

TEN MISSIVES CONCERNING THE OCCULTATION

*An English translation of **Shaykh al-Mufid's al-Fusul al-'Asharah fi'l-Ghaybah**, from the First Edition edited by Shaykh Faris al-Hasun and published in Qum, Iran, in the year 1413, A.H., by the 1000th Anniversary International Congress for Sheikh Mofeed.*



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Foreword of the Editor, Shaykh Faris al-Hasun

All praise is due to Allah Who has obligated upon Himself mercy, and due to His Mercy sent forth the Messengers, Prophets and Imams (عليهم السلام). And may prayers and peace be upon His Servant and Messenger, Muhammad, and upon his infallible progeny.

Indeed, thoughts of the reappearance of the saviour of humanity have accumulated in the last age, the first indication and acclamation of which is from Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) - wherein all of His Prophets, from our father, Adam (عليه السلام), to our Prophet, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), conveyed the glad tidings of his reappearance and his government, may Allah expedite his relief.

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We have here a research and a delving into the books of narrations and history, clearly testifying that the totality of the Prophets and Messengers from Adam (عليه السلام) to our Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), and the totality of the Imams from Imam 'Ali (عليه السلام) to Imam al-'Askari (عليه السلام), have mentioned the Mahdi and indicated his name and some of his qualities and his reappearance.

And we do not exaggerate in our saying that many of the narrations reported by the two sects concerning the Mahdi (عجل الله فرجه) are from the Imams (صلوات الله عليهم).

1. Why We are Interested in the Mahdi (عليه السلام)

So why all this interest in the promised Mahdi? And why this surety concerning him? As for the answer, we note a number of points;

- I. All of this interest is so that the totality of Allah's creations recognise Imam al-Mahdi, and that he is the Master of Divine Judgement,² and his is the Rightful Government of whose existence Allah has promised His servants, so that he who did not

¹ 'May Allah expedite his relief' is the approximate English translation of the Arabic phrase عجل الله فرجه, which we will use henceforth.

² That is, the Imam is the foremost recipient of Allah's commands in the present age, which are binding upon him and he is the one who maintains and executes these commands to the benefit of those of Allah's creation who recognise his authority.

previously know the Imam believes in him in his heart and calls for his relief, and he who knows the Imam obeys him.

- II. All of this is for those who are aware of his occultation, lest they deviate and err, lest they entertain doubts about their Imam, his existence and his reappearance, for many of them have concentrated their beliefs on their Imam, and they count themselves among those waiting for his reappearance, and they may posit that there are contradictions in the meaning of his reappearance.³
- III. All this is for the sake of the recognition of those who are aware of his occultation of the importance for rising to help him establish his government - عجل الله فرجه - for which glad tidings have been conveyed by the Prophets, the speakers of truth and the Imams (عليهم السلام) who wished that they could realise it.
- IV. All of this is so that the believer may be reassured of the inevitability of *the return* in this life before the next,⁴ and take back the rights of the oppressed from the oppressor, and punish the criminals and make them taste the punishment of this life before the next, by which they bless the doers of good, those who fear Allah in this life before the next.
- V. All this is so that Allah's creation may recognise His righteous *awliya* - those who tolerated various kinds of oppression and torment - so they will rule the Earth justly, because they are the inheritors as in Allah's Saying; {indeed, the land is inherited by My righteous servants}.⁵

³ Shaykh Faris al-Hasun uses the word ليرفعوا in the original Arabic text, which literally means "for they [may] raise" but since there are no real contradictions concerning the matter of the Imam's reappearance, the word posit is more appropriate.

⁴ The return of certain individuals in this life, from both the best of people [preceded by those of them who are infallible individuals with divine authority] and the absolute worst [i.e., their enemies] is one of the necessary doctrines of the Imami sect. For a survey of the reliable narrations on this doctrine, refer to vol. 53 of 'Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar*, specifically the "Bab al-Raj'ah" [Chapter on the Return] from page 39 of the Third Edition, published in Beirut, Lebanon in the year 1403 A.H. by Darahaya al-Turath al-'Arabi.

⁵ Al-Hasun quotes Surah al-Anbiya, verse 105, as {إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ}, although in the original verse, Allah (جل جلاله) says {أَنَّ}. As for the word *awliya* [Arabic: أولياء], stemming from the Arabic root و-ل-ي, from which the words *wali* [ولي] and *wilayah* [ولاية] are also derived, it has multiple meanings. It can generally be trusted to convey friendship [الولاية الصداقة] and love [الولاية المودة], but in this context it also means that these *awliya* are in a covenant with Allah عز وجل by

- VI. All this is so that the people recognise the importance of the matter of the Mahdi and his government, and that they do not become impediments for him and his Shi'a during his occultation, so the people will be saddened due to them and call for their relief, so they would have been sharing in what befalls the Mahdi and his Shi'a of difficulties and pains, and also sharing with them in being compensated and rewarded.
- VII. Last but not least, all of this is so that Allah's creation recognise the entirety of the matter; that for the true government, the Speech of Allah must be raised therein, and the Speech of Allah is supreme.

