*inna khalaqa Allāh Ādama 'alā ṣūratihi*), which is the image of Divine Name of All-Merciful (*'alā ṣūrat al-Raḥmān*), and therefore is worthy to be His Vicegerent,[595]

> It is through him that God looks at His creatures and dispenses His Mercy upon them […] He is the Word which divides and unites. The world subsists in virtue of his existence […] This is why he has been called khalīfa: for through him God preserves His creation, as the seal preserves the treasures […] Thus Man has been charged to guard the kingdom, and the world will be preserved for as long as the Perfect Human subsists therein".[596]

Muḥammad the person on the other hand is the Perfect Human and therefore in many ways is an actualized archetype that Perfect Humans must attain within their individual capacities. Michel Chodkiewicz nicely summarizes this by writing: "Properly speaking, this perfection is possessed only by Muḥammad, the ultimate and total manifestation of the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*. Yet, on the other hand, it is equally the goal of all spiritual life and the very definition of *walāya*. Hence, the *walāya* of the *walī* can only be participation in the *walāya* of the Prophet".[597]

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[593] Qur'ān 2:31.
[594] *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 436.
[595] *Ibid.* 436.
[596] Chodkiewicz. M, *Seal of the Saints*, p.70, *Fuṣūṣ*, Maktabat Miṣr, (Cairo, 2010), 13.
[597] Chodkiewicz. M, *Seal of the Saints*, 71.

Chapter 14. Messengers, Prophets and Saints

A central theme in the mystical doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī is that of *wilāyah* or *walāyah*. When used with a *kasra* on the *waw*, it implies authority (*wilāyah*), whilst pronounced with a *fatḥa* on the *waw* means love and friendship (*walāyah*).[598] *Wilāyah*, therefore, "[…] is connected to guardianship, in the sense of protection, management of affairs, authority and superiority".[599] It is an extension of the authority of God and His Prophet: "Indeed, your guardian (*walī*) is Allāh, the Messenger and those who are possessors of authority".[600] Though prophecy was sealed with Muḥammad, the transfer of *wilāyah* began with Adam and will continue in every era according to both Ibn ʿArabī and Shīʿī theology. It is through the seal of prophecy[601] that all the Prophets inherited from:

> Every Prophet, from Adam until the lat Prophet, receives only from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets, even though his clay's existence may come later in time. In his reality he is existent, which is spoken of in his words […], 'I was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay'. The other prophets were only prophets when they were sent.[602]

Similarly it is the reality of final Prophet which is the source sainthood itself as the Divine Names governing creation manifest through the Muḥammadan reality into the created world. The word *walī* (saint), comes from the word *wilāyah*, with its literal meaning being 'friend of God' or its practical meaning being the one who is the 'near-most to God'[603] (*walī Allāh*).

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[598] Lectures on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by Jawādī Amūlī, an Iranian authority on Ibn ʿArabī, recommended by Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

[599] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 365.

[600] Qurʾān 4:59.

[601] This is indicative of Muḥammad as the final Prophet and seal to prophecy, however, he is also the prototype Prophet, through whom prophecy itself comes from.

[602] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 29.

[603] Though the term *walī* is translated as 'friend', its primary meaning is related to 'closeness' or 'nearness'. Thus the *walī* is one who is close or near. God as *Walī* is closer to human beings than any other being, as reflected in the verse: "*And indeed We created man, and We know whatever thoughts his inner self develops, and We are closer to him than (his) jugular vein*", (Qurʾān 50:16). The term 'saint' which will also be used for *walī* in keeping with its standard English translation is also not completely correct, as saint is derived from the Latin

Wilāyah is an overarching entity that houses both prophecy and messengership, thus every Prophet is a *walī*, but not every saint is a Prophet, as is the case for saints who come after Muḥammad. Similarly every Messenger is a Prophet and every Prophet is a saint, however this is not the case *vice versa*.[604] Ibn 'Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ* mentions that both prophecy and messengership are degrees within the rank of sainthood and are restricted to the material world, as prophecy and messengership are divine positions, responsible for transmitting God's word and principles to the faithful on earth. Why the position of a *walī* is not restricted is that *al-Walī* is also a name of God, as opposed to *rasūl* or *nabī*. As God's names are not restricted to the material world, the actualization of '*Walī*' as a name of God allows for the divine name to permeate the saint and subsist even after termination of his or her worldly life. The station of a *walī* is in relation to their proximity to God and this does not cease with physical death, but lives eternally through the spiritual body of a person after death. Though the station of *wilāyah* is the highest station, with the most perfect *walī* being superior to all of creation, prophecy and messengership are nevertheless degrees within the rank of sainthood to which Ibn 'Arabī remarks: " […] since the prophethood and messengerhood are special degrees within sainthood, over and above the other degrees contained in sainthood. He knows, then, that he is higher than the saint who is possessed neither of law-giving prophethood nor messengerhood".[605] This is also coupled with the fact that prophecy and messengership comes with a degree of infallibility: "[…] it is impossible for a Prophet, by virtue of possessing this special dignity *within* sainthood, to venture forth into something God would dislike to have him do, or to attempt something impossible to attain".[606] In essence the *awliyā'* (saints) are such due to their proximity to God, gaining awareness of God through the Muḥammadan reality. Both the universe and Perfect Humans are sustained through the Muḥammadan light. Ahmad on this point remarks: "This doctrine is functionally equivalent to the Shī'ī concept of the Imām".[607]

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sanctus, meaning 'holy'. *Sanctus* would be closer to the Arabic root *q-d-s*, from which the name of God *al-Qudūs* is derived, meaning 'The Holy'. Perhaps this is why Christian Arabs use the term *qiddīs* for saint as opposed to *walī*.
[604] Izutsu. T, Sufism and Taoism, 263.
[605] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 154.
[606] *Ibid*. 154.
[607] *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī'ah Islam*, The Shi'ah Institute Press, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 47.

Within Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, there is a hierarchy of those who are close and for those who are closer in proximity to God. The topmost in the hierarchy is the *quṭb*, though the *quṭb* too is veiled by an isthmus and therefore must go through the aid of the isthmus to gain Divine overflow.[608] This isthmus is indeed the Muḥammadan reality, which is also referred to as the Muḥammadan light (*nūr Muḥammadī*). The cosmic position of the Prophet can be taken after him by the *quṭb*, although strictly speaking, the *quṭb* cannot actualize the fullness of the Muḥammadan reality. A point worth mentioning is that what makes Muḥammad unique in his being is not only that his existence precedes all others, such that his existence is a light for all those after him, but that in his physical being, he is the foremost in both knowledge of God and creation, and is also the most obedient to Him. Obedience to the Divine Will is of paramount importance for a saint to ascend the ladder of sainthood, as through obedience does God unveil knowledge of Himself to the saint. For this reason, a part of the *walāyah*, implies perfect knowledge of Divine truths, the world, the self and relationship between the Absolute and created beings, however: "It is not necessary that a perfect man have precedence in all things and at all levels. The Men only pay heed to that precedence which concerns one's level in knowing God; that is their final goal".[609] As all saints will not possess the same understanding, so too will not all Prophets or Messengers be the same either, as the Qur'ān mentions: "*And certainly We have made some Prophets excel over others […]",*[610] hence there are varying degrees to each station. With that said, an important yet controversial discussion which needs mention is that of the Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Saints (*Awliyā'*). In the following subchapter, a summary outline will be given on both types of seals. I do not wish to delve on the topic, as in and of itself, the discussion surrounding the Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Saints would require a specialized historic analysis which for now is beyond the scope of our discourse.

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[608] Michel Chodiewicz's *Seal of the Saints* can be referred to for a better understanding of the hierarchical structure of the *awliyā'*.
[609] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 27.
[610] Qur'ān 17:55.

Chapter 15. The Seal of Prophecy and the Seal of Sainthood

One of the most complicated discussions in the mystical discourses of Ibn 'Arabī is that of the 'Seal' (*khatm*). There is no ambiguity that the Seal of the Prophets is Muḥammad, however everything that follows after it has been subject to interpretation and debate. As there is no real synthesis on the topic among early commentators of Ibn 'Arabī, it is not hard to appreciate why such confusion remains with scholars of Ibn 'Arabī who relied on these very commentators to present a clear direction. As Dagli states in his translation of the *Fuṣūṣ*, key questions in this discourse are "Who is the Seal of the Saints?", "What is the relationship of the Seal of the Saints to the Seal of the Messengers?", "What is the relationship of the Seal of the Saints to other saints […]?" And "What is the relationship of sainthood to prophethood?"[611] The discourse on the Seal of Sainthood predates Ibn 'Arabī's own and by discussing it, Ibn 'Arabī appears to be answering questions posed by Ḥakīm Tirmidhī (d.869) in his *Khatm al-awliya'*.[612]

Before we begin to explore answers to these questions, it is imperative to further elaborate on the spiritual ranks and hierarchy of the Perfect Humans. As previously alluded to, the overall station of sainthood is higher than that of prophecy, as prophecy is a station restricted to the material world, whilst the *walī* transcends all created realms. A Prophet in his specific makeup is a special type of *walī* and due to his infallible nature, coupled with access to direct revelation, is superior to the all other saints and vicegerents. This is very much similar to the

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[611] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 27-28.
[612] Ibn 'Arabī differs from Tirmidhī in his understanding of sainthood on two main points as highlighted by Masataka Takeshita in his PhD dissertation entitled '*Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of The Perfect Man and Its Place in The History of Islamic Thought*'. Ibn 'Arabī divides prophethood into "[…] special, legislative and general, absolute, and the latter is attributed also to the saints, while the former is only applied to the messengers". He also concludes that Muḥammad's sainthood is higher than his prophethood and messengership, Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of The Perfect Man and Its Place in The History of Islamic Thought*, University of Chicago, (1986), pp.164-165.

position of Imāmat and *wilāyah* in the Shīʿī School, where *wilāyah* is an overarching reality possessed by all Prophets and Imāms, albeit varying in degrees depending on the individual's rank. Imāmat as a station is also greater than prophecy, as it encompasses the reality of prophecy, as in the case of Abraham, who was first a Prophet, then a Messenger and finally an Imām. In the case of ʿAlī, as successor to the Prophet, he too holds the reality of prophecy, but without the position of a Prophet, due to there being no Prophet after Muḥammad. ʿAlī is also from the same light as Muḥammad and his heir, which in turn implies that he is also the heir to the Prophets.[613][614] Being the 'door' (*bāb*) of the knowledge of Muḥammad, his heir and sharing in the primordial Muḥammadan light,[615] ʿAlī from a Shīʿī perspective would be considered the Universal Seal of Sainthood. As the Seal of prophecy and the seal of sainthood both existed together before the creation of Adam, the only viable reality with that of Muḥammad is ʿAlī. As the concept of the 'door', inheritor and sharing in the Muḥammadan light are found in prophetic traditions (as previously discussed under the section on Imāmat), it should not come as a surprise that commentators of the *Fuṣūṣ*, such as Mirzā Muḥammad Qumshaʾī (d. 1888) have argued for the station of ʿAlī as the Universal Seal of Sainthood. Their argument focuses on a passage of *al-Futūḥāt* where Ibn ʿArabī makes very clear that the first thing bestowed with existence was the 'Muḥammadan reality proceeding from the Divine Name of the Infinitely Compassionate' (*ḥaqīqah muḥammadiyyah raḥmāniyyah*).[616] All early commentaries of the *Fuṣūṣ* stressed this very understanding.[617] Why this understanding is important is that for Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥammad and ʿAlī are from the same primordial light aligning with the prophetic tradition "I and ʿAlī are from the one light".[618] Ibn ʿArabī in regards to ʿAlī states: "[…] and the closest of all men to him [the Prophet] is ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is the Imām of the universe and the secret of all the Prophets (*wa sirr al-anbiyāʾ*

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[613] Refer to the section on Imāmat.
[614] Sainthood, similar to Imāmat is characterized by the principle of *wilāyah* and takes its beginnings through the Muḥammadan light. ʿAlī is an Imām as he inherits Muḥammad, similarly Adam is a Prophet through the Muḥammadan reality, as are saints *walī* because of the reality of Muḥammad.
[615] *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, V, 143.
[616] *al-Futūḥāt*, 1:118.
[617] Please refer to commentaries of the *Fuṣūṣ* by Qūnawī, Jandī, and Kāshānī.
[618] This tradition is famously referred to as *Ḥadīth Nūr* with a number of variants to it. One variant found in *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, V, 3, reads, "I and ʿAlī were one light in the hand of God fourteen thousand years before the creation of Adam. He (God) then divided the light into two parts; a part for me and a part for ʿAlī". Another found in *Farāʾid al-simṭayn*, I, 40, says "I and ʿAlī were created from the light of God […]".

ajma'īn)".[619] If this quote of Ibn 'Arabī's is to be taken as it is, then according to Osman Yahia in his authoritative critical edition of *al-Futūḥāt*, there are clear Shī'ī tendencies. However, Osman Yahia, whilst acknowledging the above quote is from the Beyazit recension, also makes reference to the following sentence found in the Evkaf Müzesi recension, which states: "[…] and the closest of all men to him [the Prophet] is 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and [he is the] secrets of the Prophets (*wa asrār al-anbiyā'*).[620] As is evident, the term 'Imām of the universe' (*al-Imām al 'ālam*) is missing from the Evkaf Müzesi recension. Worth mentioning is that the fourteenth – fifteenth century Ottoman theologian and first to be endowed with the title '*Shaykh al-Islām*' in the Empire, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥamza Fanārī (d. 1431), in his premier commentary on Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, includes the term 'Imām of the universe' whilst quoting Ibn 'Arabī. *Miṣbāḥ al-uns* has become a seminal text for those studying advanced theoretical mysticism and a leading commentary on explaining the doctrine of the perfect human.[621] Due the proximity of time between Ibn 'Arabī's death and when Fanārī wrote *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, coupled with his official status as *Shaykh al-Islām*, and his access to primary sources unavailable to later commentators, Fanārī's insights are an invaluable contribution in ascertaining Ibn 'Arabī's actual words. Further, though Osman Yahia is very clear in that the sentence from the Beyazit recension shows clear Shī'ī tendencies, it can be said that both recensions present Shī'ī tendencies, as the phrase "[he is the] secrets of the Prophets" (*wa asrār al-anbiyā'*) is indicative of the primordial nature of the *wilāyah* of 'Alī. Jesus has not been mentioned as the 'secret of the all the Prophets' or 'secrets of the Prophets', for had he been given such a description, it would have implied his existence from the time of Adam. We clearly know that Muḥammad, the Seal of prophecy and prophetic archetype was a Prophet when Adam was "between water and clay" as previously mentioned, and if the Seal of Sainthood has also existed alongside Muḥammad's primordial light, then the only individual mentioned as having existed from the beginning is 'Alī (in inference from the above mentioned two recessions of *al-Futūḥāt*). This is however not true for Jesus and therefore a question that can be asked when discussing Jesus is what did Ibn 'Arabī actually

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[619] *al-Futūḥāt*, 1:119.
[620] *al-Futūḥāt*, (Yahia), 2:227.
[621] Nasr. S.H, 'Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today', *Transcendent Philosophy*, London Academy of Iranian Studies, (London, 2005), VI, 5.

mean by Jesus being the Seal of Sainthood, and can this be interpreted within the confines of a universal or delimited Seal. It is also no coincidence that within the existing recensions, mostly the points of conflict and controversy are in relation to Shī'ī tendencies. Historically these recensions were never in Shī'ī hands and so therefore an important question that can arise is: Were these recensions deliberately obscured to erase Shī'ī affiliations? Ahmad whilst explaining his teacher Osman Yahia's position on Shī'ī tendencies in *al-Futūḥāt*, remarked that although the Evkaf Müzesi recession according to Yahia was the most complete manuscript, he observed possible omissions that indicated perversion to the original text.[622] When discussing the Seal of Sainthood, early commentators seem to have varied opinions on the identity of who it could have been. Qūnawī, the most authoritative interpreter of Ibn 'Arabī is vague in the actual discussion on the topic of the Seal in the chapter of Seth, however does conclude in the chapter of Aaron that the Mahdī is the 'direct Vicegerent of God'.[623] It is also interesting that the chapter on Aaron in the *Fuṣūṣ* is titled: 'Bezel of Wisdom of the Imāmat in the Word of Aaron', as it coincides with the prophetic tradition of *Manzilah*,[624] which is used by Shī'ī theologians to establish the Imāmat of 'Alī.[625] There is little doubt Ibn 'Arabī would not have been aware of the fact that Shī'ī theologians use the succession of Aaron to Moses as proof of the position of 'Alī to Muḥammad. As this prophetic traditions compares 'Alī being to Muḥammad what Aaron was to Moses, with exception that there will be no Prophet after Muḥammad, the term *manzilah* (position) is comprehensive and inclusive of 'Alī's complete successorship, but that he will not be given the status of a Prophet. Admittedly Ibn 'Arabī has worded the title ambiguously and by referring to Aaron as an Imām, uses language appealing to Shī'ī readers of the text.[626] That stated, Qūnawī is vague in elaborating explicitly on the

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[622] From a discussion with Saiyad Ahmad on Osman Yahia in Chicago in July 2019. Saiyad Ahmad also raised some important questions which have for the best part only been addressed by Amir-Moezzi. "Is it possible that the ultimate origins of the doctrine of the Perfect Man are to be found to coincide with the origins of the doctrine of the Light of Muḥammad? Not only that but, might it also be possible that the latter was a doctrine of thoroughly Shī'ī pedigree? In other words, could it be that the roots of such mystical esoterica and arcana are to be found in Shī'ī thought? At the very least the possibility is worthy of further exploration", *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī'ah Islam*, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 53

[623] Qūnawī, *Kitāb al-Fukūk*, (Tehran, 1992), 252
[624] Ibn Hanbal. A, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, II, 701, *ḥadīth* 957, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, *Kitāb Faḍā'il Ṣaḥāba al-Nabī*, chapter 9, 659, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, IV, *Kitāb Faḍā'il Ṣaḥāba al-Nabī*,187.
[625] Refer to the section on Imāmat.
[626] Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, trans. Tawus Raja, 459.

identity of the Seal of Sainthood, whereas Jandī[627] his student maintains Jesus as being the Absolute Seal of Sainthood.[628] Kāshānī, Jandī's student then identifies the Seal as the Mahdī,[629] followed by Qaysarī who then refutes his teacher Kāshānī and reverts back to the identity of the Seal of Sainthood being Jesus.[630] Suffice it to say that the whole discussion is open to interpretation, as is the nature of mystical texts.

Another ambiguous discourse is that in both the *Fuṣūṣ* and *al-Futūḥāt* there are allusions to the Seal of Sainthood being superior to the Seal of Prophecy. Although I have tried to present a Shī'ī perspective in the above discourse, this from an orthodox Sunnī position would have proven problematic if not for the disclaimer that the Seal of the Saints is amongst the perfection of the Seal of prophecy.[631] In line with the prophetic tradition "he who knows himself, knows his Lord"[632] a tradition frequently cited by Ibn 'Arabī, the closest and most perfect saint is one who has attained complete knowledge of God (*'ārif*). On this topic, Ibn 'Arabī writes:

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[627] Claude Addas in *Ibn 'Arabī: The Voyage of No Return*, The Islamic Text Society, (Cambridge, 2018), 49, writes that even if Ibn 'Arabī did not explicitly mention who the Seal was, "Ibn 'Arabī did confide this detail to some of his disciples who passed on the information from generation to generation. Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī – who, as we shall see, was raised by the Shaykh al-Akbar from a very really age – communicated it to his student Jandī, who reported it in his commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ*". Statements such as these are problematic because had it been the case that the information Addas alludes to was passed from generation to generation, there would have been an outright consensus on who the Seal of the Saints was. Furthermore, though it is probable that Qūnawī may have communicated this information with Jandī, there is no certainty of this from the texts. A question that arises is why Qūnawī did not explicitly mention who the Seal was in his authoritative commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*? The purpose of highlighting this quote from Addas is to demonstrate how easy it is to interpret the more ambiguous sections in Ibn 'Arabī's works as a fact. In essence there is no clear-cut evidence to suggest generations who came after in the Akbarian School had a consistent take on the Seal of Sainthood. It is simply that Ibn 'Arabī, much like Islamic mystics of his era wrote in *ishāra* (signs/allusions). It was purposely written to be ambiguous, where most probably answers are found scattered across the writings of Ibn 'Arabī much like pieces in a puzzle requiring to be gathered and placed in its correct order.
[628] *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī'ah Islam*, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 50.
[629] Kāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, (Cairo, 1908), p.35
[630] *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī'ah Islam*, The Shi'ah Institute Press, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 50.
[631] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 28.
[632] Refer to William Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 20-22.

This is none other than the highest knower than the highest knower of Allāh.none possesses this knowledge, save the Seal of the Messengers, and the Seal of the Saints and none of the prophets and messengers can behold it apart from the Niche of the Messenger-Seal (Muḥammad), nor can any of the saints behold it apart from the Niche of the saints (*al-walī al-khātam*) – so that indeed even the messengers do not perceive it when they perceive it, apart from the Niche of the Seal of the Saints. For messengership and prophethood – by which I mean law-giving and prophethood – shall [one day] come to an end, whereas sainthood will never come to an end.[633]

In another passage, both Seals are regarded as equal:

Every Prophet, from Adam until the last Prophet, receives only from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets (Muḥammad) […] Likewise, the Seal of the Saints was a saint while Adam was between water and clay, but the other saints were saints only after attaining the conditions for sainthood, namely the assimilation of the divine virtues.[634]

In essence, Ibn ‘Arabī mentions two types of Seals; the first the Seal of Universal Sainthood and secondly the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood. In fact all Prophets have a seal, as is also the case with the Muḥammadan Seal which is encompassing of all other seals. Interestingly, in places in the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ‘Arabī recognizes himself as the Seal. This again is not always explicit, but has been alluded to in at least three passages of the *Fuṣūṣ*, *al-Futūḥāt* and a lesser known works, called *‘Anqā’ Mughrib* .[635] Knowing that interpreting the Seal of Sainthood as himself could be problematic, Ibn ‘Arabī develops his theory on the *wilāyah* of the seal through a process of graduation. In other words, there are two types of *wilāyah*; one is delimited (*muqayyadah*) and the other is absolute (*muṭlaqah*). Ibn ‘Arabī in places identifies himself as the delimited seal, whereas he apparently identifies Jesus after his return to Earth before the end of time as holder of the absolute Seal. There is an important passage by Ibn ‘Arabī summarizing his position:

[633] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, pp.35-36, c.f. *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī‘ah Islam*, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 55.
[634] *Ibid.* 29.
[635]Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, pp.27-29, *al-Futūḥāt* (4 volumes), I, chapter 65, p.318, Elmore. G. *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*, 531-2.

In each era, the world needs a Prophet or a Messenger and after them a Vicegerent or *walī* who is his successor so that the divine command may be handed down by a Messenger to another Prophet to the Seal of the Prophets and after that, the same command may be handed down to special successors and saints to the Seal of the Saints with whose death the Day of Resurrection will come. The command of the world refers to the other world and other worldly aspect will appear to remains table, permanent, and unchangeable.[636]

The position of Jesus as the Seal of Sainthood is in itself controversial, because it moves away from the figure of the Mahdī as the awaited savior towards the end of times. Though theologically and as per prophetic traditions, Jesus too will return, his position is secondary to that of the Mahdī, complementing and aiding the Mahdī as opposed to identifying as the central character. By placing Jesus in the position of the Universal Seal, this would naturally curtail the position of the Mahdī as Islām's main protagonist within the apocalyptic traditions.

Returning to observations on Ibn 'Arabī's structure of *wilāyah*, which is crucial in understanding the perfect human, parallels did exist in Shī'ī *ḥadīth* literature, not readily found in other Islamic traditions. Whereas the doctrine of *wilāyah* itself is found in Shī'ism, Shī'ī mystics such as Sayyid Ḥayder Āmulī (d.1385) differed on the identity of the Seals, believing 'Alī to be the Absolute Seal of Sainthood, and the Mahdī as the Muḥammadan Seal, a viewpoint seemingly contrary to that of Ibn 'Arabī[637]. What is certain however, is that the Seal of Prophecy (*khātm al-anbiyā'*) is Muḥammad, with no doubt in Jesus being a Seal of Sainthood, in some capacity, be it absolute, or delimited, and 'Alī existing from the time of Adam as the 'secret of the Prophets'. From our discourse in this chapter, it is probable to conclude that Ibn 'Arabī is very ambiguous and cautious when discussing the position of 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*. This would come as no surprise if he held Shī'ī tendencies due to the social and political climate that he was writing in. What may be extremely useful is to piece

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[636]Āmulī. S.H. *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Persian translation by Muhammad Reza Jozi, Rozaneh Publications, (Tehran, 1996), I, p.157.
[637]Chodiewicz. M, *Seal of the Saints*, 136.

together what Ibn ʿArabī does say about ʿAlī and the *ahl al-bayt* in his writings. Are there Shīʿī influences in the writings of Ibn "Arabī? What is definitive is that the position of ʿAlī, the *ahl al-bayt*, the Mahdī and his understanding of the Perfect Human were not part of Sunnī theological belief and only found itself partially being introduced into theological discussion much after Ibn ʿArabī's death. The Akbarian[638] position on ʿAlī, the *ahl al-bayt*, and the Mahdī were readily complemented in early Shīʿī texts, which would imply Ibn ʿArabī at the very least, knowingly or unknowingly having adopted a faith system complementary to that of Shīʿī belief. Perhaps a part of the answer as to the belief structure of Ibn ʿArabī lies in a quote from *al-Futūḥāt* which says: "If a gnostic (*ʿārif*) is really a gnostic he cannot stay tied to one form of belief".[639] With the beginning of the next chapter of our discourse, it will be extremely vital to piece together Ibn ʿArabī's understanding of the position of ʿAlī and the *ahl al-bayt*.

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[638] The School of Ibn ʿArabī.
[639] Ismail Hakki Bursevi's translation of *Kernel of The Kernel by Ibn ʿArabī*, Beshara Publications, (Roxburgh, 1997), 1.

Chapter 16. Problems of Definition

16.1 Historical Context

If one is to understand Shīʿism by the formalisation of its theological school, then this officially came into being some hundred years after the beginning of the major occultation (329 AH/ 941), in line with the establishment of its theological seminary in Najaf by al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067). For this reason al-Ṭūsī is also referred to as *Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa* (the Chief of the Shīʿī School). However his actual legacy rests in establishing a school of jurisprudence, as the standardization of Shīʿī theology had already occurred under al-Mufīd (d. 1022), just under half a century before. It was at this juncture that four main principles of Imāmat were enshrined in theology, that of divine appointment, divine knowledge, infallibility, and the Imāms being twelve in number (with the *twelfth* in occultation).[640] This is not to say that these principles were not previously followed, but that there had been a broader acceptance of diverse opinion in understanding foundational beliefs, such as in relation to preexisting debates on the validity of the principle of infallibility, with the likes of prominent Shīʿī theologian Ibn Junayd (d. 991) not upholding this principle. With Shīʿism being recognized as the School of Imāmat, it is no wonder that the most discussed theological subject in the formative period was regarding the nature of the Imām and his function. As it was not exclusively the Twelvers who held the title of Shīʿī, there began to appear subtle differences in understanding the nature of the Imām. After the Twelvers, the more prominent from among Shīʿī sub-sects were the Zaydīya and Ismāʿīlīya. A common denominator that unified Shīʿī Imāmology and therefore these sub-sects was the central role of ʿAlī, his divine appointment

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[640] Standardization of a theological school does not mean that there were no preexisting principles and beliefs. From the beginning of the major occultation, there has existed set of beliefs and doctrines based on the Qurʾān, prophetic tradition and sayings of the Imāms. The methodology however, was based on *akhbār*, meaning solely tradition without reasoning. Al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣadūq and to an extent al-Ṭūsī applied an *akhbārī* methodology, which meant they only quoted verses of the Qurʾān or *aḥadīth* in their doctrinal works, devoid of reasoning. In keeping with authenticity and purity of the *ḥadīth* presented, *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, for instance, whilst using a *kalāmī* template in regards to the structuring of its chapters, solely uses *aḥadīth*, and refrains from any further rational deductions. Mufīd was the first Shī ʿi theologian to officially rationalize a standardized belief framework.This is also referred to as *kalām*, and was established as a tool through which to defend the tenets of faith and belief through rational arguments against those who either doubted or attacked these tenets.

and that of the hereditary Imāms and their special knowledge. Not all early groups, especially those who held the doctrine of 'the righteous scholars' (*al-'ulama' al-abrār*), saw infallibility or the ability to perform miracles as a condition for an Imām, in particular sections of the Zaydīya school.[641] In all, there was a general consensus among the various Shī'ī sub-sects on the principles of Imāmat as mentioned above.

Worth noting is that the first Shī'ī dynasty, the Idrisids, established itself in 788, after the Battle of Fakhkh, fought in 786 between the Abbasids and two branches of the *ahl al-bayt*; the descendants of al-Ḥasan and children of Zayd (d. 740). The Idrisid dynasty was to rule from 788 to 985 over modern day Morocco. This was swiftly followed by the Fatimid Caliphate from 909 to 1171. As it was the Maghreb that Ibn 'Arabī initially travelled across, it should come as no surprise that he would have been exposed to Shī'ī heritage, considering North Africa had on its soil two Shī'ī dynasties overlapping over a period of roughly three hundred years. In the East, the Būyid dynasty ruled over Iraq and half of modern day Iran from 934-1062. Theologically they began as Zaydī, but with the establishment of their dynasty, swiftly converted to Twelverism. As has been pointed out by Moojen Momen, the transition to Twelverism may have been due to a question of succession. Zaydī doctrine necessitates that a successor (leader) must be from the line of 'Alī which the Būyids were not.[642] Suffice it to say that by the thirteenth century, Shī'ism had developed into a school encompassing both legal – jurisprudential and theological interpretations. It had developed a lose hierarchy and maintained a central position for the divinely appointed Imām. By the time Ibn 'Arabī was born, three predominant Shī'ī communities existed; the Twelvers, Zaydīya and Ismā'īlīya, each with roughly similar principles on Imāmat and consisting of their own interpretations of an esoteric (*bāṭinī*) tradition which had been handed down through a chain from 'Alī. Though there was disagreement on the doctrine of infallibility and the number of Imāms between these three communities, other core principles as discussed early were the same. Coupled with this historical context, it will be of utmost importance to define what constituted being Shī'ī in the period of the Imāms themselves and how the term evolved.

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[641] Refer to the section on Imāmat for a more detailed discussion on *al-'ulama' al-abrār*.
[642] Momen. M, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, Yale University Press, (Yale, 1985), 75-76.

16.2 What defines a Shī'a?

When discussing Shī'ī influences, a core question that comes to mind is what constitutes a Shī'a? This subchapter will therefore be divided into five parts and will touch upon four definitions of the term '*shī'a*' as it evolved through the first two centuries of Islām. These definitions can be characterized as *Shī'ī tafḍīlī*, *Shī'ī tarbīy'ī*, *Shī'ī muḥabatī* and *Shī'ī imāmī*.[643] Though coined after the first two centuries, for ease of reference, I have borrowed these four names from contemporary Shī'ī historians and theologians who use them as a marker to describe the four types of groups referred to as Shī'ī in the first two centuries of Islām.[644] This will then be followed by the final subchapter which will look at core similarities between Shī'ism and Sufism.

16.2.1 *Tashayu' tafḍīlī*

The first use of the term *Tashayyu'/* Shī'a is found in the first century of Islām and holds more a political connotation than a theological one. This is not to conclude that the remaining three terms were not found in the first century, but that this particular definition was the more commonly identified one, during the lead up to the events of Karbalā' (680/ 61 AH) approximately fifty years after the death of Muḥammad.[645] On the other hand, those who were theologically Shī'ī fell into two camps – the first camp were those who believed in 'Alī's succession and that of the subsequent Imāms as chosen by God; that the chain of Imāmat was from among the descendants of 'Alī; that the Imām was infallible, and that he was bestowed divine knowledge.[646] The other type of theological Shī'a was one who believed in 'Alī's succession and that of the subsequent Imāms as chosen by God, but did not uphold the

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[643] Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shī'a Khālis*, 50-59.

[644] *Ibid.* 50-59.

[645] The majority of those labeled as Shī'a in Kūfah before the events of Karbalā' were in fact *tafḍīlī*, Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shī'a Khālis*, 52.

[646] Refer to *Kitāb Sulaym* for the given description on those who were theologically Shī'ī, as opposed to those who were politically Shī'ī. A political Shī'a, if such a term can be used, describes an individual or a group of people who supported 'Alī's political calm as Caliph and therefore ruler of those lands falling under Muslim rule. A theological Shī'a was one who supported 'Alī's divine right as an Imām, entrusted to guide the faithful to God and fulfil God's decree on Earth. Though the Imām is not a Prophet, however, as absolute successor to Muḥammad, he would have commanded similar practical authority in the absence of Muḥammad, both in relation to temporal and spirit affairs.

infallibility of the Imāms and considered them similar to pious jurists.[647] It is more probable that in the events leading up to the tragedy of Karbalā', *Tashayyu'* or being Shī'ī was considered more of a political statement than a formal school. If we chronologically chart divisions that took place after Muḥammad, the first watershed came within days of succession, as two major groups formed – those in favor of the caliph and those loyal to 'Alī and Fāṭimah.[648] By the caliphate of 'Uthmān (644 – 656), these initial two groups had evolved into the '*Uthmāniyyah* (those who revered the first three caliphs but were hostile to 'Alī), and the followers of 'Alī, who were labeled as his '*shī'a*'. The difference between these two groups to that of the first two groups formed immediately after the death of Muḥammad was that both recognized the caliphate of the first three caliphs, but differed on the caliphate of 'Alī. It was sufficient to favor 'Alī over 'Uthmān or uphold the right of 'Alī as fourth caliph for one to be labeled a *shī'a*.[649] An important distinction to be made with those who were theologically Shī'a is that theological Shī'ism upheld the belief in 'Alī's direct succession and his appointment as being by God, such as in the case of Sulaym and Salmān (d. 652).[650] Within *Kitāb Sulaym* there is reference in the seventh *ḥadith* to the term *Shī'a of 'Alī*, which is significant as it identifies this term being used formally as early as the caliphate of Abū Bakr.[651] From the point of view of all authoritative Shī'ī Qur'ānic commentaries (*tafāsīr*), the term *shī'a* was first used by Muḥammad in his lifetime exclusively for the followers of 'Alī.[652] Later Sunnī commentators such as al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-manthūr* have also mentioned the same when commentating on verse *seven* of Sūrah Bayyinah. The term '*khayr al-barīyah*' (best of creatures) has been explained by Muḥammad as 'Alī and his *shī'a*. Now whether Muḥammad was implying a theological school cannot be explicitly proven, although it would make more sense that he meant those aligned or friendly to 'Alī. If we were to cast aside

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[647] The doctrine of '*ulama' al-abrār* has been discussed in the previous section.

[648] For an in-depth understanding of events that coincided with the death of the Prophet, refer to *The succession Muḥammad* by Wilferd Madelung.

[649] Doubt can be cast on the famous tradition of *al-Khulafa' al-Rashidūn* (the rightly guided caliphs), where the Prophet had reportedly urged his companions to cling stubbornly onto the rightly guided caliphs, Tirmidhī, *ḥadith* no. 266. If the rightly guided caliphs were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī and al-Ḥasan as argued by later scholars, such as al Suyūtī in his *Tarīkh al-khulafa'*, then why was there a dispute on 'Alī.

[650] See *Kitāb Sulaym* as previously discussed.

[651] The *ḥadith* is narrated on the authority of Sulaym through Abān that Sulaym heard 'Alī say that from seventy-three sects, only one will be the saved sect. Thirteen of the seventy-three will also claim to love *ahl al-bayt* of whom only one will be saved. This one sect has been described as 'our Shī'a'.

[652] This can be found in commentaries of *Sūrah Bayyinah*, verse *seven*.

definitions and just look at the term '*shī'at'Alī*' as taken from the sciences of *tafsīr* and *Ḥadīth* as evidence, the term '*shī'at'Alī*' existed as reference for 'Alī's partisans as early as in the lifetime of Muḥammad. Historically it can be said that the term existed from the period of Abū Bakr.

By the time of 'Alī's death, four groups came into existence, the '*Uthmāniyyah*, the Umayyads (who were an extension in many ways of the '*Uthmāniyyah* due to their enmity with 'Alī), the *Khārijites* (who rejected both the Umayyads and 'Alī) and the s*hī'a*.[653] From among the *shī'a*, prominent were s*hī'a tafḍīlī* (*Tashayu' tafḍīlī*) who supported the first two caliphs, but maintained 'Alī's superiority or at the very least his superiority over 'Uthmān. Accepting 'Alī however, did not equate to following him in matters of belief and jurisprudence.[654] It is conclusive that s*hī'a tafḍīlī* were those who were only politically supportive of 'Alī or acknowledged 'Alī's right to rule. Undoubtedly under this given definition a sizable proportion of Ṣūfīs would fall into the s*hī'ī* camp due to their reverence of 'Alī, be it as fourth caliph or spiritual superiority over other companions.[655] In the very least, those who supported 'Alī were deemed s*hī'ī* and those who demonstrated animosity towards him were in this context '*Uthmāniyyah*.

16.2.2 *Tashayu' tarbīy'ī*

With the advent of the Abbasid caliphate, the existing groupings evolved once more. *Tashayu' tarbīy'ī* can be interpreted as those who supported 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*. From the two

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[653] Husayn. N, *The Rehabilitation of 'Alī in Sunnī Ḥadīth and Historiography*, (The Royal Asiatic Society, 2020), 565.