2. Those Who Wrote About the Mahdi in the Last Fourth Century, A.H.

As we have mentioned previously; that Allah and then His Prophets altogether are those who have mentioned the Mahdi and opened the doors of investigation concerning him and his reappearance.

And when our Prophet, Muhammad, arose with his message, it was for the promotion of great intellectual discourse concerning the Awaited Saviour, wherein the first took great interest in the issue of the Mahdi and the refutation of objections against him, and the reports we have received from him through the paths of transmission of the two sects⁶ bear good witness to fulfilling this demand.

After him, the task of promoting intellectual discourse about Imam al-Mahdi was taken up by his caliphs, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, by virtue of their covenant with the Prophet, so they took advantage of the opportunities to prove to the Muslims their belief in the Mahdi, and we have transmitted many reports from them on this issue which fulfil this demand.

which their words and deeds are a perfect reflection of their mutual esteem with Him, which none else possess, so in virtue of that perfect match between their words and deeds and their loftiest station in His view, they are those who guide man to his Lord, and in virtue of this exclusive degree of recognition of Allah and of His rights over His creation they never sin, so they are infallible (and those who guide man to his Lord cannot be trusted unless they are absolutely free from disobeying His authoritative commands), so their words and deeds are a binding authority and an {*excellent pattern*} [33:21] which must be followed if one hopes for salvation. Hence, their status as *awliya* includes the *wilayah* of divine authority from Allah [الولاية السلطنة], and that is the sense in which the Shaykh used the word *awliya*, and this is proven by his words which follow; سيحكمون الأرض بالعدل - "so they will *rule* the Earth justly."

⁶ The Shi'a Imamiyyah and the Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah.

And when the time of the birth of the Imam neared, there arose great interest in discussing him and the many reports of his conditions and his characteristics and his occultation, until the two ‘Askari Imams [i.e. ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Hadi and his son al-Hasan al-Zaki al-‘Askari, both of whom resided under house arrest in the ‘Abbasid garrison town of Samarra in modern Iraq] adopted a manner of seclusion and did not interact directly with their companions and abandoned the communications from before, all of this was to habituate the Shi’a with what they would eventually acquire of an Imam in occultation.

And when Imam al-Mahdi was born, it seemed that a new manner of moving and preaching had arisen than the one before his father Imam al-‘Askari, because this stage had already passed from the stage of seeing to that of doing, so it seemed that Imam al-‘Askari took great steps to prove the beliefs of the Shi’a in terms of the *imamah* of his son the awaited Mahdi and refuting objections against that belief, until Imam al-‘Askari presented his son the Mahdi to particular individuals from among his Shi’a from time to time, whence they would speak to him and ask him questions and he would answer them.

After the martyrdom of Imam al-‘Askari, and the submission of the position of *imamah* to the Mahdi, the responsibility for preaching came upon his person through the means of select deputies, so responses to the questions posed by his Shi’a came through the means of these doors to him and missives were issued from his end in responding to the questions and solving the issues of the Shi’a and refuting the objections concerning him.

And the last missive he issued during his minor occultation was to the last of his special deputies, ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Samarri, and his letter is as thus;

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

O’ ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Samarri, may Allah increase your and your brothers’ reward in this task, for indeed you will die within 6 days, so put your affairs in order and do not recommend to anyone to take up your position after your passing, for my second occultation [sic] has begun, so I will not reappear except after Allah gives me permission, and that is after a long time will pass, whence hearts will harden and the earth will be filled with oppression.

And after the occurrence of my major occultation the task of preaching Islam in general and proving the

beliefs of the Shi'a with respect to the *Imamah* of the awaited Mahdi and his occultation and his special appearance falls to the jurists and narrators of reports by virtue of our covenant.

And in the missive of the departed Muhammad b. 'Uthman al-'Amri:

'...As for any incidents which occur, refer them to the narrators of our reports, as they are my authority on you [Shi'a] and I am the authority of Allah on them.'

And in the beginning of the major occultation, the task of consolidating the beliefs of the Shi'a with respect to their Imam will be great and difficult, so do you see the scholars have started refuting the objections against him with their debates, lessons, sermons and the works they have authored?