[654] In a tradition by Ibn Qūlawayh (d. 978), during the reign of 'Alī, the people of Kūfah approached 'Alī to ask him for a prayer leader who would lead them in *tarāwīḥ* prayers. When 'Alī declined to comply with their request, the people became angered by this. 'Alī then tells his companion to leave the people to do what they want, concluding on the verse of the Qur'ān: "And whoever […] follows other than the way of the believers, We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination", (4:115), Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, VIII, 47, *ḥadīth* 5. For 'Alī and those who regarded him as their spiritual guide, *tarāwīḥ* was an innovation prescribed in the caliphate of 'Umar, thus not present in the time of the Prophet.

[655] Jonathan Brown incapsulates 'Alī's position in the following words: "''Alī had always been seen as the Prophet's spiritual heir, leading al-Junayd to say, 'that a person who was granted *ilm ladunnī*, or the directly, divinely granted wisdom that God gives to select people. Sufis quoted the Companion Ibn Mas'ūd as saying that the Quran was revealed with 'an Outer and Inner meaning, and indeed 'Ali b. Abī Tālib has with him the knowledge of both''', Brown. J, *Hadith – Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Oneworld, (Georgetown, 2017), 160.

examples which can be presented, the first is pre-Abbasid, for instance those who supported 'Alī in the civil wars and were able to give their life, believing 'Alī to be the true caliph. The second example is from the time of Abbasids and more specific, that of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 767/ 150 AH). Though not a Shī'ī by any means in the modern context, his avid support for the *ahl al-bayt* and in particular the descendants of Ḥasan from persecution at the hands of the Abbasids lead to his imprisonment and eventual death. He was willing to risk his life in protecting the life of members of the *ahl al-bayt*, similar to those who supported and fought with 'Alī in the civil wars. The Abbasid caliphate would label him as s*hī'ī* for his support of the Ḥasanī branch of the *ahl al-bayt*.[656] Therefore open demonstration of support for the *ahl al-bayt* or acceptance of their superiority was sufficient to be deemed s*hī'ī* in the Abbasid period. It was not a condition for an individual to believe in the divine appointment, but supporting the rights of the *ahl al-bayt* in the face of the existing caliphate was sufficient. It cannot be argued that this type of s*hī'ī* was exclusively political, but at the same time was not wholly theological either.

16.2.3 *Tashayu' muḥabbatī*

This particular term was applicable for those in the second and third century of Islām who openly expressed their love for 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt* and can be demonstrated by a poem from Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820/ 204 AH), whose school of jurisprudence became one of the four official schools in Sunnī Islām. He writes: "If love for the Family of Muḥammad implies *rafḍ*[657], Jinn and man know that I am a *rāfiḍī*".[658] Though there is no evidence to suggest that al-Shāfiʿī qualified himself as a Shī'ī in the theological sense, his poem gives an insight into how expressing love for the *ahl al-bayt* may have been regarded as a sign of Shī'ism. It also indicates on how reverence for the *ahl al-bayt* had evolved amongst mainstream Muslims by end of the second century.

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[656] Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shī'a Khālis*, 52-54.
[657] A derogatory term used for specific Shī'i groups who cursed the enemies of 'Alī and those they believed usurped his right of succession.
[658] Al-Qāḍi Nūr Allāh Tūstarī, *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq wa izhaq al-bāṭil*, III, n.p., n.d., 5.

16.2.4 *Tashayu' imāmī*

The fourth category of Shī'a can be defined as those who were theologically Shī'ī . This would imply that an individual believe in 'Alī as their Imām, that Imāmat was through divine appointment, and that the succession of Imāmat included the descendants of 'Alī. To clarify this further into three points, a theological Shī'ī would firstly, believe in the Imāmat and *wilāyah* of 'Alī, and that he was the first Imām appointed by God. The second point would be a belief in the chain of Imāmat, coupled with a belief either in a living Imām, or a representative of the Imām in his place, who would guide the faithful in matters of religious and spiritual affairs. The final point is revering the *ahl al-bayt* and maintaining their primacy above all companions of Muḥammad. It is in this fourth category of Shī'a therefore, that the various sects and sub-sects of Shī'ism can be placed. Shī'ī sects and sub-sects branched off in the first two centuries of Islām on matters of succession to the line of Imāmat. More importantly, these groups were theologically Shī'ī .[659] By the fourth century of Islām, it is theological Shī'ism which became prominent. If a further category to the four mentioned types of Shī'a were to be added, it would be that of Twelver Shī'a, who as previously stated in the section on Imāmat uphold a belief in twelve Imāms, that the Imāms are appointed by God, and that the *twelfth* Imām is living but in occultation.

What is apparent from this chapter is that in the first two centuries of Islām, expressions of love and support for 'Alī were sufficient for an individual to be labeled a *shī'ī*. Therefore it is reasonable to infer that it was not orthodox practice for non-Shī'as in this period to support and praise 'Alī or highlight qualities of the *ahl al-bayt*. Praising or listing virtues of 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt* in the public sphere was deemed a political statement and a sign of an individual's affinity to the Shī'a cause.

16.2.5 *Shī'ism and Taṣawwuf*

Having explored how the term *Tashayyu'* developed through the first two centuries, it would be a fair analysis to conclude that its evolution into a complex theological school was not a

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[659] What was originally referred to as the Shī'a of 'Alī would in time split into various sub-sects, such as the Zaydīyyah, Ismā'īlīyyah, and Wāqifiyyah.

simple one. What is simple to infer however, is the centrality of ʿAlī after the death of the Prophet, be it from those labeled as political supporters of ʿAlī in the first century, to those who believed in him as appointed by God. The commonality which allowed for both parties to be labeled as Shīʿī in each circumstance was a belief in ʿAlī's right of leadership after Muḥammad. Therefore it should not come as a surprise that many who disliked Shīʿism were also hostile to Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*). Undoubtedly ʿAlī too plays a central role in Sufism and to dispute this fact would be an injustice to the very foundations of Sufism itself.[660] Shīʿī narrations can be found in rich Ṣūfī literature, whilst visibly impacting Ṣūfī doctrine and practices through reliance on chains of transmission through ʿAlī to Muḥammad. Many of these chain of narrations which reach ʿAlī are through other Shīʿī Imāms, the most prominent being the *sixth* and *eighth* Imāms. With books of major Sunnī literature such as the *Kutub al-Sittah* (the six major works) only referencing less than half a dozen narrations from other Shīʿī Imāms aside from ʿAlī, a great number of narrations from ʿAlī found in early Ṣūfī literature, such as *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* find chains of transmission solely in Shīʿī tradition. These traditions are mainly concerning poverty, food consumption, sleep, remembrance, clothing, morality and general asceticism and can be found in Shīʿī *Ḥadīth* compilations, such as *al-Kāfī*, *al-Khiṣāl* or *Mishkāt al-anwār* by al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī (d. 1153).[661] There have been attempts throughout history to purge Shīʿī tradition from early Ṣūfī literature. One such recent attempt is by Christopher Melchert in *Before Sufism* – whilst mounting an attack on Jonathan Brown's analysis of early Ṣūfī literature using Shīʿī tradition from the Imāms, he concludes, "Brown's textbook is generally superior to all its predecessors, but we catch him here at a weak point. Not wishing to say rudely that to someone familiar with Sunni hadith collections Shiʿi collections look like a lot of rubbish […]".[662] As is evident from his works, Melchert is seemly unfamiliar with *Ḥadīth* literature and the science of *Rijal* in Shīʿism. Having presented minimal evidence for his criticism on Shīʿī tradition, and demonstrating little to no knowledge

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[660]Before the advent of the Naqshbandīyah in the fourteenth century, all known Ṣūfī orders took their spiritual genealogy through ʿAlī back to the Prophet. This provided Islamic legitimacy and spiritual authority to the order.
[661]With al-Ghazāli's voluminous *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* standing as guide to those wanting to embark in Ṣūfī moral practices, its equivalent in Shīʿism can be found in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's (d. 1680) *al-Maḥajjat al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-iḥyāʾ*. While using the same structure as found in Iḥyāʾ, al-Kāshānī presents Ṣūfī moral practice from the perspective of the Shīʿī Imāms.
[662] Melchert. C, *Before Sufism, Islam – Early Islamic renunciant piety*, De Gruyter, (Berlin, 2020), 8.

of the Islamic sciences as interpreted by the Shī'ī school, Melchert's side-criticism of Brown using Shī'ī tradition, has little substance.[663] That said, a topic rarely touched, but where deep similarities are found between Sufism and Shī'ism are in the actual rituals of remembrance and supplications used in Sufism. Due to the secretive nature of Ṣūfī oral traditions, it would be unlikely that anything comprehensive is written on it, though generic rituals have been mentioned in spiritual manuals, such as Ibn 'Arabī's *Journey to the Lord of Power* or *A Prayer for Spiritual Elevation and Protection*. Where it has been documented, many of the prayers, supplications and formulas of God's names have been passed through an oral tradition from master to novice on the authority of 'Alī or members of the *ahl al-bayt*.[664]

Throughout the history of Islām, those hostile to both Sufism and Shī'ism have found it convenient to bunch them together under deviant ideologies, as was the case with writers such as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201/ 597 AH). For those who understood the difference between Sufism and Shī'ism, were at times also pulled into disagreements as to whether a particular Ṣūfī was Shī'ī or Sunnī, such as in the case of Ibn 'Arabī. In theory, free of theology, Sufism was conceived as a spiritual methodology which was meant to cater to cross-denominational needs. However, as Ṣūfī orders developed, so did distinct doctrines of beliefs and as specific orders started to take sectarian stances, so did their belief structures.[665]

It is hard to hide the fact that Sufism's overall emphasis on the *ahl al-bayt* and in particular, reverence for many of the Shī'ī Imāms allows for a natural affinity with Shī'ism.[666] The likes of orders such as the Qadirīyah or the Kubrawīyah both include the first eight Imāms, with the exclusion of the *second* Imām in a spiritual line of succession similar to that found in Shī'ism. Additionally, such lineages in the latter period of the Abbasid caliphate were deemed as Shī'ī

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[663] Melchert's overall arguments are reflective of Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 1328) criticisms of Shī'ī found in *Minhāj al-Sunnah*.

[664] For a better understanding, refer to Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah yi-'Abbāsī*, trans. M.H. Faghfoory and Amir-Moezzi. M.A, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*.

[665] The Naqshbandīyah and Ṣafavīyah orders are prime examples of this.

[666] Stories of the Imāms guiding individuals who were later regarded as the forefathers of Ṣūfī thought, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), Uways al-Qaranī (d. 657), Ibāhīm al Adham (d. 777), Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 850) and Bāyazīd Basṭāmī (d. 874), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 810) and Ma'rūf al-Kharkhī (d. 820) can commonly be found Ṣūfī manuals.

Imāmī lineages. For the Abbasid caliphate, the Shīʿī Imāms were rivals and therefore any Imām from the *sixth* Imām onwards was perceived as a threat.[667] Experts such as Nasr have gone so far as to write:

> [...] some of the Sufis like al-Ḥallāj were definitely Shiʿite or of Shiʿite tendency and there are certain relations between Sufism and Shiʿism, particularly in its Ismāʿīlī form, as we see in clear references to Sufism in the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity, which if not definitely Ismāʿīlī in origin certainly come from a Shiʿi background and are later closely associated with Ismāʿilism".[668]

Whilst describing the esoteric nature of Shīʿism, Nasr further goes on to writes:

> In its purely spiritual or *ṭarīqah* aspect it is in many instances identical with Sufism as it exists in the Sunni world, and certain Sufi orders such as the Niʿmatullāhī have existed in both the Shiʿite and Sunni worlds. But in addition Shīʿism possesses even in its Shariʿite and theological aspects certain esoteric elements which make it akin to Sufism. In fact one could say that Shīʿism, even in its outward aspect, is oriented toward the spiritual stations (*maqāmat-i ʿirfānī*) of the Prophet and the Imāms, which are also the goal of the spiritual life in Sufism".[669]

If Sufism is to be taken as a separate entity in its own right, it would still be difficult to dismiss relationships between prominent Ṣūfī saints and the first eight Shīʿī Imāms. It was only after the *eighth* Imām, mainly as a result of the political climate, that the remaining four Imāms retracted from direct contact with Sufism.[670] Some of the greatest of early Ṣūfīs were disciples of the Imāms, for instance both Ḥasan al-Baṣrī[671] and Uways al-Qaranī have been described as

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[667] Historically there was a cold relationship between the Imāms and both the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. The only exception comes in the time of al-Maʾmūn (d. 833), who had strategically appointed the *eighth* Imām as his Crown Prince. The Imām within two to four years of being the Crown Prince died of poisoning. Shīʿī historians unanimously have concluded that the poison was administered at the instructions of Maʾmūn himself.

[668] Nasr. S.H, *Sufi Essays*, 114, also see Nasr. S.H, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines.*

[669] Nasr. S.H, *Sufi Essays*, 107.

[670] Nasr. S.H, *Sufi Essays*, 114.

[671] Although Nasr mentions a claim that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was a student of ʿAlī, there a varying dates for his death and it is probable that he may have actually come into contact with the *sixth* Imām, as opposed to ʿAlī himself.

students of ʿAlī, Ibāhīm al Adham, Bishr al-Ḥāfī and Bāyazīd Basṭāmī were associates in the spiritual circles of the *sixth* Imām,[672] Shaqīq al-Balkhī was considered a disciple of the *seventh* Imām, with Maʿrūf al-Kharkhī having been initiated by the *eighth* Imām.[673] Irrespective of their schools of jurisprudence, the above mentioned Ṣūfī saints would have been labeled Shīʿī due to their close relationship with the Imāms, and in accordance with the understanding of the term Shīʿī in the time they lived in. It does not by any means imply that they were theologically Shīʿī , although it is difficult to refute or verify accurately due to a lack of historical evidence in relation to their orthodox practices. The early identity of Sufism does somewhat appear to be blurred with Shīʿism. It is not hard to appreciate as a result, why Ṣūfīs too faced similar persecution to that of their Shīʿī counterparts. Be that as it may, Sufism by its very nature was not a theological or legal pathway, but a spiritual one, initiating both Shīʿī and Sunnī devotees.

For Sufism to adopt its own distinct identity at times, divorced from Shīʿism was not always possible, primarily due to the role the Imāms had played in its formation. Without ʿAlī or the *ahl al-bayt*, there would be no Sufism in its current manifestation. Henry Corbin in comparing Shīʿism and Sufism remarks: "We shall see that genealogies of the various branches of Sufism lead back to one or the other of the Holy Imāms of Shīʿism, principally to the Sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) or the Eighth Imām ʿAlī Riḍā (d. 203/819)".[674] It is highly probable that these genealogies were created many generations after the Imāms, nevertheless, it is very difficult to overlook the fact that there is a unique connection between Shīʿism and Sufism, which is not apparen with Sunnī theological schools. The leadership of the Imāms, reverence to the *ahl al-bayt*, the idea of *wilāyah*,[675] the theory of sainthood, the need for a spiritual guide, symbolism and the esoteric interpretation of religion are just some example of convergence between Shīʿism and Sufism. It is in relation to these similarities that Corbin concludes:

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672 *Ibid*. 114.
673 Algar. H, *Imam Musa al-Kazim and Sufi Tradition*, n.d., n.p., 5-7.
674 Corbin. H, Alone with the Alone, Princeton University Press, (New Jersey, 1997), 9.
675 Although the doctrine of *wilāyah* as a theoretical discourse may have appeared in Ṣūfī manuals around the eleventh to twelfth century, the practical understanding of *wilāyah* and its application has been a central tenet in Sufism from its inception.

This is the basis of the fundamental kinship between Shī'ism and Sufism […] The conviction that to everything that is apparent, literal, external, exoteric (*Ẓāhir*) there corresponds something hidden, spiritual, internal, esoteric (*bāṭin*) is the scriptural principle which is at the very foundation of Shī'ism as a religious phenomenon. It is the central postulate of esoterism and of esoteric hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*). This is not to doubt that the prophet Muḥammad is the "seal of the prophets and of prophecy"; the cycle of prophetic Revelation is closed, no new *sharī'a*, or religious Law is awaited. But the literal and apparent text of this ultimate Revelation offers something which is still potency. This potency calls for the action of persons who will transform it into act, and such is the spiritual mission of the Imām and his companions. It is an initiative mission, its function is to initiate into the *ta'wīl* , and initiation into the ta'wīl marks spiritual birth. Thus prophetic Revelation is closed, but precisely because it is closed, it implies the continued openness of prophetic hermeneutics, of the ta'wīl, or *intelligentia spiritualis* […] We merely note the impossibility of dissociating them, of studying separately Ismailian Gnosis, the theosophy of Duodeciman Shī'ism (notably Shaikhism), and the Sufism of Suhrawardī, Ibn 'Arabī, or Semnānī.[676]

Three observations that can be raised from what Corbin has written in terms of similarities between Shī'ism and Sufism are the need for a form of spiritual initiation, esoteric hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) and the interlinkage between Shī'ī esoteric traditions and the Ṣūfī traditions of 'Suhrawardī, Ibn 'Arabī, or Semnānī'. It is for this precise reason that the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī cannot be looked at separately from similar Islamic esoteric traditions that existed around the same period. There has always been a nexus of thoughts, philosophies and ideas in the Islamic world which are interdependent on one another.

Ironic as it may sound, Sufism has boasted from amongst it ranks noteworthy Sunnī and Shī'ī masters, be they the Sunnī polemicist al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) or the Shī'ī mystic Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 1385). Whilst a type of metaphysics developed in the study of Sufism, its early textbooks have stayed clear of theological distinctions.[677] Early Sufism revolved solely around

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676Corbin. H, Alone with the Alone, 78-79.
677 The term metaphysics in this context implies knowledge of the Universal, or as explained by Guénon "knowledge of principles belonging to the universal order". He continues to add, "Metaphysical truths can only

tarīqah, with its spiritual chain of transmission at least before the fourteenth century, exclusively reaching 'Alī.[678] Though famous Sunnī theologians such as al-Ghazālī were Ṣūfī practitioners, Sufism even by the fifteenth century was still considered by some prominent thinkers such as Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) as a pathway distinctly different from orthodox Sunnī Islām. Just over a century and a half after Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Khaldūn comments:

> The *ṣūfīs* thus became saturated with the Shi'ah theories. (Shi'ah) theories entered so deeply into their religious ideas that they based their own practice of using a cloak (*khirqah*) on the fact that 'Alī clothed al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in such a cloak and caused him to agree solemnly that he would adhere to the mystical path. (The tradition thus inaugurated by 'Alī) was continued according to the *ṣūfīs,* through al-Junayd, one of the *ṣūfī* shaykhs.[679]

Ibn Khaldūn's interpretation is not a new one, but is reminiscent of the first two centuries of Islām and the usage of the title Shī'ī by Sunnī orthodoxy and the early Abbasid caliphate. Keeping in mind Ibn Khaldūn was a famous Sunnī authority who lived after both Ibn 'Arabī and Qūnawī, the sensitivity surrounding 'Alī as highlighted by the above quote still existed, "the fact that (the Ṣūfīs) restrict (precedence in mysticism) to 'Alī smells strongly of pro-Shi'ah sentiment".[680] This could be taken as a motivation for the formation of later Ṣūfī orders based on theological inclinations, the most prominent being the Naqshbandīyah. It was this fourteenth century order that produced a spiritual lineage not starting with 'Alī.

Where Sufism and Shī'ism appear to part is that Shī'ism as a theological school, in time was forced to become political, whereas Sufism up to the twelfth century remained at best a

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be conceived by the use of a faculty that does not belong to the individual order, and that, by reason of the immediate character of its operation, may be called 'initiative', but only on the strict condition that it is not regarded as having anything in common with the faculty which certain contemporary philosophers call intuition, a purely instinctive and vital faculty that is really beneath reason and not above it", Guénon, *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, trans. Marco Pallis, Sophia Perennis, (New York, 2004), 71-76.

[678] The fourteenth century saw the beginnings of an exclusive Sunnī Ṣūfī order embodied in the Naqshbandīyah, with a chain beginning with Abū Bakr. There is no historical evidence that such a chain existed before the fourteenth century. It is completely possible that it did, surfacing in the fourteenth century as sectarian intensified, or that a spiritual chain was doctored with Abū Bakr placed as its head to free Sufism from what can only be described as a spiritual methodology with its central character being 'Alī.

[679] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, (New York, 1958), II, 187.

[680] *Ibid.* II, 187.

spiritual methodology for the faithful, and therefore less explicit political or revolutionary content can be found in its literature.[681] This is not to say that Ṣūfīs and in particular later generations of Ṣūfīs did not engage in politics. There are ample examples in both Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire of Ṣūfīs, who were also members of the Sunnī clergy engaging in the political and polemical arena, such as the *seventieth* century Naqshbandī Ḥanafī cleric, Shah Walī Allāh Dehlawī (d. 1762). One finds similar examples in the *nineteenth* century with the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa under the guidance of its first caliph, Shaihu Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817). Earlier examples of Ṣūfī political and revolutionary engagement can be witnessed in the figure of Shah Ismāʿīl (d. 1524) and the rise of the Safavī dynasty. A commonality among the aforementioned personalities is that they were not mere Ṣūfīs, but either represented or were affiliated closely to their theological schools, thus in turn providing them religious legitimacy for their revolutionary and political behavior. With no bifurcation between the spiritual and material in Islām, Sufism as a spiritual methodology could be used for worldly ambition under the umbrella of spreading the one true religion.

Having earlier looked at ʿAlī's central role, coupled with reverence for the *ahl al-bayt* occupied at the heart of both Sufism and Shīʿism, a third and perhaps most important characteristic possessed by both is of the doctrine of *wilāyah*. ʿAlāʾ al-Dawlah Semnānī (d. 1336), a Persian Ṣūfī of the Kubrawīyah, who came a generation after Qūnawī, sums up *wilāyah* in the following terms:

> Spiritual authority (*wilāyah*) is the science of the inward, and hereditary (*wirātha*) is the science of the outward. Imāmat is the science of both the outward and the inward. The [function of] spiritual legatee (*wiṣayah*) is safeguarding the chain (*silsilah*) of the inward, and the caliphate (*khilāfah*) is safeguarding the chain of the outward. After the Prophet ʿAlī was appointed as the spiritual authority (*Walī*), inheritor (*wārith*), Imām, spiritual heir (*waṣī*), successor (*khalifah*) to the Prophet, Peace be upon him.[682]

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[681] This is not to say that Ṣūfī orders have not engaged in the political arena, such as in the case of the Ṣafavī order. It is also the case that spiritual genealogies overtime became a political.

[682] Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah yi-ʿAbbāsī*, trans. M.H. Faghfoory, University Press of America, (Maryland, 2008), 52.

Taken at face value and to those unknowing of Ṣūfī doctrine, this quote would be sufficient in establishing Semnānī and the Kubrawīyah order as Shī'ī, though there is no firm evidence to prove the order was Shī'ī at this point in history. As can be inferred, the lines between Sufism and Shī'ism from time to time appear fluid. If this quote is to be taken in light of modern day interpretations, such as through Chishtī[683] teachings as an example, there would be no contradiction in appreciating such a quote from both Shī'ī and Sunnī devotees of the order, as *khilāfah* in this instance can very simply be interpreted as spiritual as opposed to political or worldly. It is therefore quite possible to marry the worldly *khilāfah* of Abū Bakr and the spiritual *khilāfah* of 'Alī. In fact all Ṣūfī orders with the exception of the Naqshbandīyah would be able to do so purely on the basis of their spiritual lineages. Whereas there are ways of reconciling such quotes, what can obscure boundaries further are poetic statements written by such prominent early Ṣūfīs as the poet Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1221), author of the famous *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, who writes:

> If you ask me what the path of the truth is
> or who is the most perfect on the path of religion
> I will tell you what the path of the truth is
> it is the one whose Imām is 'Alī al-Murtaḍā
> When Muḥammad departed from this world and left the people know that the Imāmat of the
> people of the world belongs to 'Alī
> After Muṣṭafā, Ḥaydar is the Imām,
> your religion and faith finds perfection by following him.
> The Imāmat of Murtaḍā and the People of Yāsīn,
> the path of truth (*tarīqah*) in religion is their path.[684]

He then continues to write:

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[683] A prominent Ṣūfī order predominantly found in the Subcontinent, and taking its names and teachings from the thirteenth century mystic Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236).
[684] 'Aṭṭār. F, *Sī faṣl*, section 12, https://ganjoor.net/attar/30fasl/, Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah yi-'Abbāsī*, trans. M.H. Faghfoory, 53.

I will tell you the name of that eternal king Who stepped his foot on the shoulder of

Muḥammad Commander of the Faithful

that majestic king

 Commander of the Faithful

that mystery of Adam […]

If you know any Imām other than he,

you can not call yourself a Muslim

Know the light of Aḥmad and Ḥaydar as one […][685]

There are very little ways in reconciling such poems by ʿAṭṭār, but to conclude that he may
have been representing his personal opinions as opposed to a mainstream Ṣūfī one. This type
of argument from those who want to separate Sufism from any signs of Shīʿism is a weak one,
as firstly Sufism is not a theological school, and secondly, Ṣūfī poetry is very personal and is
an expression of the truth as witnessed by the poet-mystic. Mystical poetry which gained fame
in Sufism, has mainly been written by those masters who are recognized as having completed
the spiritual cycle. Though certain verses such as the ones mentioned by ʿAṭṭār may be
perceived outside of poetry as unorthodox, there is a unique tolerance in Sufism that allows for
varying types of expression without judgement. Certain types of expression, such as in this
case may lean towards Shīʿism and other types of poetry may represent mainstream Sunnī
theological belief. Suffice it to say that there traditionally has been a greater threshold of
acceptance in mystical poetry. On the other hand, such poems by ʿAṭṭār may even have been
overlooked by other Ṣūfī masters over the centuries and considering the climate in which these
poems were being written, it can very well be inferred that either ʿAṭṭār was inclined towards
Shīʿism but was in *taqiyya* or that the principle doctrines of *wilāyah*, Imāmat and the position
of ʿAlī were borrowed from Shīʿism and incorporated into Sufism as it developed. Shīʿism as
an organized theological school predates the formalization of Sufism and as Shīʿism is the
only variant of Islām to uphold identical beliefs as expressed by both ʿAṭṭār and Semnānī, it is
not difficult to appreciate why mainstream Sunnī theologians such as Ibn Khaldūn considered
Ṣūfī practices as foreign to Sunnī interpretations of Islām. This does not mean that Sunnī Islām

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[685] *Maẓar-i Dhāt*, c.f. Muʾadhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah yi-ʿAbbāsī*, trans. M.H. Faghfoory, 53, ʿAṭṭār. F,
Sī faṣl, section 12, https://ganjoor.net/attar/30fasl/.

is devoid of spirituality or mystical inclination, but that as Sufism represents a distinct spiritual methodology appearing through the teachings of the Shī'ī Imāms, over the centuries, question-marks have been raised by theologians such as the above mentioned Ibn Khaldūn, as to its compatibility and legitimacy with orthodox Sunnī Islam.[686]

To briefly illustrated the point further, one may explore the mystical poems of the likes of Rūmī and Ḥakīm Sanā'ī (d. 1141), the former writing:

> I adore 'Alī, love is our creed
>
> and he who holds us as an enemy
>
> May he become blind in two eyes.
>
> We found felicity from the love of 'Alī
>
> […] he who calls anyone other than the Commander of the Faithful as his Imām
>
> He is an idol-worshipper, and indeed, breaking idols is our job […][687]

Sanā'ī too in similar style writes:

> The one whom you consider equal to 'Alī,
>
> because of your ignorance
>
> By God, he is not even worthy of being the keeper of the shoes of 'Alī's servant (Qanbar)
>
> I can not believe that he who claims faith
>
> And violates Zahra's right but still clams to follow the religion of the Prophet.[688]

Although both Rūmī and Sanā'ī in these verses of poetry are in praise of 'Alī, there is a stark difference between the two types of praise, which would have been picked up by those aware of the theological debates and polemical discussions taking place at the time when these poems were written. There is little doubt Sunnī Ṣūfīs, including many mainstream Sunnī theologians have unreservedly praised 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*. However when praise becomes a theological statement and migrates across theological lines, then it does not remain mere

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[686] The likes of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) although not against Sufism, called for its reform from what they felt were innovations.
[687] *Dīwān Shams Tabrīzī*, c.f. Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah yi-'Abbāsī*, trans. M.H. Faghfoory, 56.
[688] Ḥakīm Sanā'ī, *Dīwān Sanāī'*, Sanāī' library, Tehran, n.d., 469.

praise, but a political statement. For example, the above-mentioned poem by Sanā'ī is sufficient without doubt to establish his Tashayyu', as what has been written is tantamount to *tabarra'* (disassociation) from the first Caliph. For a reader familiar with the events of Fadak, Sanā'ī has in his poem explicitly taken the side of Fāṭimah against Abū Bakr and this would be theologically problematic, especially if Abū Bakr is outright being mentioned as violating Fāṭimah's right. In relation to Rūmī's poem, though not as extreme as Sanā'ī's, it does hold similar beliefs to the Shī'ī in regards to 'Alī. Of course there is little evidence to establish that Rūmī was Shī'ī, however, it is indicative of an opinion that helped to bridge theological boundaries and therefore further study may be required in investigating the position of prominent Ṣūfī masters, such as Rūmī in helping to reconcile theological difference, by distinguishing them from Ṣūfī-inclined theologians such as al-Ghazālī who in his younger days contributed to polemical rhetoric. Indeed the poems quoted are just some examples of a genre found in mystical poetry in and around the period Sanā'ī, Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī. Certainly in mainstream Sunnī thought, these views or opinions would be considered Shī'ī. In fact if they were to be shown to Shī'ī theologians without specifying the author, they too would conclude that the authors were Shī'ī. It should not come as a surprise that statements or opinions of this nature are mostly found in poetic form and rarely emerge outside of mystical poetry in Sufism. The only viable conclusion that can be taken is due to the climate, poetry was the sole medium which allowed for a degree of expression, whilst maintaining *taqiyya*. To reiterate, it would be very difficult to conclude the theological position of each of the early Ṣūfī masters up to the time of Ibn 'Arabī. Praise for 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt* found in the poetry of 'Aṭṭār and Sanā'ī for example, would not be found in the writings of al-Hujwīrī. There appear grades of reverence towards 'Alī, differing from Ṣūfī to Ṣūfī, which is to be expected as each Ṣūfī would bring there own theological understandings to the practice of Sufism. However, it is also important to have in mind that the purpose of Sufism was to attain closeness to God, and also as important was to be truthful to that which was revealed onto the heart and soul of the spiritual traveler. For this reason it is rare to find a Ṣūfī master negating the spiritual unveiling of another, as each unveiling contains a circumstantial truth for the mystic. A Ṣūfī master however, may comment on the station (*maqām*) a particular Ṣūfī may have been when expressing certain sentiments. As this chapter comes to a close, it is worth noting that the topic of Shī'ī influences on Sufism has been relatively neglected in modern

academia, but remains a serious topic worth examining. That said, the next chapter will address the position of the *ahl al-bayt*, as understood by Ibn ʿArabī.

Chapter 17. Ibn ʿArabī and the Family of Muḥammad

A relatively unexplored theme in the study of Ibn ʿArabī are his ideas and insights in respect to the *ahl al-bayt*. Where his predecessors had avoided the topic through fear of being branded *rāfiḍī*, Ibn ʿArabī wrote not only a unique discourse, but an explicit one in conveying the qualities and position of the *ahl al-bayt*, such that Shīʿī thinkers found it useful to borrow from his legacy.[689] Though Ibn ʿArabī transcends labels or better still, the confines of what are traditional theological schools, coming to understand his beliefs in regards to the *ahl al-bayt* would better present an opportunity to explore Shīʿī influences and leanings. His reverence for the *ahl al-bayt* does not necessarily imply his 'Shīʿī-ness', nor that he had been influenced by the Shīʿī doctrine, but it is enough to put a question mark as to whether Ibn ʿArabī's ideas would have been considered Sunnī as understood by his contemporaries. In understanding Ibn ʿArabī's position, I would like to break this chapter into three sections – firstly looking at his beliefs as a whole in regards to the *ahl al-bayt*, the second on his understanding of ʿAlī, and the third, his thoughts on the Mahdī.

17.1 Ahl al-bayt

In *al-Futūḥāt* Ibn ʿArabī refers to two important verses of the Qurʾān, coupled with one prophetic tradition in commenting upon the *ahl al-bayt*. Perhaps ironic is that both verses referenced by Ibn ʿArabī contribute to the overall position in Shīʿī theology when establishing the superiority of *ahl al-bayt* after the Prophet. The two verses are known as the 'verse of purity' (*taṭhīr*)[690] and 'the verse of the loved ones' (*al-muwaddah*).[691] From the former verse the following section has been used: "*[…] Allāh only intends to remove from you impurity (rijis) O' ahl al-bayt, and to purify you with (a thorough) purification*", whilst from the latter

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[689] Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the terminology, philosophical reasoning and general reverence for Ibn ʿArabī has increased both in the seminaries of Qum and Tehran. This has been immensely influenced by Sayyid Khomeynī's (d. 1989) own dedication to the study of Ibn ʿArabī. The first few centuries following the death of Ibn ʿArabī saw his ideas and terminologies being adopted by Shīʿī thinkers such as Rajab Bursī, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, and then later by Sayyid Hāshim al-Tūbilī al-Baḥrānī (d.1696) within their respective works.
[690] Qurʾān 33:33.
[691] Qurʾān 42:23.

verse it reads: "*[…] Say (to them Muḥammad) 'I do need seek a reward of you for this except the love (al-muwaddah) of those near of kin' […]*". The prophetic tradition referenced by Ibn 'Arabī is part of a lengthier narration which states that the stars are a security (*amān*) for the creation of the skies (*ahl al-samā'*) and *ahl al-bayt* are the security for my nation (*ummatī*).[692] In this subchapter, I will look at both these verses in order of the existing sequence mentioned and then the prophetic tradition.

The discourse on purity of the *ahl al-bayt* finds its roots in the *twenty-ninth* chapter of *al-Futūḥāt* under the discussion on the Poles (*al-aqṭāb*) and that too specifically in relation to Salmān (d. 652/653). Whilst describing the qualities of Salmān[693] and what a *quṭb salmāniyyah* should embody, Ibn 'Arabī quotes a tradition from the *sixth* Imām and then proceeds to give its chain in order of the *fifth*, *fourth*, *third* Imām, finally reaching the *first* Imām, who in turn quotes from the Prophet. He references this tradition to Tirmidhī (d. 892), whereby he says that "The people of the Qur'ān (*ahl Qur'an*) are the people of God (*ahl Allāh*) and His elite".[694] He then goes on to say that the Prophet was a complete and purified servant of God, and so too are the *ahl al-bayt*, purified from all sin and indecencies as outlined in the verse of purity. Ibn 'Arabī continues to quote another prophetic tradition which states: "Salmān is from us *ahl al-bayt*" and therefore on the basis of this tradition, Salmān too, having entered the fold of the *ahl al-bayt* is thoroughly purified from sin and indecencies. Salmān is viewed as the exception and an example of the heights of human perfection, so-much-so that the Prophet allows for him to enter the sanctity and purity reserved only for the *ahl al-bayt*. He continues to write in respect to Salmān being a part of the *ahl al-bay*t that:

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[692] There is another variant of this prophetic tradition which reads that the *ahl al-bayt* are a security for the inhabitants of earth, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb Faḍā'il Ṣaḥāba*, *ḥadīth*. 1109. This particular variant is probably more accurate with Ḥākim Nayshābūrī (d. 1014/ 405 AH) authenticating it in his *Mustadrak*. It also complements Ibn 'Arabī's explanation on the original tradition he quoted, as whilst explaining the tradition of the *ahl al-bayt* being a 'security for my nation' writes that they are a security for the believers and "of all people" (*wa l'nāss ajma'īn*), as opposed to just of 'my ummah', *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 13:148.
[693] The station of a *Salmānī Pole* is only second to that of the Poles from the *ahl al-bayt*. Salmān having spiritually migrated to becoming part of the *ahl al-bayt* is an indication to all Islamic mystics the need to gain spiritual closeness to the *ahl al-bayt* if a lofty station is to be achieved.
[694] *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, III, 127-128, Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nisā'ī*, V, 17, c.f. Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, translated by Tawus Raja, 498.