And here we mention by method of abbreviation some of the thousand scholars according to the subject of their defending Imam al-Mahdi in the last fourth century, A.H.. From among them are;

- I. Abu Is'haq Ibrahim b. Is'haq al-Ahmari al-Nahawandi; Abu Ahmad al-Qasim b. Muhammad al-Hamdani heard from him in 269 A.H.. He wrote a *Kitab al-Ghaybah* [lit; Book about the Occultation].
- II. Abu Is'haq Ibrahim b. Salih al-Anmati al-Kufi al-Asadi; one of the trustworthy companions of Imam al-Kadhim, he wrote a book about the Occultation, Ja'far b. Qulawayh narrated from him through one means of transmission.
- III. Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. 'Abd Allah al-Mihrani al-Aabi; he wrote a book collating the evidences that the opponents of the Imamiyyah are obliged to remove⁷ concerning occultation and the occulted [if they are to deny the Twelfth Imam].
- IV. Abu Bakr Khaythamah Ahmad b. Zahir al-Nasa'i; he died in 279 A.H., he compiled a book on the transmitted reports about the Mahdi.
- V. Al-Hafidh Abu Nu'aym Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah al-Isfahani; he died in 430 A.H., he wrote a book with 40 reports which mention the Mahdi, and with his mention are included his attributes and the reality of his uprising and its proofs, and the virtues of the Mahdi.
- VI. Abu'l-'Abbas [Abu 'Ali] Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Razi al-Khudayb [Ibn al-Khudayb] al-Ayadi; he wrote a book about intercession and unveiling during the occultation.

⁷ From their own books.

- VII. Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Ali b. al-'Abbas b. Nuh al-Sayrafi; he came down from Basrah, he was trustworthy in his narrations, and he would elaborate when he narrated, a shrewd jurist with respect to reports and narrations, and he was the teacher of Shaykh al-Najashi and the shaykh of those who benefitted from him, he died while surpassing the limits of excellence and in 410 A.H., and he compiled a book of reports from the Four Deputies.
- VIII. Abu'l-Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Imran b. Musa, known as Ibn al-Jundi; a teacher of Shaykh al-Najashi, wrote a book on the Occultation.
- IX. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan b. 'Ayyash b. Ibrahim b. Ayyub al-Jawhari; he wrote a book about what has been revealed in the Qur'an concerning Sahib al-Zaman, and reports about the deputies of the Four Imams [i.e. Muhammad al-Jawad, 'Ali al-Hadi, al-Hasan al-'Askari and Imam al-Mahdi].
- X. Al-Hafidh al-Nussabah al-Wa'idh al-Sha'ir al-Ashraf b. al-Aghr b. Hashim, known as Taj al-'Ula al-'Alawi al-Husayni; he was born in Ramlah in 482 A.H., and he died in Halab in 610 A.H. at the age of 128, he wrote a book on the Occultation, the reports that have been transmitted on the authority of the Holy Prophet and the Imams about the Occultation and the obligation of believing in it.
- XI. Al-Jaludi; he died in 332 A.H., and he wrote a book concerning the reports that have been transmitted about the Mahdi.
- XII. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. Hamzah b. 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, known as al-Tabari and al-Mar'ash; he was one of the eminent members of this sect and one of its jurists, he died in 358 A.H., and he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XIII. Abu 'Ali al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Saffar al-Basri, a trustworthy shaykh from among our companions; al-Hasan b. Sama'ah narrated from him, and he wrote a book compiling the evidences for the uprising of the Qa'im.
- XIV. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. Yahya b. al-Hasan b. Ja'far b. 'Abd Allah b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, known as Ibn Akhi Tahir; he died in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, 358 A.H., and he wrote a book about the Occultation

and the mention of the Qa'im.

- XV. Abu'l-Hasan Handhalah b. Zakariya b. Handhalah b. Khalid b. al-Iyyar al-Tamimi al-Qazwini; he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XVI. Abu'l-Hasan Salamah b. Muhammad b. Isma'il [Isma] b. 'Abd Allah b. Musa b. Abi'l-Akram al-Ardhani [al-Azwani]; he died in 339 A.H., and he wrote a book about the Occultation and the relief from confusion thereby.
- XVII. Abu Sa'id 'Abbad b. Ya'qub al-Rawajani al-Asadi al-Kufi; he died in 250 or 271 A.H., he compiled a book of reports about the Mahdi, and called it the *Musnad*.
- XVIII. Abu'l-Fadl 'Abbas b. Hisham al-Nashiri al-Asadi; one of the companions of Imam al-Rida, and he died in 220 A.H.. He wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XIX. Abu'l-'Abbas 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far b. al-Husayn b. Malik al-Himyari al-Qummi; he was trustworthy, and the shaykh of the scholars of Qum and their eminent leader,⁸ he wrote a book about the Occultation and the state of confusion therein, and a compilation of narrations with short chains of transmission tracing back to Sahib al-Amr, and missives.
- XX. Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Madura'i [al-Badura'i]; he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XXI. Abu'l-Qasim 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Musa b. Babuwayh al-Qummi; he died in 329 A.H., and he compiled a book named *al-Imamah wa'l-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah* [Insight amidst Confusion on the Issue of *Imamah*].
- XXII. Abu'l-Qasim 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Musa b. Muhammad b. Musa b. Ibrahim b. Musa b. Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, known as al-Sharif al-Murtadha 'Ilm al-Huda; he was born in Rajab, 355 A.H., and al-Najashi said; he died five days before the end of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in 436 A.H., and he prayed upon him and washed his body with al-Sharif Abu Ya'la. Al-Sharif al-Murtadha wrote a book about the Occultation named *al-Muqni'ah fi'l-Ghaybah*.
- XXIII. Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Aban, known as

⁸ A literal translation here would be "and their face".