Based on the above, this is a testimony to Salmān's purity, divine protection and infallibility, because God has testified tp the purity of the Prophet's Household and the removal of defilement from them. Now, when the mere ascription of a person to them suffices to show that he is purified, sanctified, and under God's special attention, then what do you think about the ahl al-bayt themselves? They are certainly purified; rather, they are purity itself [or the source and root of purity]".[695]

Where Ibn 'Arabī's apparent deviation occurs from the Sunnī understanding of the *ahl al-bayt* is his definition of who the verse of purity was revealed for. This observation is extremely important as it is not only that he deviates from traditional Sunnī belief on the *ahl al-bayt*, but that no thinker before him had held such an opinion on the nature of the *ahl al-bayt*. If one is to weigh Ibn 'Arabī's definition of the purity of the *ahl al-bayt* in light of the verse of purity, it may well be considered extreme even for mainstream Shī'a theologians such as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. Ibn 'Arabī whilst commenting on the verse of purity explains that *ahl al-bayt* are defined as all of the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, which in the literal sense may be just about acceptable to both Sunnī and Shī'a, however the point of divergence would be that due to the verse of purity, the hearts of all descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are purified. Thus if they were to sin, it would not affect their hearts, whereas for all others, sin would stain it.[696] Ibn 'Arabī continues to write that one should not become upset with a member of the Prophet's household if he or she were to commit a sin, be it a major one, as the sin does not pollute their hearts. He adds that primarily the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn would not face divine torment or punishment and if for some reason they were to be punished (by being placed in hell), it would be temporary. Of the principles of spiritual wayfaring he adds, is to maintain love for the Prophet's family, such that if a wayfarer wants to be protected in his

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[695] I have taken the translation from Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, trans. Tawus Raja, 499, who in turn cites from *al-Futūḥāt* 1:195-199. For the sake of continuity, the same quote is found in the following reference *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:227-239.
[696] Within Islamic Ethics, a sin has a spiritual impact on a person as it 'darkens' the heart, which as a result removes a veil of purity and innocence of a person, much that it leaves a scare on the spiritual heart. For further elaboration, refer to al-Ghazalī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.

or her spiritual journey (*sulūk*), it is vital to give the rights due to the Prophet's family (a part of these rights being to love them).[697] It is at this juncture that Ibn ʿArabī adds the need to love the Prophet's family because of the necessity of "loving the near kin" as outlined in the verse of the loved ones. He continues to write that because the Prophet had instructed all Muslims to love his near of kin, in reality those who love the Prophet and do not express this love to the *ahl al-bayt*, have overlooked the fact that the Prophet too is part of the *ahl al-bayt*. An individual who overlooks the near of kin has in essence rebelled against God and His Prophet.[698] In the *fifty-second* chapter of *al-Futūḥāt*, which Ibn ʿArabī wrote towards the end of his life, under the topic of 'the spiritual state and station of the Pole', he again emphasizes a lack of love towards the *ahl al-bayt* as a violation of the faithful's commitment to God and His Prophet. Whilst suggesting a key principle for the attention of the faithful, which is that one should love all members of the Prophet's Family, be they closely related or far of kin, he relays a story that he had heard from a Meccan during his stay in Mecca:

> There was a time that I was deeply upset with an action of the *Shurafāʾ*[699] of Mecca, such that one night I saw a dream. In that dream I saw Fāṭimah the daughter of the Messenger of God, who turned away from me. I greeted her and asked her why she was upset with me. She responded why are you disrespecting the *Shurafāʾ*. I replied have you not witnessed what they have done. She then remarked, are they not my children? I responded that from now on I have repented.[700]

The above story is an example of the immense love Ibn ʿArabī believed was meant to be shown to the *ahl al-bayt*. What it also nicely leads to are questions surrounding the infallibility of the *ahl al-bayt*. Quite pertinent to our discourse is the discussion on the verse of purity, which for the Shīʿī school highlights the infallibility of the *ahl al-bayt*.[701] Before venturing into any analysis on this particular topic, it is paramount to acknowledge that infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) holds a different meaning in Shīʿism from that which is understood in both Sunnī and

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[697]*al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:227-239.
[698]*Ibid*. 3:240.
[699] Descendants of the Prophet.
[700]*al-Futūḥāt* 4:139
[701] The Prophet, Fāṭimah and Imāms.

in many ways by extension the works of Ibn 'Arabī.[702] If we were to contextualize the position of a Pole as described by Ibn 'Arabī into a Shī'ī context, it would be probable to conclude that a Pole may possess a degree of infallibility, because a Pole according to Ibn 'Arabī is purified from the insinuations of his or her base desires – ego (*nafs*).[703] Similarly the *Salmānī* Pole (*quṭb salmāniyyah*), not only has a pure heart, but his or her actions are also protected from sin.[704] Yahia under the heading of '*Ahl al-bayt* the Poles of the World' (*ahl al-bayt aqṭāb 'ālam*) explains that there is a clause where Ibn 'Arabī highlights not all members of the Family of the Prophet are thoroughly pure and protected from all sin, but from among them are a special group who are divinely protected from sin and mistake and it is this small group from among (family of the Prophet) who are also Poles. To summarize, whilst the heart's of the progeny of the Prophet may be purified, there is a select group whose every action is also purified from sin and mistake.[705] In *Shajarat al-kawn*, Ibn 'Arabī identifies the initial select group, excluding the Poles who are to come after:

> Now the five fingers of your hand are there to remind you of the five members of the Prophet's household: Muḥammad, Fāṭimah, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, from whom Allāh cleansed all impurity, as He says: *Allāh only desires to take away all uncleanness from you, O people's of the household, and to purify you a thorough purifying.*[706][707]

Not only do this small group inherit from the Prophet, but due to their servitude, also gain a special grace (*barakah*) from God which essentially allows them to be the epicenter of divine manifestation in creation. Ibn 'Arabī describes this group as 'the infallible, the protected' (*al-*

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[702] In the Sunnī school, infallibility traditionally was reserved only for Prophets. Though a saint may not commit a sin, and in turn be protected by God from sinning, he or she would still not be considered with possessing infallibility (*'iṣma*). On the other hand in the Shī'ī school, as the *ahl al-bayt* are protected by God from sin, therefore they would be given the title of one who is 'infallible'. The description of one who is protected by God from sin (*al-maḥfūẓ*) would not be used in this instance. Differences at times may appear semantical, with the Sunnī school wanting to maintain a separation in the status of Prophets to all others, therefore using two different terms for effectively the same function – one for a Prophet and the other for a saint. This is not to say that there are no theological subgroups in both schools opposed to infallibility, however the predominant opinion is as explained.

[703] *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:239.

[704] Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shī'a Khālis*, 155.

[705] *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:227-239.

[706] Verse of purity – I have used the translation on p.128 of Ibn 'Arabī, *The Tree of Being (Sharajat al-kawn)*.

[707] Ibn 'Arabī, *The Tree of Being (Sharajat al-kawn)*, trans. by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, 128.

maʿṣūmīn al-maḥfūẓīn), who are divinely protected from sin and establish the parameters of divine law (*al-qāʾimīn b'ḥudūd sayyidahim*), thus holding a special rank from among the Family of the Prophet and are therefore the Universal Poles.[708][709] Furthermore, in the final section of the *fourth* volume, Ibn ʿArabī whilst commenting on the verse of purity, states that as ignorance is also an impurity, the *ahl al-bayt* are therefore clean of this too. By making reference to the *twenty-ninth* chapter, it is evident that he is not implying all of the members of the Prophet's Family, but a specific group from among them.[710] What is interesting too is that this very reasoning has been used by Shīʿī theologians after Ibn ʿArabī to argue from the verse of purity that the Imāms are pure from ignorance.[711]

Whilst having briefly examined the verse of purity and the verse of the loved ones, Ibn ʿArabī proceeds in explaining an important prophetic tradition under the theme of questions and answers. The prophetic tradition comes in question number a hundred and fifty, where he writes: "My *ahl al-bayt* are a security for my nation (*ahl al-baytī amān ummatī*)?" Ibn ʿArabī then continues to explain what the meaning of this prophetic tradition may be. He alludes to the fact the people of the Qurʾān (meaning *ahl al-bayt*, which includes Muḥammad) are the people of God (*ahl Allāh*) and that they can be described as possessing the attributes of God. As the Qurʾān is a security, a cure and a mercy for the nation of Muḥammad, the same can be said for the *ahl al-bayt*. Thus the tradition "'My *ahl al-bayt* are a security for my nation' is from the mercy of God upon the nation of Muḥammad". Ibn ʿArabī appears to make these comparisons in light of the prophetic tradition of the two equally weighty things (*thaqalayn*), left behind by the Prophet – the Qurʾān and *ahl al-bayt*, as his style of writing is indicative of the fact that the reader would have been aware of this tradition.[712] He does not give any reasoning behind his statements, but takes it as a matter of fact when explaining the qualities of the Qurʾān and then mirroring these qualities in *ahl al-bayt*. The only reasoning he brings is

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[708] *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:227-239.

[709] Interesting Khiḍr too is regarded as from the *Salmānī* Poles, which as explained is an elite station, *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:239.

[710] *al-Futūḥāt* 4:333.

[711] Wakīl. M.H, *Muḥī al-Dīn Shīʿa Khālis*, 162.

[712] "I am leaving for you two weighty things – the Book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*) and my progeny (*ʿitratī*) […]", *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, III, 26/ IV, 371/ V, 181/189, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb Faḍāʾil Ṣaḥāba*, II, 203/ I, 572.

when arguing Salmān too would have possessed these qualities, because the Prophet had said "Salmān is from us *ahl al-bayt*".[713]

Although much of what has been mentioned begins with Salmān, what is found is a concise discussion on the station of the *ahl al-bayt*. Within Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of sainthood, there are three elements which distinguishes the position of sainthood. As has previously been stated, the station of sainthood is the highest position in the spiritual hierarchy. It is an umbrella which absorbs both prophecy and messengership. That said, the three elements of sainthood which makes a saint superior in nature are a lack of sin, knowledge and love. These three elements or qualities can be inferred from the overall discussion on sainthood in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī. To explain further, sin is a violation of the divine decree insomuch as it creates a distance between the sinner and God. The further one moves away from God, the lesser a saint that person is. Knowledge of the self, of creation and ultimately of God defines the closeness of a saint to God and as love is the firmest connection attaching a saint to God, those who possess all three elements are most superior. In relation to the *ahl al-bayt*, the verse of purity in general removes from their hearts the affect of sin. When examining the select group found amongst the *ahl al-bayt*, the verse of purity protects them in their entirety from sin and committing a mistake. As the verse of purity removes uncleanliness (*rijis*), ignorance too is removed from the *ahl al-bayt* as according to Ibn ʿArabī, ignorance is in itself unclean. Finally the verse of the loved ones indicates upon God's desire for the faithful to love the *ahl al-bayt*. Ibn ʿArabī as previously mentioned has stated the need for this love to manifest as a necessity on the spiritual journey. If God has made the *ahl al-bayt* the object of love, this itself is underlying of the superiority of the *ahl al-bayt*. As a security for the nation or in fact of all people, by definition they become guardians and in the literal since are *walī* (possessing *wilāyah*) over all people. When compared to the Qurʾān, as Ibn ʿArabī does, their position becomes a medium for guidance and they effectively become the word of God in creation. Rather they are the *barzakh* between God and creation. These are not ideas or concepts that have previously been given by classical Sunnī scholars before Ibn ʿArabī, but in its entirety

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[713]*al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 13:145-148.

represent a new school in Sunnī Islām. At least in the first three centuries of Islām, these ideas were enough to label a person or school Shī'ī.

17.2 Imām 'Alī

Having examined the position of the *ahl al-bayt*, this section will be briefer and will look at a specific passage from *al-Futūḥāt*. 'Alī as previously mentioned enjoys the position of being a member of the *ahl al-bayt* and therefore by virtue of this station is thoroughly purified from sin. His position from amongst the *ahl al-bayt* and in relation to all other saints appears to be significantly more important. From the works of Ibn 'Arabī and all of the early commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*, it is evident that Ibn 'Arabī's position on the beginning of creation was that the first in creation endowed with existence was Muḥammad. In the *sixth* chapter of *al-Futūḥāt*, Ibn 'Arabī explains that the first thing (*shay'*) created as a result of the Divine Light touching it was the primordial 'dust' (*al-habā*),[714] which then became the blueprint for creation. No one is closer than Muḥammad to the original blueprint of creation. Ibn 'Arabī then adds: […] and the closest of all men to him (*aqrab al-nāss ilayh*) is 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib […]".[715] This particular point has already been mentioned, however a point which requires emphasis is that Ibn 'Arabī identifies the Muḥammadan Light with both Muḥammad and 'Alī simultaneously.[716] Singling 'Alī from all others as the closest to Muḥammad, within the context of creation, whilst having elaborated prior on Muḥammad's primordial existence is indicative of 'Alī's existential position, not just in relation to Muḥammad, who in his archetypal being is also the primary cause of creation, but by virtue of his closeness to Muḥammad, 'Alī too has a causal relationship to the rest of creation. This strengthens the argument of 'Alī being the Absolute Seal of Sainthood, as both the Seal of prophecy and Sainthood existed together before Adam. Furthermore as Ahmad points out: "[…] in the opening benediction of *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, Ibn al-'Arabī, although he does mention the other Companions, uses the extraordinary formula of *ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* after the name of 'Alī". This formula is unusual insofar as it is reserved solely for the Prophet

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[714] Akin to prime matter.
[715] *al-Futūḥāt* 1:119.
[716] In both *al-Khiṣāl*, I, 31 and *al-Amālī*, 234, al-Ṣadūq narrates a prophetic tradition that states: "I [Prophet] and 'Alī are from one light [*nūr wāḥid*]". Similarly al-Ṣadūq brings forth a prophetic tradition in II, 482 of *al-Khiṣāl* which highlights that the light of Muḥammad had existed four hundred thousand years before creation.

Muḥammad and is never even used by the Shī ‘ah in this way".[717] Indeed, by using such a

formula only pronounced for Muḥammad, it may be indicative of how intertwined

Muḥammad and ‘Alī are, both primordially and existentially. What it may also suggest is that

as the position of ‘Alī to Muḥammad is existentially and spiritually the closest, ‘Alī as his

direct Vicegerent adopts the divine blessings which comes with this unique formula, but does

not take on the mantle of prophecy, as the post of prophecy is sealed through Muḥammad.

What remains however, is its spiritual overflow, ever-continuing through the chain of *wilāyah*.

‘Alī in line with all early Ṣūfī genealogies,[718] was the first spiritual caliph of Muḥammad. A

meaning of caliph is another from the same root,[719] which would imply in the literal sense,

Muḥammad and ‘Alī being from the same root, thus complementing Ibn ‘Arabī’s position of

the two’s unified reality before the creation of Adam. In fact studies of pre-Islamic texts have

suggested the meaning of caliph to imply "successor selected by God",[720] which is closer to

the Qur’ānic understanding of caliph, as when it is used in the Qur’ān, it follows divine

appointment.[721] The position of ‘Alī to Muḥammad can further be appreciated if examined in

light of the prophetic tradition of *Manzilah*.[722]

As is the nature and style in which Ibn ‘Arabī writes, his ideas are found scattered throughout

his works and therefore it becomes important to piece together his views from various

sections. In another part of *al-Futūḥāt*, whilst addressing chivalry (*futūwwat*), Ibn ‘Arabī

quotes a famous prophetic tradition that reads: "There is no one more chivalrous than ‘Alī

[…]" (*la fatā ilā ‘Alī*) in highlighting ‘Alī’s loftiness.[723] Chivalry in itself is a spiritual station

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[717] *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī‘ah Islam*, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 59.
[718] Prior to the formalization of the Naqshbandīyah’s distinct Sunnī identity. It was during the period of the Khwājagān, somewhere between the tenth and fourteenth century that a genealogy appears beginning with Abū Bakr alongside a preexisting genealogy that began with ‘Alī.
[719] Kadi. W; Shahin. A, "Caliph, caliphate", *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, Princeton University, (Princeton, 2013), 81-86
[720]*Ibid*. 81-86
[721] ‘*And when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make a caliph on earth" […]*’, Qur’ān (2:30). The concept of caliph, both in pre-Islamic literature and in the Qur’ān is the very same understanding found in Shī‘ī theology of what it meant to be appointed caliph. Hence the most important primary principle of Imāmat is divine appointment above any form of worldly appointment.
[722] Refer to our previous discussion on this tradition.
[723] According to Ṭabarī, as the Muslims retreated at the battle of Uḥud, this pronouncement came from the heavens in recognition of ‘Alī’s bravery and obedience to the instructions of the Prophet whilst defending him

and a state of being. Khwāja ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 1088), whilst writing one of the first comprehensive practical manuals on the stations of the spiritual wayfarer (*Manāzil al-sā’irīn*), dedicates station thirty-nine to chivalry.[724] Ibn ‘Arabī's understanding of chivalry somewhat differs from past Ṣūfī masters, such as Sulamī (d. 1021) and his student, the authoritative al-Qushayrī (d. 1074) who in their respective works, do not mention ‘Alī when discussing chivalry.[725] Al-Qushayrī his *Epistle* does however mention Abraham, the Men of the Cave and the *sixth* Imām as chivalrous men.[726][727] Further to this, he also quotes ‘Alī al-Daqqaq by writing: "No one has achieved perfection in chivalry, except the Messenger of God – may God bless and greet him – for on the Day of Judgment everyone will be saying, 'Me, Me, except the Messenger of God, who will be saying: 'My community, my community!'".[728] Ibn ‘Arabī's approach on the other hand in explaining chivalry mainly focuses on ‘Alī as the quintessential example of this particular station.[729] Chivalry plays an important role in Ibn ‘Arabī's mystical philosophy. At the beginning of *al-Futūḥāt*, he describes meeting a person who he calls 'the young man' (*al-fata*) next to the Ka‘ba. It is this young man who manifests to him the content of *al-Futūḥāt*.[730] With antithetical qualities, similar to the characteristics of God, Ibn ‘Arabī concludes in similar fashion to the Qur’ānic parable in which Adam teaching the angels their names,[731] the young man "[…] revealed to me all my names, and I knew who I was and who I was not".[732] The station of chivalry and indeed *al-fata* are a reflection of the perfect person, as extrapolated from the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī. Consequently, how Ibn ‘Arabī describes ‘Alī within the framework of chivalry is vital in coming to know his understanding

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from enemy fighters, *The History of al-Tabari*, VII, trans. M. Watts and M. V. McDonald, (New York, 1988), 119-20.

[724] Station thirty-nine is divided into three stages; in respect to the self, others and God. In this way, the whole treatise entitled ‘*Manāzil al-sā’irīn*', with its hundred stations are divided into three stages.

[725] Sulamī and al-Qushayrī were the first to write on spiritual chivalry.

[726] Al-Qushayri, Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism, trans. Alexander D. Knysh, Garnet Publishing Limited, (Lebanon, 2007), 237-241.

[727] Both Abraham and the Men of the Cave have been mentioned as chivalrous in the Qur’ān (18:13, 21:58-60).

[728] Al-Qushayri, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, trans. Alexander D. Knysh, Garnet Publishing Limited, (Lebanon, 2007), 237.

[729] By the thirteenth century there appears a change in approach in addressing the topic of chivalry. ‘Alī's role becomes central, as a whole philosophy of chivalry is developed around his generosity, forgiveness, bravery and altruism. Instrumental to this development were Ibn ‘Arabī and Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar Suhrawardī (d. 1234), author of *Kitāb al-futūwwat*.

[730] *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 1:218-230.

[731] Qur’ān 2:33.

[732] Al-Sulami, *The Way Of Sufi Chivalry*, Inner Traditions International, (New York, 1991), 23.

of 'Alī and the perfect human. Pertinent, but requiring considerable unpacking is when he remarks:

> A chivalrous person is the son of the times (*ibn al-waqt*)[733], who implements his work in accordance to the time; is not restricted to time (*zamān*) nor place (*makān*) […] there is no one more chivalrous than 'Alī, therefore only he is the legatee (*wasī*) and possessor of guardianship (*walī*).[734] The chivalrous are the leaders of spiritual realms and the world of possibility, consisting of proof (*ḥujjah*), authority (*sulṭān*), evidence (*dalīl*) and testimony (*burhān*).[735]

From this passage, 'Alī's spiritual authority is immediately clear, though it does not directly qualify his temporal power. That said, the term *wasī* in its absolute sense implies however heir to the Prophet and therefore it can be argued that both spiritual and temporal authority is meant when Ibn 'Arabī mentions the term *wasī*.