Ba'lan al-Razi al-Kulayni; he was the maternal uncle of the trusted scholar of Islam, Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, one of a number of those who narrated from them from Sahl b. Ziyad in *al-Kafi*, and he collated a book of reports about the Qa'im.

- XXIV. 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Salim b. 'Umar b. Rabah b. Qays al-Sawwaq al-Qala; he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XXV. Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. Mahziyar al-Dawraqi al-Ahwazi, his father was a Christian, and he said; "Indeed, 'Ali has also accepted Islam and he is young and yet Allah has granted him recognition of this matter [i.e. *Imamah*]," and he learned and narrated from Imam 'Ali al-Rida and his son Abi Ja'far,⁹ specifically from the latter, and he wrote a book on the Qa'im.
- XXVI. Abu Musa 'Isa b. Mihran al-Musta'tif; he wrote a book about the Mahdi.
- XXVII. Abu Muhammad al-Fadl b. Shadhan b. Jibra'il [al-Khalil] al-Azdi al-Nisaburi; he died in 260 A.H., Imam al-Taqi's son 'Ali found him, he wrote a book proving the Raj'ah, and also compiling narrations about the Raj'ah and about the Qa'im.
- XXVIII. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Ja'far al-Nu'mani, known as Ibn Abi Zaynab al-Katib, he was a pupil of the trusted scholar of Islam, al-Kulayni, and he wrote a book about the Occultation, and this book is known for discussing the futility of estimating the length of the Occultation.
- XXIX. Abu 'Ali Muhammad b. Ahmad b. al-Junayd, al-Najashi said about him; "I heard some of our shaykhs mentioning that he possessed the wealth of Sahib al-Amr and also his sword and that he bequeathed it to his bondswoman," he wrote a book called *Izalah al-Ran min Qulub al-Ikhwān*¹⁰ concerning the Occultation.
- XXX. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah b. Qada'ah b. Safwan b. Mihran b. al-Jammal, , known as al-Safwani; he was al-Nu'mani's partner in the funeral prayer on al-Kulayni, and he wrote a book about the Occultation and the relief from confusion.
- XXXI. Abu'l-'Anbas Muhammad b. Is'haq b. Abi'l-'Anbas al-'Anisi al-Samiri; he wrote a book about Sahib al-Zaman.
- XXXII. Abu'l-Husayn Muhammad b. Bahr al-Rahni al-Sijistani

⁹ That is, Imam Muhammad al-Jawad.

¹⁰ 'Removing Greed from the Hearts of the Brotherhood.'

- [al-Shaybani] al-Mutakallim; he wrote a book about Divine Authority during the delay in the reappearance of the Qa'im.
- XXXIII. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Jumhur al-'Ammi [al-Qummi] al-Basri; he narrated from al-Rida (عليه السلام), and he wrote a book about Sahib al-Zaman (عليه السلام), and a book about the time of the uprising of the Qa'im.
- XXXIV. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Tusi; he recited the funeral prayer on Shaykh al-Mufid, and he wrote a book on the Occultation known as *Kitab al-Ghaybah*.
- XXXV. Muhammad. Zayd b. 'Ali al-Farsi; he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XXXVI. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Abi'l-'Azaqar al-Shalmaghani; he died in 323 A.H., he was one of the foremost of our companions and on the straight path, but he envied Abi'l-Qasim al-Husayn b. Ruh, which made him apostasise from his sect and believe in the doctrines of a refuted sect, and articles purporting false doctrines appeared which were attributed to him, coming with his accursed signature at the end, and he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XXXVII. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Musa b. Babuwayh al-Qummi; he died in 381 A.H., he wrote a book known as *Ikmal al-Din wa Itmam al-Ni'mah*,¹¹ demonstrating his familiarity with the matter of Imam al-Mahdi (عجل الله فرجه), and a First Treatise on the Occultation, as well as a Second and a Third.
- XXXVIII. Abu'l-Fat'h Muhammad b. 'Ali b. 'Uthman al-Karajaki; he died in 449 A.H., he wrote a book proving the validity of the longevity of Sahib al-Zaman's age and a book about the sects in the mention of what reports have been fairly received about the Occultation.
- XXXIX. Abu Bakr Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Baghdadi; a contemporary of Ibn Hammam who died in 332 A.H., and he wrote a book about the Occultation.
- XL. Abu'l-Nadr Muhammad b. Mas'ud b. Muhammad b. 'Ayyash al-Salami al-Samarqandi, known as al-'Ayyashi; he was in the first part of his life a Sunni and he heard many Sunni narrations, then he recognised the truth and turned to us. He wrote a book on the Occultation.

¹¹ This book is usually referred to as *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah*, meaning 'The Perfection of the Religion and the Fullness of Blessing.'

- XLI. Abu'l-Faraj al-Mudhaffar b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn al-Hamdani, from among the ambassadors of the Imami sect; he recited the funeral prayer on al-Mufid and was present in the gatherings wherein the Shaykh and Sayyid al-Murtadha would teach and he would not read to them. He wrote a book about the Occultation.

Here ends the intended meaning of our mention of some of the independently authored books on the theme of Imam al-Mahdi, and we did not mention what is implied in the books of the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Shi'a about Imam al-Mahdi, nor did we mention the books of Waqifi authors who end their discussions at some of the Imams or their offspring. On the same basis we have not mentioned the poets who composed poetry about Imam al-Mahdi, all for the sake of brevity.

3. The Interest of Shaykh al-Mufid in Investigating the Mahdi

Knowledge boomed in the time of Shaykh al-Mufid and reached its peak, and civilisation was then in rapid progress, and in his era Baghdad in particular was full of scholars from every Islamic persuasion.

All of this, yet we see that our shaykh al-Mufid rose from the ranks of all these scholars, and his knowledge and fame prevailed over all of them.

And in his time, the objections against the school of thought of the Ahl al-Bayt worsened one day after the other. So the Shaykh held gatherings for debating, and the scholars of other sects debated in these gatherings and he obliterated them, and they were guided on his hands of absolute forgiveness.

It was the satisfaction of Allah on him that had first inspired in him great interest in *'ilm al-kalam*,¹² whether by tongue or by the pen. And among the themes of speculative theology which gave him great interest was the theme of Imam al-Mahdi and his conditions, his reappearance and the longevity of his age, and so on. So he refuted objections and proved the beliefs of the Shi'a with respect to the Imam of the Time through his independent and inclusive debates, lessons and books.

His Books on the Subject of Imam al-Mahdi:

- I. *Kitab al-Ghaybah*: al-Najashi mentioned it in his *Rijal*, on page 401, and

¹² *'Ilm al-kalam* is the Arabic term for what is known in English as 'speculative theology'.

Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani mentioned it in his *al-Dhari'ah*, in the 16th volume, on page 80, as the *Kitab al-Ghaybah al-Kabir* [i.e. the Greater Book about the Occultation] of al-Mufid.

- II. *Al-Masa'il al-'Asharah fi'l-Ghaybah*: al-Najashi mentioned it on page 399, and this is the book, divided into its requisite chapters, which has been presented to the esteemed reader.
- III. *Mukhtasar fi'l-Ghaybah*: al-Najashi mentioned it on page 399 of his *Rijal*.
- IV. *Al-Naqd 'ala'l-Talhi fi'l-Ghaybah*: al-Najashi mentions it on page 400.
- V. *Jawabat al-Farqiyyin fi'l-Ghaybah*: al-Najashi mentions it on page 400.
- VI. *Al-Jawabat fi Khuruj al-Imam al-Mahdi*: al-Najashi mentions it on page 401, and al-Tihrani mentions it in volume 16 of his *al-Dhari'ah*, page 80, that Shaykh al-Mufid had a book named *Jawabat fi Khuruj al-Mahdi* - and he mentioned that it still exists - as three chapters. And it is apparent that these two are one and the same book. He also mentioned that the three chapters are:
 - a. On One who Dies Without Having Recognised an Imam.
 - b. If the Companions of the Imam Gathered with Him, They Would Number the Same as Those who Were Present at the Battle of Badr.
 - It has reached us that this is *al-Naqd 'ala'l-Talhi*, because it conveys information from the Imam's deputy al-'Amri.
 - c. The Reasons for the Necessity of the Imam's Being in Hiding.
 - The print is from *al-Jawabat* - which was published within a number of al-Mufid's treatises which were published by Maktabah al-Mufid, numbering 4 treatises, as follows:
 - A. Pages 383-388 - An Explanation of the Narration On One who Dies Without Having Recognised an Imam.
 - B. Pages 389-394, the First Treatise - Attendance of a Gathering of the Chief of Chiefs Wherein He Spoke About *Imamah* and Concluded with the Statement About the Occultation.
 - C. Pages 394-398, the First Treatise - The Question of Some of the Opponents who Said: 'What is the Reason for the Necessity of the Hiding of the Imam of the Time in his Occultation Which has Been Prolonged for too long?'
 - D. Pages 399-402, the First Treatise - The Question One

Posed to Shaykh al-Mufid Whence he Said: ‘What is the Evidence for the Existence of the Imam who is the Authority in Occultation, as People have Disputed About his Existence, and This is Apparent?’