When reading through the works of Ibn 'Arabī, there appears an emphasis on the pursuit and obligation to pursue knowledge, be it worldly or celestial. Unique to Ibn 'Arabī is his usage of the occult sciences such as astrology, numerology, and the science of letters, not to mention angelology and Islamic geomancy. In fact reading through his works on the occult, especially the book *Risalah al-Dur al-maknūn wa al-jawhar al-maṣūn*, Ibn 'Arabī also mentions the use of what may today be referred to as magic squares. Suffice it say that as important knowledge of the physical world was to Ibn 'Arabī, he appreciated all types of sciences, including those by their very nature which may have been hidden or may not have openly been taught due to it being perceived as dangerous. Nevertheless, the knowledge of what in the modern context can only be described as the occult, appears to be an important component of how Ibn 'Arabī came to formulate his the worldview. It was a science that housed secrets and in turn these secrets

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[733] Although the term *ibn al-waqt* in certain contexts may appear to be a negative one, in this case, it is positive. The term is in the modern context to imply an opportunist, however in this context, it feels to a person who takes every opportunity given by God. Therefore it is a positive title.

[734] The terms *wasī* and *walī* have only been used together like this in Shī 'i theology for 'Alī, to denote 'Alī's Imāmat and *wilāyah*. There are no usages of this sequence for any other caliph. As the term caliph is not also used, what Ibn 'Arabī may well have been meaning is spiritual authority as opposed to temporal authority.

[735] *al-Futūḥāt* 4:357.

were important in unveiling a fuller understanding of the reality of creation. The second longest chapter in *al-Futūḥāt* is titled 'The Science of Letters' and is telling of the significance this type of knowledge had on the works of Ibn 'Arabī. At the beginning of the chapter, Ibn 'Arabī writes:

> The meaning carried by letters encompass absolute Existence in its totality […] It is through the letter that both what is Written is drawn out, and the Law is fulfilled. Far from being original or simple entities, however, letters themselves are produced by the rotation and interaction of a specific number of celestial spheres (*aflāk*) among all the spheres that move concentrically within the total, ultimate Sphere (*al-falak al-aqsā*). Along with bringing letters into existence, the rotation of the spheres combines physical qualities (heat, cold, dryness and humidity) together in pairs […] Each of the spheres from which the letters emerge, moreover, goes through a cycle that has a certain number of years, and passes through a set number of 'mansions' (*manāzil*) […] The science of letters can thus not be looked at independently of the science of the heavenly bodies or of the cosmic cycle.[736]

The purpose of referencing this passage is to demonstrate Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of the importance of the science of letters. Similarly with the science of letters comes the science of the cosmos, astrology and much of the other strands making up what is referred to as the occult. As he mentions, a science cannot be understood isolated due to a need in comprehending all of the sciences in reaching the truth. In other words, if only one science is known, it leaves the overall journey incomplete, therefore to gain a complete understanding is to know the subtle interlinkages between the sciences, where the purpose of the sciences is to guide the seeker in knowing the world of existence. It is because through the letters did God manifested the world of being: "God described Himself as having a Breath. This is His emergence from the Unseen and the manifestation of the letters as the Visible. The letters are containers for meanings, while the meanings are the spirits of the letters".[737] With the

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[736]Translated by C. Chodkiewicz & D. Grill, Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, II, Pir Press, (New York, 2004), 108.
[737] *al-Futūḥāt* 3:95, translation taken from *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 226.

importance of the science of letters established, it is worth mentioning that in *Risalah al-Dur al-maknūn*, Ibn ʿArabī says the following:

> Imām ʿAlī is the inheritor of our master the Messenger of God in the science of letters (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūf*) and he has alluded (in signs) to this by saying 'I am the city of knowledge (*madinat al-ʿilm*) and ʿAlī is its gate (*bābu-hā*), therefore anyone who intends to gain knowledge should enter through the gate – and ʿAlī inherited the knowledge of the beginning and the end (*ʿilm al-awwalīn wa al-ākhirīn*) – and I have not seen anyone more comprehensive in knowledgeable than ʿAlī – and he was the first to have made a magic square (*jadwal*) which was a hundred by a hundred, and taught *jafr jāmʿ* through the secrets of letters by writing such that all of past and present is found in it.[738]

A similar passage reads:

> Imām ʿAlī inherited the science of letters from the Messenger of God, then Imām Ḥusayn, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Imām Bāqir, and after Imām Ṣādiq were the inheritors of this knowledge – and Imām Ṣādiq was someone that at the age of seven years understood the subtleties of this ocean and its secrets – and he was someone who spoke on the science *jafr* and the science of letters […] and said […] we possess the white *jafr*, the red *jafr*, the major *jafr* and the minor *jafr*, that in the last days will be made apparent by Imām Muḥammad Mahdī […].[739]

There are a number of key points that can be reasonably inferred from these two passages. The main point is that knowledge possessed by the Prophet is supreme in that it encompasses all of knowledge from the beginning to the end of time. ʿAlī as the *bāb*, inherited this knowledge and so too do the Imāms succeeding him (in this case the *third*, *fourth*, *fifth* and *sixth* Imāms). This supreme knowledge, especially of the occult and divine sciences, will be made apparent

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[738]*Risalah al-Dur al-maknūn wa al-jawhar al-maṣūn c.f. Hazāro Yek Nukteh*, 662, no.281.
[739]*Risalah al-Dur al-maknūn* c.f. Āmulī. H, *ʿAyūn masāʾil al-nafs wa sirḥ al-ʿayūn fī sharḥ al-ʿayūn*, 778. This passage is akin to ʿAlī famous sermon, *Khuṭbat al-Taṭanjiyyah* (refer to the section on Imāmat), where he proclaims: "I am the Word through which the decree is complete and the Universe is maintained […]".

by the Mahdī in the last days. Therefore the Mahdī also an inheritor of this knowledge, will represent the knowledge of the Prophet in the last days. Though there is no mention of temporal inheritance, ʿAlī and a select number of Imāms that succeeded him (as mentioned by Ibn ʿArabī) are inheritors to the knowledge of prophecy. What is also inferable is that aside from temporal power, ʿAlī appears to inherit all other facilities which makes Muḥammad superior in creation. His position as closest to Muḥammad, sharing in the primordial light, being the Imām of the universe and the secret [mystery] of all the Prophets (*wa sirr al-anbiyā' ajmaʿīn*), implies that ʿAlī's primordial reality shares in the Muḥammadan Reality. As mystery of all of the Prophets, there is a subtle unity between Muḥammad as the prophetic archetype and ʿAlī as its mystery. *Sirr* represents an inward reality which houses divine secrets and is a channel in receiving grace from God.[740] Qushayrī in describing the meaning of *sirr* states:

> According to Sufi principles, [the innermost self] serves as a repository of direct vision [of God], in the same way as the spirits are the repository of love and the hearts are the repository of knowledge […] According to the terminology and principles of the Sufis, the innermost self (*sirr*) is more subtle than the spirit, while the spirit is more noble than the heart. They say that the innermost selves are free from the bondage of all things [other than God], from traces and remains. The words "innermost self" denotes the [mystical] states that are kept secret between God […] and His servant.[741]

If we were to try analyze the position of ʿAlī in light of the given description, it would require considerable unpacking. Suffice it to say that the concept of the innermost self (*sirr*) in relation to the prophets mirrors the Muḥammadan Reality found deeply embedded in the very core of prophecy. ʿAlī's essential self therefore is one with the Muḥammadan Reality, similar to Muḥammad's essential being. By virtue of Prophecy spanning the breadth of human existence (Adam being the first human-prophet), so too does the spiritual relation between Muḥammad and ʿAlī, devoid of worldly time and space. In light of the Muḥammadan Reality being a medium through which God created the world of existence, and ʿAlī the 'mystery of

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[740] Further explanation of *sirr* will be provided in the next subchapter.
[741] Al-Qushayri, Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism, trans. Alexander D. Knysh, 110.

all the Prophets', an interesting tradition by ʿAlī is found narrated through ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (d. 657) which states:

> O' ʿAmmār, it was through my name that the world of being, all objects and the universe was founded – and it was my name through which the Prophets beseeched God (for the fulfillment of their prayers). I am the divine tablet (*al-luḥ*), I am the divine pen (*al-qalam*), I am the throne (*al-ʿarsh*), and I am the chair (*al-kursī*), and I am the heaven heavens, and I am beautiful names [of God] and I am the the highest words (*kalimāt ʿalīyyan*).[742]

It is understandable why ʿAlī's position can easily be underestimated by a reader who limits their research to only *al-Futūḥāt* without piecing it together with other works of Ibn ʿArabī. Among Shīʿī theologians, at least until the fifth century of Islām, such mystical depictions as just mentioned were not readily available, and only existed in *ḥadīth* literature. Texts such as *al-Kāfī* which mention *ḥadīth* on the the primordial light (nūr), or the preexisting essences of the Prophet and ʿAlī, were generally quoted without further commentary, explanation or footnotes. Classical Shīʿī texts refrained from giving opinions or analysis, but mainly stuck to the letter of the tradition. It was only after the fourth century of Islām that commentaries and theological discourse developed on the principles found in these traditions. If one is to contextual the ideas mentioned by Ibn ʿArabī in the society he was living in, these ideas would certainly be new and potentially controversial due to its radical portrayal of ʿAlī not readily available in both Sunnī and Shīʿī theological discussions of the time. Closest to such ideas as mentioned would be found in early Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature. Ibn ʿArabī's methodology and approach to Alī was that he scattered his thoughts across his works, which would not have been easily picked up, unless a researcher was actively researching to piece his ideas on ʿAlī together. Why Ibn ʿArabī used such a methodology may have been as a result of the time he lived in, with major resentment to Shīʿism on the whole, but it would also have been because of the allusive nature of how mystical texts were written, in the confidence that one's target audience would understand the subtleties of the methodology used. One must appreciate that

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[742] Bursī. R, *Mashāriq al-anwār*, Intishārāt ʿAlimī – Farhangī, (Qum, 2010), 370.

Ibn ‘Arabī was writing for the elite from amongst the mystics, and this is why he uses a style typical of the way Ṣūfī Masters of the time would write. In addition, Ibn ‘Arabī insisted on the seeker knowing a range of sciences in comprehending the truth and therefore it can be inferred that to know a broad range of sciences was a necessary prerequisite if a deeper understanding of his works was to be achieved. In essence, a reader should be a scholar of Islām and of the mystical sciences, ever-aware of the various complexities Ibn ‘Arabī would have faced, without which the reader would not appreciate subtle references made to verses of the Qur’ān, prophetic traditions, philosophical discourse contemporary to Ibn ‘Arabī's time and theological insinuations. What has been summarized in this subchapter is sufficient as a brief overview of Ibn ‘Arabī's ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. The final subchapter will look at the position of the Mahdī in the thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabī.

17.3 The Mahdī

The first in-depth discussion on the Mahdī from a mystical perspective is found in the writings of Ibn Arabī. Traditionally the topic of the Mahdī was limited to specific chapters relating to Islamic eschatology. Though Ibn ‘Arabī does appear to integrate the philosophy of the Mahdī within his overall doctrine, there does appear a lack of evolution on the topic by Islamic mystical thinkers after him. The discourse on the Mahdī is only topical among adherents of the so-called ‘Akbarian School’ and any further debate on Ibn ‘Arabī's Mahdī is limited to discussions on his ancestry by later commentators and his rank when compared to that of Jesus. Not surprising are chapters on the Mahdī found in Shī‘ī mystical literature, such as in the works of Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d.1385), and Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d.1696), gaining what can only be inferred as much needed confidence from the open discussion found in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī. The subject of the Mahdī has always been an integral part of Shī‘ī theology, albeit in the first three centuries of Islām, it was rarely discussed as openly as is found post – Ibn ‘Arabī. Perhaps this was as a result of political sensitivities the topic may have rendered, especially in the time of Abbasids.[743] The period of the last two Shī‘ī Imāms

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[743] There too was fear on the part of the Abbasids that talk on the Mahdī may lead to insurrections from elements within the Shī‘ī communities. There had previous been a number of noteworthy revolts such as a Shī‘ī revolt in 762 by Nafs al-Zakīyah (d.762), the Battle of Fakhkh in 786, and the uprising of Ṣaḥib al-Zanj in 869 [although believed by Shī‘ī scholars, not to be a Shī‘ī movement, but rather a Khawārij lead endeavour].

before the *twelfth* Imām witnessed a rise in messianic currents, leading to the imprisonment of the *eleventh* Imām for most of his ministry. Any discussion on the Mahdī could well have been perceived as the beginnings of an insurrection, under the Abbasid caliphate. It is therefore interesting that Ibn ʿArabī not only dedicates a chapter in *al-Futūḥāt* to 'The Mahdī's Helper'[744], but appears to actively mention him across many of his works. There are a number of variants to this chapter, especially in relation to the Mahdī's ancestry, however what is clear from all recensions is that the Mahdī is the Imām of the Time (*Imām al-Waqt*), the Rightly Guided Imām and the caliph of God who will come forth to fill the world with justice and equity, as it was filled with injustice and tyranny. Through him the true religion of the Prophet will become manifest and he will eliminate all different schools so that only the Pure Religion (*dīn khālis*) remains. The Mahdī is therefore the 'proof' (*ḥujjah*) of God over the people, "For God only gave him precedence over His [other] creatures and appointed him as their Imām so that he could strive to achieve what is beneficial for them".[745] This is why he is also protected from sin and mistakes (*maʿṣūm*) and possesses knowledge of the unseen (*ʿilm al-ghayb*). According to Ibn ʿArabī the knowledge of the Imām is divine and therefore not only worldly, "[…] for he is the rightly guided Vicegerent [of God], one who understands the languages of animals, whose justice extends to both men and jinn".[746] What is also very telling from this chapter is that Ibn ʿArabī accepts the Mahdī as the Imām of his time. When cross referenced with Qūnawī's passage on the Mahdī in his will, it appears that both he and Qūnawī believed in a living Mahdī who was the proof of God in creation. Furthermore, the depiction of the Mahdī appears to encompass qualities given by God to His prophets. Effectively the Mahdī is inheritor to the position of Muḥammad in the last days. Such a description and terminology used is rarely found in Sunnī texts, though are found in Shīʿī *ḥadīth* collections such as *al-Kāfī* and *Baṣāʾir*. It is therefore difficult to dismiss clear Shīʿī influences as is evident from this chapter of *al-Futūḥāt*, even before an analysis of the ancestry of the Mahdī is undertaken. Undoubtedly, chapter *three hundred and thirty-three* of *al-Futūḥāt* would have been quite revolutionary for Sunnī thinkers of the time.[747] Ironically the content of the chapter itself has

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744 Chapter 366.
745 A section of chapter 366 of *al-Futūḥāt*, trans. C. Chodkiewicz & D. Grill, Ibn ʿArabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, II, 85.
746 *Ibid.* 70.
747 The chapter concerning the Mahdī and his lineage.

not created as much controversy as the question of ancestry. It has become contentious, with accusations of omissions and distortions to existing recensions of *al-Futūḥāt* in concern to the Mahdī's ancestors. The reason why is that traditional Sunnī texts highlight the Mahdī being from the line of al-Ḥasan the eldest son of ʿAlī, where the Shīʿī position is that he is from the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, the younger son of ʿAlī and the forefather to the remaining nine Shīʿī Imāms. The Mahdī being alive is also a traditional Shīʿī position, as mainstream Sunnī belief has been that his birth is to happen and his father's name will be ʿAbd Allāh.[748]

Osman Yahia in his critical edition of *al-Futūḥāt* introduces the ancestor of the Mahdī as al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, similarly a recent critical edition published in 2002 by Mahmud Muraji also attributes the forefather of the Mahdī as al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī. In contrast, Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtīyānī (d. 2005) in his critical edition has corrected what he believed were distortions to the existing texts, by referring to the Mahdī's forefather as al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, with another commentary, this time by Riḍā-nejād published ibn 2001 entitled *Hidayat al-umam* also stating the same.[749] More important is Shaʿrānī's authoritative *al-Yawāqīt wa al-jawāhir*. In that he also writes that the ancestor of the Mahdī is al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and his father is the *eleventh* Shīʿī Imām, Ḥasan al-Askarī b. Imām al-Naqī. Finally worth mentioning is are two treatises, the first called *Risalah fī Amr al-Mahdī*, attributed to Qūnawī which states that al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī is the paternal ancestor of the Mahdī[750] and the second is a commentary again ascribed to Qūnawī of *al-Shajrah al-nu'maniyyah*, which itself is attributed to Ibn ʿArabī, in which it states the Mahdī is from the descendants of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and his father is Ḥasan al-Askarī b. Imām al-Naqī.[751] Suffice it to say that there are textual arguments on both sides, which is enough to conclude that debate still exists on who the ancestors of the Mahdī are. Indeed there does appear general consensus on the vast majority of the content found in

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[748] Refer to the chapter on the Mahdī in the section on Imāmat.

[749] Article published in 2014, Parvin Kazemzadeh & Maryam Davarnia, *The Sealness of the Wilayah of al-Mahdi and the Specification of His Ancestors according to ibn Arabi and Some Commentators of Futuhat al-makkiyyah*, 74.

[750] Peacock. A.C.S, *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 2019), 226.

[751] Article published in 2014, Parvin Kazemzadeh & Maryam Davarnia, *The Sealness of the Wilayah of al-Mahdi and the Specification of His Ancestors according to ibn Arabi and Some Commentators of Futuhat al-makkiyyah*, p.74. I have corrected the article as it attributes *al-Shajrah al-nu'maniyyah* to Qūnawī, whereas what is attributed to him is a commentary on the treatise.

chapter *three hundred and thirty-three*. The only point of contention aside from his ancestry is the position of the Mahdī being ranked below that of Jesus, to which both Qumsha'ī[752] and more recently Ḥasan-zadeh Āmūlī in his *'Irfān wa ḥikmat-i muta'aliyyah*, published in 1995 have claimed the sentence which indicates upon al-Ḥasan being the paternal ancestor of the Mahdī as being distorted.[753]

The nature and style of Ibn 'Arabī as previously mentioned requires that a thorough search of all his writings be performed if a comprehensive understanding of the Mahdī is to be reached. One type of text often ignored are his supplications. In a book of supplications lithographed in Istanbul in the nineteenth century by Naqshbandī master, Ahmed Ziyaüddin Gümüşhānevī (d. 1893) titled *Majmū'at aḥzāb*, are found two salutations addressing the Prophet's Vicegerent of the time.[754] The first salutation is titled 'Salutations on the Greatest Mystery (*sirr al-a'ẓam*)' and the second is called 'Salutations on the Pole (*quṭb*)'. From the titles we can infer that the Pole of the time is not Ibn 'Arabī, as it would be illogical for him to be greeting himself or beseech God to unite him with His Pole and Vicegerent. The Pole of the time is also appointed by God, and is the 'Greatest Mystery', containing all the qualities familiar to the Shī'ī Imāms. Whilst commentating on the *Fuṣūṣ*, Qayṣarī addresses the term 'Mystery' by writing: "As for the 'mystery', it is from the perspective that none perceives His lights except the possessors of hearts and those firm in knowledge of Allāh, to the exclusion of others".[755] The Pole and Vicegerent of the times when described as the Greatest Mystery is indicative of his position as the greatest medium between God and creation, the most knowledgeable and a perfect human of his time. Ibn 'Arabī though in places alludes to being the Seal of Sainthood, is no more than a Seal in the delimited sense if these supplications and salutations are to be taken into consideration. His status is lower than that of the Pole of the times and therefore he yarns to be

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[752] Qumsha'ī's position amongst Persian commentators of Ibn 'Arabī would be regarded as authoritative. Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *The Garden of Truth*, 226, briefly but concisely summarizes his influence by writing: "[…] whom many Persian experts on *'irfān* consider as a second Ibn 'Arabī and the most prominent commentator upon gnostic texts such as the *Fuṣūṣ* since the time of Qūnawī".