- As for its composition, we refer to Agha al-Tihrani’s *al-Dhari’ah*, in volumes 5 - page 195, 20 - pages 388, 390 and 395, and 16 - pages 80-82.

His Books Wherein the Discussion of the Imam is Included:

- I. *Al-Idah fi’l-Imamah*: it remains in a number of fragments in this book - *al-Fusul al-‘Asharah*, which includes excerpts from *al-Idah fi’l-Imamah wa’l-Ghaybah*.
- II. *Al-Irshad fi Ma’rifah Hujjaj Allah ‘ala’l-‘Ibad*: Imam al-Hujjah and his occultation have been mentioned in a particular chapter.
- III. *Al-‘Uyun wa’l-Mahasin*: It discusses the Occultation.
- IV. *Al-Zahir fi’l-Mu’jazat*: it is traced back to an earlier work on the miracles of the Prophets and the Imams, and among them is Imam al-Hujjah al-Muntadhar.

And this is how we have unearthed the discussion of Imam al-Mahdi in the remainder of the books of the author on the subjects of *imamah*, history and creedal beliefs.

4. The Link of Shaykh al-Mufid to the Holy Denouement, Imam al-Mahdi

The occurrence of the Major Occultation cut off the lies of those who claimed to be the special agents of the Imam and the means of access to him, and these particular events have become normal occurrences for the just jurists.

But this does not negate the possibility of seeing the Imam during his Major Occultation, and the honour of assisting him, even with recognition of those who have testified to having seen him. We have eliminated that due to it being the lie of those who have claimed to be the means of access to the Imam and his special agents.

Shaykh al-Mufid has said in this book, *al-Fusul al-‘Asharah*: ‘So after the extinction of whoever named him from among the companions of his father and his companions, the reports which were transmitted and presented on the

authority of the Imams of the family of Muhammad reigned supreme, wherein it was said: “He must be the awaited Qa’im of the two occultations, one of them longer than the other,” so the particular reports of him will be recognised in the palace [of the ‘Abbasids] and the masses will not recognise the longevity of his establishment, except those who have striven to assist him from among his trusted friends, and he has not stopped working through others.’

As for what Shaykh al-Mufid mentioned of the sincere narration wherein regarding the Major Occultation whose longitude has been oft-noted it is possible that whoever recognises reports of the Imam is the one who strives to assist him from among his trusted friends and the Imam has not stopped working through others.

Having recognised this fact, Shaykh al-Tabarsi narrated two correspondences from Shaykh al-Mufid and the responses to them from the Holy Denouement [i.e. Imam al-Mahdi]. He said:

A book has been mentioned and responded to by the Holy Denouement, may Allah preserve and nurture it throughout the remaining days of Safar in the year 410 A.H. upon the shaykh al-Mufid Abi ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu‘man, may Allah sanctify his soul and illuminate his resting place, the mention of his agent who is conveying from the Holy Denouement to the Hejaz the following letter:

‘To the good brother and rightly guided adherent Shaykh al-Mufid Abi ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu‘man, may Allah make his greatness last, from the covenant which Allah has deposited in and taken concerning His servants...’

And what came in the other missive:

A letter signed by the most esteemed hand, peace be upon its owner:

‘This is our book to you which the adhering brother and sincere and pure friend, and our loyal assistant, may Allah guard you with His Eye which does not sleep, so may He preserve through him, and not expose our line of communication which also serves as our supply line for the properties guaranteed for anyone, and give what is in it to whomever depends on it for his living, and will by action the totality of these properties to him, indeed as Allah wills, and the prayers of Allah be upon Muhammad and his pure progeny.’

In narrating the second missive, al-Tabarsi also said:

And he [i.e. Imam al-Mahdi] responded to his other book before it, may the salutations of Allah be upon

him, on Thursday, the 13th of Dhi'l-Hijjah in the year 412 A.H., in the following letter:

'From 'Abd Allah the link in his path to the inspiration of truth and its evidence...

And what came in the other missive:

The following signed letter was written by the most esteemed hand, peace be upon its owner, in the beginning of Shawwal, 412 A.H.:

'This is our book to you, who is the inspiring adherent to the exalted truth, by our dictation and trusted line of communication, so he fears for everyone, and conceals it, and makes for him a letter by which whoever lives [in this time] aspires to the security [of his rule] from among our friends, may Allah include them in His Blessings, as Allah wills, all praise is due to Allah and may prayers be upon our master the Prophet Muhammad and his pure progeny.'