[753] 'Āmūlī. H, *'Irfān wa ḥikmat-i muta'aliyyah*, Qiyam, (Qum, 1995), 44.

[754] Gümüşhānevī. A, *Majmū'at aḥzāb*, Lithograph, III, 12-14 and 91-92, c.f. *Philosophy and The Intellect Life In Shī'ah Islam*, The Shi'ah Institute Press, chapter 2, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, 59. I have used the reference cited by Ahmad as the lithograph in my possession does not include volume number.

[755] *Muqaddimah Qayṣarī*, English-Arabic Text, trans. Mukhtar H. Ali, 182.

united with him. In the *four hundredth and sixty-third* chapter of *al-Futūḥāt*, it is clear that there are only twelve Poles (*aqṭāb*) that uphold the world. These twelve are the perfect humans after the Prophet, of whom the twelfth is living.[756] There does appear to be a stark contrast between Ibn 'Arabī's twelve Poles and the concept of twelve Imāms, especially with both the twelfth Pole and twelfth Imām living. As the Mahdī according to Ibn 'Arabī is divinely protected by God from sin and mistakes, is guided by God and possesses knowledge divine,[757] whilst being inheritor to prophecy and is a Pole in his time, it can be reasonably inferred that the twelfth Pole and the twelfth Imām in function and personality are the same, though may differ in specific traits such as ancestry. Indeed comparisons have been made between the final Imām and Pole, for instance by the fifteenth century Persian philosopher Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 1502) in his *Kitāb Nūr al-hidāyah*. In describing the Pole of the time, Ibn 'Arabī in his first supplication gives salutations to the 'Vicegerent of Muḥammad' by using honorific titles such as 'his Vicegerent [Muḥammad] on earth in this time (*fī adhā al-zamān*)', 'proof of God' (*ḥujjat Allāh*), 'promise of God' (*wa'd Allāh*), and 'he who is assigned in this time to be a security for both realms' (*wa khaṣṣahu fī adhā al-zamān liyakūn l'l-'ālamīn amān*).[758] This mimics the prophetic tradition previously mentioned, discussing the position of the *ahl al-bayt* as a security (*amān*) for the nation and more so the world. The Pole of the time is also described as 'Pole of the existential circle' (*quṭb dā'rat al-wujūd*) and 'place of divine sight and witnessing' (*maḥal al-sami' wa al-shuhūd*). He then continues in the first supplication to say that creation only sustains but through his will, as he is the manifestation of the Real (*ḥaqq*) and a mine of the truth (where truth is mined), "O God convey my greeting (*salāmī*) to him […]".[759] Ibn 'Arabī whilst describing him, states he is the manifestation of the gathering together of the Divine Names of the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden. In his second supplication whilst mentioning the Pole of the time being the gathering together of the four Divine Names, Ibn 'Arabī also adds that he is a sign (*ayah*) of God between the Divine characteristics and actions. Though both of these supplications require a thorough

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[756] *al-Futūḥāt* 4:77-78.
[757] Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, trans. C. Chodkiewicz & D. Grill, II, 85.
[758] It should be noted that there is tradition from the *sixth* Imām describing the Imām as the promise of God, and a holder of His mysterious (*sīrr Allāh*), *al-Kāfī*, I, 188 with a whole chapter named *Kitāb al-ḥujjah* in *al-Kāfī* that describes the Prophet and Imāms as a proof of God over creation.
[759] Gümüşhānevī. A, *Majmū'at aḥzāb*, Lithograph, III, 13.

examination, the final point worth mentioning is that found in both supplications is a prayer where he beseeches God by saying: "O God, O Gatherer of the people on the day where there is no doubt [Judgement Day], gather me together with him [...]".[760] A subtle mention of Judgement Day, whilst beseeching God to be united with the final Pole, who is the Mahdī is just one example of how precise Ibn Arabī is to detail and just how meticulous he is in conveying a strong message to the reader. Ibn 'Arabī, unlike his predecessors is the only Ṣūfī writer to have given such emphasis on the doctrine of Mahdī, both from a theoretical perspective, as well as a personal one. Such elaborate explanations on the Mahdī, his ancestry, knowledge, infallibility, position and role on earth is unique to Ibn 'Arabī. Although similar details were present in Shī'ī tradition such as *al-Kāfī*, Shī'ī thinkers only started to write freely about the Mahdī after Ibn 'Arabī. This may be either coincidental, due to a change in political climate, or it could genuinely be inspired by Ibn 'Arabī, coupled with a change in political climate. Perhaps further independent research is required on the subject of how Ibn 'Arabī influenced generations of Shī'ī theologians in their writings on the merits of the *ahl al-bayt*, 'Alī and the Mahdī, such as Rajab Bursī, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī and Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1696) author of *Madina al-ma'ajiz*. Pertinent to conclude this chapter on, is to reemphasize the extraordinary position the *ahl al-bayt*, 'Alī and the Mahdī played in the unique worldview of 'Ibn 'Arabī, unwitnessed before in Sufism.

760 *Ibid.* III, 92.

Chapter 18. Conclusion

It is evident that the position of Imāmat in Shī'ī thought is similar to that of Ibn 'Arabī's Perfect Human. Though terminologies adopted may differ, the description of what both beliefs entail, remarkably resemble one another. Whereas Shī'ism uses the language of theology, Ibn 'Arabī is able to apply philosophical and mystical vocabulary in distinguishing his ideas from mainstream theological language. For Ibn 'Arabī, the Perfect Human represents not just a socio-political leader among Muslims, or a central figure in administrating laws and governance, but is the most perfect manifestation of God in creation, chosen to guide the initiated on a path to divine union. The importance of the Perfect Human is as described in the *Fuṣūṣ*, "[…] like the pupil in relation to the eye, through which vision occurs […] through him the Real looks upon creation and shows mercy upon them".[761] There is nothing similar to the Perfect Human in Sunnī theology, with the position of the *caliph* being one of jurisprudential necessity, as opposed to a necessary belief found in Shī'ī dogma when discussing the position of the Imām.[762] A caption from the famous supplication *Jāmi'ah kabīrah*, recommended for a devotee to recite upon entering the shrine of an Imām, reads:

> Peace be on you O Household of prophecy (*ahl al-bayt al-nabūwwah*), and location of the Divine message (*risālah*) – frequently visited by the angels – destination of Divine revelation – depth of mercy – treasures of knowledge – absolute degree of forbearance – origins of generosity – leaders of all nations […] pillars of the upright (servant) – maintainers of the slaves (of God) – doors of true faith – trustees of the Most Compassionate (God) – descendants of the Prophets […] the inheritors of the Prophets – the prefect example – the most excellent callers (to faith) – the proof of God on the inhabitants of the world […] the centre of God's

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[761] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, trans. C.K. Dagli, 6.
[762] Both Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and al-Ghazālī in their mystical treatises have discussed the position of the *walī* (saint) in light of the *Imago Dei* motif, with the place of the *walī* in the universe, in what can be described as the microcosm-macrocosm motif. This is where the *walī* becomes the microcosm in relation to the macrocosm which is the universe. Such concepts are not reflected in Sunnī theological manuals. Furthermore these ideas were initially expounded upon in detail by the Ikhwān and can be found in Shī'ī tradition on the centrality and cosmic role of the Imām.

blessings – the source of God's wisdom (on earth) – the keepers of God's secret – the bearers of God's Book (Qur'ān) […][763]

The unique ontological position of the Imām becomes apparent in these few verses. Similar language can be found in another famous devotional supplication referred to as '*Āl Yāsīn*' (Family of Muḥammad),[764] recited specifically in remembrance of the Mahdī, but can also be recited more generally for other Imāms. The Imāms are described with such titles as 'caller of God' (*dāʿī Allāh*), 'door of God' (*bāb Allāh*), 'God's Vicegerent and helper of His Truth' (*khalīfat Allāh wa nāṣir ḥaqqih*), and 'God's proof and evidence of His Divine Will' (*ḥujjat Allāh wa dalīl irādatihi*). Whilst unheard of in mainstream Sunnī theological manuals, it bears a striking resemblance to language used by Ibn ʿArabī in the *twenty-ninth* chapter of *al-Futūḥāt*, whilst describing the Perfect Human and the chosen from among the *ahl al-bayt*. Pertinent to note is that in Ibn Arabī's own devotional literature, he describes both Muḥammad and the Mahdī in similar language. The style used by Ibn ʿArabī in his description is very unique and only found in Shīʿī devotional literature up to this point in history. Phrases such as 'the most perfect of beings and the masters of your [God] earth and your [God] heavens' (*akmal al-mukhlūqāt wa Sayyid ahl arḍika wa samawātik*), 'the greatest light' (*al-nūr al-aʿẓam*) and 'proof of God' (*ḥujjat Allāh*)[765] for Muḥammad and the Imām of the Time are reminiscent of the mystical language in Shīʿī devotional literature. Ibn ʿArabī further describes Muḥammad and the Mahdī as a place of unity for God's antithetical names and qualities, symbolizing the Prophet and his Vicegerent as the most perfect divine manifestation.

In Shīʿī theology there is greater emphasis on the Imām's knowledge and mystical reality, as opposed to mere political and administrative responsibilities. He is the absolute medium between God and creation and so too is The Perfect Human. Can it be said that Ibn ʿArabī borrowed or integrated pre-existing ideas on Imāmat into his doctrine of the Perfect Human? What is certain is that he was not the first to introduce the concept. As previously discussed,

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[763] Al-Ṣadūq, Ma*n Lā Yahḍuruhū al-Faqīh*, (n.d., n.p.), II, 370.
[764] *Yāsīn* is a title bestowed on Muḥammad, finding its roots in a chapter of the Qur'ān entitled *Yāsīn*.
[765] Gümüşhānevī. A, *Majmūʿat aḥzāb*, Lithograph, III, 91-92.

the concept itself grew from platonic interpretations of the *philosopher-king* as presented by al-Fārābī, which was then later developed by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*. The commonality here is that both al-Fārābī and the *Ikhwān* are identified as Shīʿī. Coupled with preexisting Shīʿī literature on the mystical dimensions of the Imām, it is fair to infer that there was whether knowingly or unknowingly, cross-pollination of ideas, unless it is concluded that Ibn ʿArabī's unique understanding of the Perfect Human and its central postion in creation was through divine inspiration alone. Knowledge as a result of divine inspiration (*ilhām*) would not be a foreign method of cognition for Ibn ʿArabī, as throughout his works, he alludes to such knowledge as a unique tool given by God to the *walī*. That said, four important observations come to light – The first is Ibn ʿArabī's unreserved belief in the supremacy of Muḥammad, ʿAlī and *ahl al-bayt*; the second is his belief in the primordial existence of ʿAlī, and his superiority over all others after Muḥammad; the third observation is his understanding of a living Mahdī, a belief foreign up to this point in Sunnī orthodoxy; and the fourth is Ibn ʿArabī's belief in members of the *ahl al-bayt* being 'the infallible, the protected' (*al-maʿṣūmīn al-maḥfūẓīn*).[766] Whereas the first two observations are found quite wide spread among contemporary Ṣūfī orders, the third observation is less common, with the fourth and final observation still not being accepted as a Sunnī doctrine. The concept of infallibility of other than Prophets is a wholly Shīʿī phenomenon that does not appear before Ibn ʿArabī in non-Shīʿī thought and has not been integrated into mainstream Sunnī orthodoxy or Sufism post-Ibn ʿArabī.

Undoubtably there are more than just parallels between Ibn ʿArabī's Perfect Human and Imāmology. In as much as Imāmat plays a central role in Shīʿism, so too does the Perfect Human as the axis of Ibn ʿArabī's mystical philosophy. The Perfect Human is also a complete *walī* and therefore is the possessor of *wilāyah*. Takeshita in describing the *walī* remarks:

> In this respect, theory of sainthood in Tirmidhī and Ibn ʿArabī has much in common with the theory of the Imāmat in Shīʿism. According to the latter, the Prophet is given both he outward (*Ẓāhir*) knowledge, that is, the Qurʾān and the Law, and the inward (*bāṭin*) knowledge, that is, the interpretation (taʾwīl) of the Law. Although the revelation of the outward knowledge came

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[766] *al-Futūḥāt* (Osman Yahia), 3:227-239.

to an end with Muḥammad, the inward knowledge which is indispensable for the correct understanding of the Law is continuously revealed by God to the Imāms. The knowledge which the Imāms possess is infallible. Thus both the doctrine of sainthood in Ibn 'Arabī and Tirmidhī and the doctrine of Imāmat in Shī'ism emphasize the continuous divine revelation after Muḥammad, which teaches the inner meanings of the Law, Without denying the superiority and uniqueness of Muḥammad and the finality of his Law.[767]

Takeshita's observations do raise further questions as to potential influences Shī'ī doctrine may have had on early Ṣūfī thought and its doctrinal evolution, such as on the concept of *wilāyah*, the *walī*, the Perfect Human and the position of the *ahl al-bayt*. In terms of a timeline, Shī'ī devotional literature can be found predating Ṣūfī discourse on these themes. Important as it may be, such topics are beyond the scope of this thesis, however, it would be of interest if critical works were to be produced on Shī'ī influences on early Ṣūfī thought, in particular to the above-mentioned themes. That said, indeed it would be wrong to conclude that Ibn 'Arabī was typically Shī'ī in his belief system, but at the same time it is hard to conclude that he was Sunnī as conventionally understood. Where he upheld the preeminent nature of the Prophet, 'Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*, he has also in a number of his works, wrote in praise of the both Abū Bakr and 'Umar, such as in *al-Futūḥāt* and *Shajarat al-kawn*. However, it would be simplistic to assume that the mere praising of Abū Bakr and 'Umar is an indicator for one being non-Shī'ī. As has previously been mentioned, in the first few centuries of Islām, the definition of Shī'a encompassed a wider meaning, from loving 'Alī, believing in his qualities, to upholding his right to leadership or merely supporting him. Central to Shī'ism was the role of 'Alī as Imām, appointed by God and successor to Muḥammad. Ibn 'Arabī does not shy away from presenting 'Alī as spiritually superior after Muḥammad. What he does not mention explicitly however, is 'Alī's political and worldly succession. Suffice it to say, from our section on Ibn 'Arabī, he not only wrote on the superiority of 'Alī, his primordial light unified with Muḥammad's, but also mentioned twelve Imāms, and a living Mahdī, who is

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[767]Takeshita. M, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of The Perfect Man and Its Place in The History of Islamic Thought*, University of Chicago, (1986), pp.168-169.

protected from sin and infallible.[768] These are the very tenets Shīʿism would consider as authentically Shīʿī. If it was the case that Ibn ʿArabī was Shīʿī in belief, a serious question arises in that why have an abundance of Shīʿī authorities accused Ibn ʿArabī of deviancy? Among both Sunnī and Shīʿī thinkers can be found groups of jurists who have not hesitated in admonishing Ibn ʿArabī. In the book 'The Reality of Ibn ʿArabī', compiled by Ali Hasan Khan, sixty-four books written by Sunnī scholars are listed denouncing Ibn ʿArabī as either a disbeliever, misguided or a heretic. Furthermore, Khan quotes the edicts of two hundred Sunnī scholars to support this claim.[769] Similarly the late Shīʿī Lebanese historian and authority, Sayyid Jaʿfar Murtaḍā ʿĀmūlī (d. 2019) wrote a book entitled 'Ibn ʿArabī Laysa B-Shīʿī',[770] in which he condemns Ibn ʿArabī as aggressively hostile towards Shīʿism. From among contemporary western scholars, Claude Addas too has an interesting analysis on Ibn ʿArabī's lack of affinity to Shīʿism. Whilst writing that Ibn ʿArabī's patron and protector in Damascus was Muḥyī al-Dīn B. Zakī (d. 1270/ 668 AH), she states: "[…] Ibn Zakī was also suspected of being a sympathizer with the Shīʿites. Several authors, on the basis of two verses he once wrote, assert that 'he preferred ʿAlī to ʿUthmān […]".[771] Addas then continues to add: "There is obviously a considerable temptation here to postulate a compromising link for Ibn ʿArabī between Muḥyī al-Dīn B. Zakī's 'pro- Shīʿism' and the friendship that existed between the two men".[772] In this quote, Addas is in fact refuting the statements of the authoritative Sunni historian Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373/ 774 AH) made in Bidāyah of Ibn ʿArabī harboring pro-Shīʿī sentiments.[773] She finally concludes by remarking: "[…] Ibn ʿArabī's own writings, which are the most dependable source of evidence for the matter, refute any suggestions of Shīʿite tendencies on his part".[774] Interesting as her conclusion may be, it is simply untrue to infer that Ibn ʿArabī did not have Shīʿī tendencies, as a great number of passages in this thesis have been cited to indicate otherwise. Whilst also commenting on Addas, Ahmad makes an important

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[768]In addition to the above-mentioned points are a series of arguments presented by figures such as Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Tustarī, drawn from specific passages in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī which propose him as what can only be described as a 'crypto- Shīʿī'.

[769] Khan. A. K, The Reality of Ibn ʿArabi, Umm-ul Qara Publications, (Gujranwala, 2020).

[770] Loosely translated as 'Ibn ʿArabī is not Shīʿī'.

[771] Addas. C, Quest For The Red Sulphur, The Islamic Text Society, (Cambridge, 1993), 255.

[772] Ibid. 255.

[773] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah, XIII, 258, c.f. Addas. C, Quest For The Red Sulphur, 255.

[774] Addas. C, Quest For The Red Sulphur, 255.

observation: "Had she used the word 'allegiance' in place of 'tendencies', I might have agreed with her, but to simply state that there are no passages which are suggestive of Shī'ah tendency is not true […]".[775]

A question that naturally arises from this discussion is why have some Sunnī and Shī'ī deemed Ibn 'Arabī to be anti-Shī'ī, or worse still *nāṣibī*, such as Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī (d. 1902/ 1320 AH), also referred to as Muḥaddith Nūrī.[776] The answer mainly lies in two accounts of the same incident found in the works of Ibn 'Arabī. The first account is in *al-Futūḥāt*, describing an encounter with a man from among the *Rajabiyyūn*,[777] who through his spiritual insight was able to identify the true condition of the *rawāfiḍ* as pigs. The term *rawāfiḍ* has been taken in this context to imply the Shī'a. The second account, supposedly of the same incident is found in *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, in which a slightly different narrative is given and this time the *rawāfiḍ* are seen as dogs.[778] In both cases, the *rawāfiḍ* are witnessed in the form of an animal. Pertinent to note however is that as each animal is symbolic of a particular spiritual meaning, details of whether the animal was a dog or pig becomes important. Whilst mentioning the first account, Ahmad raises a doubt on the story by adding: "[…] it is more than a little odd that Ibn al-'Arabī's patron in Damascus with whom he also shares a common *kunyah* […] was – […] 'suspected of being a sympathizer with the Shī'ahs'".[779] If this story is to be true, it makes little sense that Ibn 'Arabī shared a close relationship with a man whose spiritual reality was either a pig or a dog, depending on which account one takes. The counter-argument can be that it was not Ibn 'Arabī who through his own spiritual vision experienced these forms, but that it was a third person. As has come to be understood through the works of Ibn 'Arabī, there is a deeper emphasis on personal experience and unveiling.

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[775] *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, edited by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi, f.n. 65, 63-64.
[776] Compiler of the famous Shī'ī collection on traditions concerning jurisprudential rulings, *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*.
[777] A group numbering forty mystics, who engaged in special spiritual practices in the Islamic month of Rajab.
[778] Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, 492.
[779] *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, edited by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi, f.n. 65, 63-64.

Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tihrānī in refuting Nūrī, interprets the term *rawāfiḍ* not for the Shīʿa, but in fact for the *Khārijites*. For this he brings three arguments worth exploring. In the first argument he points out that in the books of biography (*Rijāl*), the term *rawāfiḍ* has also been used for the *Khārijites* and therefore it would not have been uncommon to have used the term as such. Tihrānī is also quick to remark that no further explanation of who the *rawāfiḍ* were or what their beliefs were to make them look like a dog is given and therefore the account remains ambiguous. The second point he raises is that as there had been no Shīʿa in Andalusia, but there were accounts of the *Khārijites* in both Andalusia and North Africa, therefore it is not improbable that the vision may have represented the *Khārijites*. His final argument is that if this passage is to be contextualized, taking into consideration the immediate writings of Ibn ʿArabī before this passage, where he praises the *ahl al-bayt*, it becomes hard to identify the *rawāfiḍ* with the Shīʿa.[780] All three arguments do not appear strong, as though there may not have been Shīʿas in Andalusia, the Shīʿī denomination of Islām was still well known. Furthermore, praise of the *ahl al-bayt* does not necessarily equate to support of the *rawāfiḍ*. A better understanding of who the *rawāfiḍ* were may be important to fully appreciate why love of the *ahl al-bayt* does not necessarily result to support of the *rawāfiḍ*.

The first systemic study of creeds and sects in Islām is *Kitāb al-milal wa al-niḥal* written by al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153), which to a greater extent is non-polemical. Of the three times he mentions the *rawāfiḍ*, he does not mention them explicitly as Shīʿa and refrains from listing them in the chapter of the Shīʿa and its various denominations.[781] Though the *rawāfiḍ* have a similar belief to the Twelvers, he describes the *rawāfiḍ* as those who disparage the first two caliphs, a description he does not add in his section on Shīʿism.[782] As has previously been mentioned, in the first two centuries of Islām, there developed four groups of Muslims who were commonly referred to as Shīʿī; *tafḍīlī*, *tarbīyʿī*, *muḥabatī* and *imāmī*. The first three types of Shīʿī held both Abū Bakr and ʿUmar in high esteem. The final group, who were theological Shīʿī, though not accepting the caliphate of the first two caliphs, have not been recorded

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[780] Ṭihrānī. S.M.H, *Liberated Soul*, 491-494.

[781] Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa al-niḥal*, (n.d., n.p.), 16, 51, 70.
[782] *Ibid.* 51.

historically as disparaging them either. Therefore an understanding of how the *rawāfiḍ* developed is important if a clearer picture of Shī'ism leading up to the time of Ibn 'Arabī is to be had. The term *rāfiḍa* seems to have developed as a result of the uprising of Zayd b. 'Alī. Effectively those who opposed Zayd's call for armed resistance from among the Shī'ī, came to be known as *rāfiḍa*. Etan Kohlberg explains their formation in the following words:

> It is said that before their desertion (*rafḍ*), they demanded unsuccessfully that Zayd publicly dissociate himself from Abū Bakr and 'Umar and pronounce them sinful usurpers. When, in subsequent generations, after having gone through several changes of meaning, the term "*Rāfiḍa*" became a popular pejorative appellation of the Imāmiyya, it was intended to recall two major sins: for the Zaydiyya, the sin of rejecting Zayd, and for the Sunnis, that of rejecting the first two caliphs".[783]

In taking Kohlberg's description of *rawāfiḍ* into consideration, the inception of the term was effectively used for a small group of Shī'a and for this reason it may be inferred that whilst al-Shahrastānī does mention the *rawāfiḍ*, he refrains from including them in the bulk of his discussion pertaining to the Shī'a and its various sub-sects. Shahrastānī's authoritative work on creeds and sects was written only a generation before Ibn 'Arabī and has been recognized as the main reference point for the study of creeds and sects for subsequent generations. Even if the story of the man from the *Rajabiyyūn* is accurate, this certainly is no indicator of Ibn 'Arabī's feelings towards Shī'ism. There is of course a chance that this story was an addition as there are two differing narratives to the same story, supposedly written by the same author. To summarize Yahia's observations as previously mentioned, that in places of *al-Futūḥāt*, there does appear to be omissions and additions.

So was Ibn 'Arabī Shī'a? There is little doubt that there are striking similarities between the theological position of the Imām and Ibn 'Arabī's Perfect Human. More so, the position of Muḥammad, 'Alī and his superiority after Muḥammad, the *ahl al-bayt*, twelve Imāms, a living Mahdī, infallibility and his general understanding of the centrality of the spiritual guide holds

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[783] Kohlberg. E, *In Praise of the Few, Studies in Shi'i Thought and History*, Brill, (Boston, 2020), 160.

a unique resemblance with Shī'ism. Ibn 'Arabī would certainly have been cognizant of how influential members of the Sunnī orthodoxy would have perceived the practice of Sufism and how his ideas may be presented. Books such as *Talbīs iblīs* by Ibn al-Jawzī are a reminder of the hostility to Sufism in general, let alone ideas presented by Ibn 'Arabī, which were effectively a radical reinterpretation in many ways of Ṣūfī philosophy. For many Shī'ī thinkers such as Tihrānī, this is a sufficient indicator that Ibn 'Arabī was Shī'ī. Theologically too, there would be little to say otherwise, especially taking into consideration how the term Shī'ī was understood in the first two centuries of Islām. However, to conclude such would be wholly simplistic. What is certain is that Ibn 'Arabī does not completely fit into parameters of orthodoxy, be it Shī'ī or Sunnī. From his biographies, it is very clear that he was a free-thinker, unrestricted by the confines of theological schools and parameters. His purpose, as is evident from his writings was to comprehend the truth, which meant that at times his ideas were unpalatable for both groups from among Shī'ī and Sunnī thinkers. Ahmad wonderfully sums up the discussion on theological allegiances by concluding:

> To try and reduce Ibn al-'Arabī to the level of a mere polemical binary of Sunnī versus Shī'ī is completely mistaken. Corbin summed up the situation quite well in reference to Avicenna's supposed formal allegiance to one or the other *madhhab*: "To wish at all costs to consign a great man's description to a file card, so as to pigeonhole him under common and expected norms, is perhaps to yield to the taste for classification; it is certainly inadequate to a personal destiny".[784]

As was the nature of early mystical literature, the style Ibn 'Arabī uses is in *ishāra* form, which unsurprisingly worked to appeal to a broad constituent, be they Shī'ī or Sunnī. The purpose of Ibn 'Arabī writing was to unveil truths, and as these truths by their very nature were universal, it should not come as a surprise if overlaps across differing faith schools are found. It is thus difficult to compartmentalize Ibn 'Arabī to a particular faith system. It may also help to explain why Ibn 'Arabī is as enthusiastically read in Western academic circles, as he is in the East. For a Shī'ī thinker, however, it is the essential truths of *wilāyah* and its

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[784] *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, edited by Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi, 63-64.

relationship between God, the Imām and creation that resonates when reading Ibn ‘Arabī. This potentially was why groups of influential Shī‘ī scholars over the span of history have been enthralled with the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī. What is certain, nevertheless is that a host of Shī‘ī thinkers post-Ibn ‘Arabī were able to integrate his style of language and terminology within their own theological discussions, such as the term *insān kamīl*, which has become synonymous for the Imām in contemporary theological texts. Ibn ‘Arabī remains as important in Shī‘ī mystical circles, as he is in Sunnī ones. Suffice it to say, debate surrounding the life and works of Ibn ‘Arabī will continue both in the Islamic world and in the West.

The study of Ibn ‘Arabī in Western academia has created much interest in the last fifty years, however with the death of influential thinkers such as Corbin, Izutsu and Yahia, research into the life and works of Ibn ‘Arabī has for the best part of the last three decades slowly become repetitive and in part dogmatic, with interpretation and analysis being presented in line with a distinct narrative, especially among Francophone Perennialist intellectuals. This is not only the case when discussing Shī‘ī influences, but is also evident across a wider variety of niche discourses pertaining to Ibn ‘Arabī, and can be observed more broadly in writings on Sufism and Islamic spirituality as identified by critics such as Mark Sedgwick. What is meant here is that there is a visible influence from scholars on Ibn ‘Arabī affliated or influenced by the Perennial – Traditionalist School[785] who whether knowingly or unknowingly tend to follow a unique pattern of discourse, or what can be described as a distinct methododology around which discussions appear to be framed. It is by no means the only methodology or interpretation, but has been a dominant one across Western study of Islamic spirituality in the last thirty years or so. This may not necessary be negative in and of itself, but if this perspective continues to remain the default interpretation on niche topics, such as Ibn ‘Arabī

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[785] Though the term 'traditionalism' came into prominence in Western intellectual circles in the nineteenth century, through contributions of philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (d. 1882), who also appear as one of the pillars of the transcendental movement, the Traditionalist or Perennial School as it has come to be known, is a twentieth century school, principally concerned with safeguarding traditional wisdom and practice believed to have been lost, particularly in Western society. The term 'Perennialism' is also not a new one, as the idea of a perennial philosophy or wisdom developed by René Guénon (d. 1951) can be found in the teachings of Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494). According to Mark Sedwick, the term *philosophia perennis* (Perennial Philosophy) as used by Guénon was first coined in 1540 by a Catholic scholar, Agostino Steuco (d.1548), in his book *De perenni philosophia* when describing Ficino's central insights, Sedwick. M, *Against the Modern World*, Oxford University Press, (New York, 2004), 23.

in relation to Shī'ism or even pluralism, initiation, and Islamic law, then undoubtedly there will be a lack the growth in relation to these topics. In the main hypothesis of his doctoral thesis, Philipp Valentini states; "*French Sufi Perennialists presented the teachings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī in a way that fit their modern theopolitical views on the authority they ascribe to the Islamic tradition*".[786] Two key figures of the French intellectual tradition on Ibn 'Arabī were René Guénon and his main successor in the French tradition, Michel Valsan. As Valentini writes, "Guénon's acceptance by the French Muslim community could not have been successful without that support given to his teachings by the rector of al-Azhar, 'Abd al-Halīm Mahmūd".[787] He continues by remarking; "When Michel Valsan met 'Abd al-Halīm Mahmūd, the latter confirmed Valsan's Islamic Orthodoxy. This was crucial for Valsan and his followers in the sense that it enabled them to become spokesmen of Islam in France".[788] Perhaps adding to a lack of knowledge of Shī'ī scholarship on Ibn 'Arabī in general, a new found legitimacy gained by French Perrenialism from the oldest Sunnī theological establishment in the world would have also been a motivation to keep positive discussions on Shī'ism and Shī'ī influences on Ibn 'Arabī at arm's length, especially in light of rising sectarianism whuch developed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, just as important to note is that both Guénon and Valsan would have acquired their initial teachings on Ibn 'Arabī from North African Ṣūfī Masters, and in particular sub-branches of the Shādhiliyah order, such as the Darqawiyah. This understanding became foundational in not just French Perrenialism, but more broadly across the School, as can be witnessed in the works of Perrenialist scholars on Sufism and in particular Ibn 'Arabī.

There are of course current exceptions to this particular narrative in the Western English-speaking world, such as Ahmad, Ali, Morrissey and Morris, who are good at presenting a much-needed broader perspective. In fact, academics such as Amir-Moezzi and Morris have even challenged Traditionalist interpretations of both Ibn 'Arabī and Sufism respectively. As a critic of the Traditionalist School, Mark Sedgwick in *Against the Modern World*:

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[786] Valentini. P. (2020), *French Sufi Theopolitics on the Approach of the Akbarian Concepts of God's Unity, Law and Perfect Man by French Modern Perennialists*, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), l'Université de Fribourg, Suisse, pp.10 -11.
[787] *Ibid.* 18.
[788] *Ibid.* 21-22.

Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual, though not touching the topic of Ibn 'Arabī does give a general observation about the Perennial – Traditionalist School by remarking:

> […] Traditionalist interpretations are never presented as such, but rather are given as the simple truth. There need be no dishonesty in this practice: we all present things in the way we see them, without feeling obliged to explain precisely how we have come to see them in that way. Readers who are sufficiently interested will, however, find the occasional reference to "hard" Traditionalist works, which some pursue.
> In the late 1980s Nasr edited two volumes entitled *Islamic Spirituality* in the excellent Crossroad series on world spiritualities. Almost every contributor to these two volumes is a Maryami.[789][790]

Sedgwick adds: "What most readers will be unable to distinguish between is Sufi spirituality and Maryami, or Traditionalist, spirituality. To a specialist in Sufism who is familiar with Traditionalism, almost every essay contains interpretations that are clearly Traditionalist but are never signaled as such. Many of these interpretations are open to dispute, to say the least. To the nonspecialist reader, however, neither the origin nor the questionable nature of the interpretations".[791]

He then goes on to give a number of examples, in particular quoting Morris: "One rarely encounters academic specialists in the spiritual dimensions of religious studies who have not in fact read several of the works of Schuon," adding "this wide-ranging influence is rarely mentioned publicly" because of "the peculiar processes of academic 'canonization.'"[792] Sedgwick further alludes to a complete disconnect between the Traditionalist School and Iran post – 1979.[793] This coupled with a dismissal and lack of acknowledgement in regards to Shī'ī

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[789] The Maryamiyah order was founded by Frithjof Schoun (d. 1998) as what can be described as an evolution of the 'Alawiyah Shādhiliyah order, which took its teachings from Aḥmad al-'Alawī (d. 1934). Schoun would later rename the order as 'Maryamiyah' in the 1960s. Following the death of Guénon, Schoun not only became the unreserved spiritual master of a Ṣūfī order tailored to the Perennial School, but also took on the mantle of father of Traditionalism.

[790] Sedgwick. M, *Against the Modern World*, 169.

[791] *Ibid.* 169

[792] *Ibid.* 160-170.

[793] *Ibid.* 153-159.

contributions to the study of Ibn ʿArabī as previously mentioned by authors such as Addas and Chodkiewicz, is potentially restricting to the overall study of Ibn ʿArabī in the long run.[794] The topic of Shīʿī contributions or influences to the study of Ibn ʿArabī has remained relatively unexplored post-Corbin, with very few paragraphs touching on potential Shīʿī contributions or influences and almost always being dismissive by perennialist or those influenced by the Traditionalist School. Indeed the influence of the Traditionalist School on the study of Ibn ʿArabī is a serious topic beyond the scope of this thesis, but is an important one nonetheless, which may help in reshaping how Ibn ʿArabī is perceived in Western Academia. Pertinent will be the need to reread Ibn ʿArabī in parallel with existing Traditionalist interpretations. This can be observed in the recent publications of Ahmad and Morrissey, who have presented serious contributions in the last half a decade to the study of Ibn ʿArabī.[795] The very teachings of Ibn ʿArabī have indicated a need to think beyond traditional parameters. He in his lifetime was seldom caged by dogma in his pursuit for the Truth. Similarly, it will be necessary that there continue different perspectives on his life and works if one is to really comprehend the voluminous contributions presented by Ibn ʿArabī to those in search of the Truth. It is hardly surprising therefore that Ibn ʿArabī has come to be known as the Greatest Master. In his concluding remarks on Ibn ʿArabī in *Wisdom and Mysticism*, Mukhtar Ali wonderfully sums up Ibn ʿArabī as:

> He produced a comprehensive and enduring system of mystical thought, the likes of which has not been
> supplanted or refuted. At the same time, he reached unfathomable heights of personal spiritual
> attainment to which Sufi masters throughout the ages have attested. If circulation, translation, and
> production are key components of world literature, then Ibn al-ʿArabī's works have spanned across the

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[794] As previously mentioned, Michel Chodkiewicz was a spiritual disciple of Michel Valsan, who in turn was a follower of Guénon. Though there is debate as to whether Valsan distanced himself from the Traditionalist School a year before Guénon's death, his initial understanding of Ibn ʿArabī can be traced to a particular understanding of
Ibn ʿArabī found in Ṣūfī teachings, prevalent in North Africa and in particular among certain branches of the Shādhiliyah order, in particular the Darqawiyah. This is almost always the case for most adherents of the Traditionalist School of thought, with exception to Nasr and Chittick due to their wider relationships, in particular, with Iranian spiritual masters.
[795] Refer to Ahmad's article entitled Imamate by any other name would smell as sweet': Ibn al-ʿArabi's Doctrine of the Perfect Man*, in *Philosophy and The Intellectual Life in Shīʿah Islam*, Morris's *The Reflective Heart* and Morrissey's *Sufism and the Perfect Human*.

globe, been translated into numerous languages, and informed virtually any discussion of spirituality and mysticism. The sheer quantity and quality of scholarship surrounding his works is a testament to his greatness in the traditon of Sufism, for he has been regarded by most as a saint of the highest order.[796]

In addition to Ali's fitting summary, Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, coupled with his personal journey of realization and actualization, is not exclusively for Ṣūfīs, rather it is a pathway that can be appreciated by readers beyond the four walls of Sufism.

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[796] Ali. M. H, Ibn al-'Arabī, the Greatest Master, *Wisdom and Mysticism*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, (n.l., 2019), 10.

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