Yahya b. Bitriq also reported these two missives in a treatise entitled *Nahj al-'Ulum ila Nafi al-Ma'dum* as had been spoken about al-Mufid, and included another missive which has been lost to us. And in contemplating the two missives which have come to us we can assert with respect to them that they do not benefit the self-proclaimed special agents and means of access to the Imam, but they concern those who will see the Imam during his Major Occultation and recognise him, and none other than the self-proclaimed special agents are understood as the meaning of the narrations about the liars who claim to see him.

And that which increases our certainty with respect to these two missives is what al-Tabarsi mentioned in the foreword of his *Kitab al-Ihtijaj*:

And we do not come to much of the various reports by their chain of transmission or consensus upon the affirmation of the Imam's existence, or its admissibility when the intellects prove that he exists, or what is known in the books and biographies produced by both our sect's authors and our opponents, except what we have variously procured from Abi Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari, for it is not known in any other way, and indeed it was included as being similar to that which we have already presented. On that basis we have mentioned its chain of transmission in the first volume to the exclusion of anything else, because the totality of what is reported from him is reported through only one chain of transmission from a sentence of the reports which he mentioned in his *tafsir*.¹³

So these two missives which have been reported without mentioning the chain of transmission are not futile for three reasons; the existence of consensus upon their authenticity, and their acceptability

¹³ The word *tafsir* means 'a composed exegesis of the Holy Qur'an.' Shaykh al-Tabarsi is obviously referring to the *Tafsir al-'Askari* attributed to the Eleventh Imam here.

when intellects indicate to their authenticity, and their notoriety in the books and biographies produced by both our sect's authors and our opponents.

So, the precision which which al-Tabarsi recorded these and his documentation are sufficient to give us certainty on the acceptability of these two missives. And our certainty on their authenticity is increased by that which al-Muhaddith al-Bahrani mentioned in his *al-Lu'lu'ah* after a text of some lines of poetry in lament of Shaykh al-Mufid attributed to Sahib al-Amr and which have been inscribed on the grave of the Shaykh:

And this is not far after the coming-out of what came out from him of the missives he produced for the aforementioned Shaykh which included much acclamation and reverence...then he said:

This and the mention of Shaykh Yahya b. Bitriq al-Hilli - which he has presented - in the treatise *Nahj al-'Ulum ila Nafi al-Ma'dum* [Recognition of the Questions Posed by the People of Aleppo] are the two paths in the laudation of Shaykh al-Mufid; one of them is the soundness of his textual arguments concerning the immaculate Imams, in virtue of what is mentioned in his writings in *al-Muqni'ah* and his other books...

And indeed the second path in the laudation of the Shaykh is thus; that what he narrated is sufficient for the Shi'a and what is received from him is accepted. Sahib al-Amr wrote to him thrice, in every year a *kitab*, and the letter which was the heading of the *kitab* began thus: 'To the good brother...'. And this is the fullest praise and laudation, and the purest tribute and compliment attributed to the Imam of the community and the ultimate successor of the Imams.

Thus ends what is in *al-Lu'lu'ah*. I say: that his statement that there is consensus on the two missives is sincere, and we also conclude from his statement that al-Tabarsi did not mention this in the foreword of his *al-Ihtijaj* - this is the same person who mentioned the reasons for which he did not include the chains of transmission of the traditions which he narrated - because the two missives are among those traditions upon which consensus has been established,¹⁴ which is why he did not mention their chains of transmission.

Indeed, some of the later scholars have cast doubt on the authenticity of these two missives, but the certainty which has been achieved with careful contemplation on this matter is sufficient with respect to their estimation, and Allah knows best.

¹⁴ With respect to their authenticity.

Ibn Shahr'ashub mentioned in his *Ma'alim*:

The title "Shaykh al-Mufid" was given to him [Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu'man] by Sahib al-Zaman, and we have mentioned the reason for that in *Manaqib Aal Abi Talib*.

And it is apparent that the intended meaning of his saying: {The title "Shaykh al-Mufid" was given to him by Sahib al-Zaman} is what came in the missive: {To the good brother and the rightly guided adherent Shaykh al-Mufid}. And undoubtedly the merits by which he is referred to are nonexistent in those copies which have been included in publications and in his available copy which we have and that which was accepted by al-Majlisi and Muhaddith al-Nuri, because all of these incomplete copies do not exist according to our investigation concerning Sahib al-Amr.

Sayyid al-Khu'i doubted this matter, based on the idea that Shaykh al-Mufid was named as such by 'Ali b. 'Isa al-Rumani after their debate, wherein the latter said to the Shaykh: 'Verily, you are *mufid*,'¹⁵ and it was the signature which Shaykh al-Mufid used later in life, while 'Shaykh al-Mufid' was only a title in the days of his youth.

Based on these two missives which have been issued from Imam al-Mahdi,¹⁶ we can conclude that the connection between the awaited Imam and this Shaykh al-Mufid was deep, because there is in them deep praise and tribute from the Imam to this shaykh who devoted his life to the defence of this oppressed sect.

So emerged the first missive praising Shaykh al-Mufid from the Imam who had sent it to him:

To the good brother, the rightly guided adherent, Shaykh al-Mufid...peace be upon you who is the sincere ally in the religion, the one who is especially certain about us...we inform you that Allah will lengthen your success in assisting the truth, and amplify your reward for your true argument concerning us...this is our letter to you who is an ally, and sincere in our pure friendship, and a steadfast supporter for us, may Allah guard you with His Eye which does not sleep...

And in the second:

Peace be upon you who is the supporter of the Truth, and the caller to it through honest words, and we

¹⁵ *Mufid* means 'useful'.

¹⁶ The original Arabic text uses الناحية المقدسة here, which would as per the context mean 'Holy Denouement,' which refers obviously to the Imam (عجل الله فرجه) in occultation.

make a pledge to you who is a sincere friend and the one who struggles for our sake against the wrongdoers, may Allah support you with His assistance through which He supported the predecessors from among our righteous friends...this is our letter to you who is the friend who inspires in people adherence to the lofty truth...

And this is sufficient honour and pride for Shaykh al-Mufid, of which he is deserving.

Foreword of the Author, Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu'man b. al-Mu'allim al-'Ukbari al-Baghdadi

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, who has guaranteed victory for those who support His cause, strengthened the authority of the truth for those who recognise His path and made guidance clear for them, while depriving success from those who deviated from it and denied it.

We turn to Him in hope of maintaining His blessings, seeking refuge in Him from punishment and affliction. May His blessings be upon our master Muhammad, the Prophet, and his family, the guided Imams, and may He bestow His peace abundantly upon them.

Now, I have discussed at length the necessity of *imamah*, the exclusive right of its rightful recipients, the Imams (عليهم السلام), emphasising their infallibility, distinguishing them from their followers through their virtues and excellence in actions, and the clear texts from Allah, the Most High, that support their claim. I have also exposed the flaws in the beliefs of those who oppose this doctrine, who have deviated into ignorance and misguidance. This has been evident among both the general populace and the more informed.

I have elucidated the reasons behind the emergence of the call by those who spoke out about religion and the silence of the pious regarding it, due to their compulsion at the hands of the oppressors and their concern for the preservation of their lives. They were threatened by those who considered their blood permissible, thereby pre-empting themselves from being killed as the prophets and messengers were, which is prohibited. All of this has been substantiated by the clear evidence found in the clear Criterion and the manifest Book, the Holy Qur'an.

I have reaffirmed the points I made in these chapters, explaining their meanings through questions and answers, and providing the arguments that support the truth through reason, the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet,¹⁷ and the

¹⁷ The traditions, practices and habits of Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله). In Shi'i theology, the Imams are considered to be the only ones who preserve and act on the Holy Prophet's traditions, as they derive their own divine authority from his.

Book of Allah. This is a desire of mine, for the one to whom this right belongs, and who occupies the highest status and rank in my view. I believe in fulfilling his right and upholding his status, and I am certain of his rightful claim and the consistency of his position. In asserting this right, I have focused on specific topics that have come to my mind at the appropriate times. The primary topic of these discussions has been the *imamah* of the Authority of the Age (عليه وعلى آباءه السلام), as I have considered it more important to address this matter directly, rather than discussing it within the broader context of its category and subject matter.

I have invoked Allah, the Most High, for guidance in structuring these chapters and in delivering statements that are comprehensible to those of sound intellect, without necessitating extended thought or reference to the foundational principles that I have previously detailed in my writings. With Allah's help, I conclude.

A Mention of the Missives in Their Proper Order & Structure, and the Explanations and Placements of the Objections Therein

1. The First Missive: The saying concerning the proclamation of the Imamiyyah of a successor for Abi Muhammad al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Rida, that is, his son born while he was himself alive, even though this son, Imam al-Mahdi, is invisible from his own kin due to that reason, and that he is hidden from the offspring of his uncle, their friends and their enemies in his time to this end, and that none other than the Imamiyyah claim this among the people.
2. The Second Missive: The disputation of Ja'far b. 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Ali,¹⁸ the brother of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari - concerning the affirmation of the Imamiyyah of a son for him, who rightfully inherited his father's estates, and Ja'far's apparent denial that his brother had a son both during the Imam's life and after his passing, and him bringing up this news as it was relayed by those who affirmed this truth to the 'Abbasid sultan, until the sultan imprisoned the Imam's bondswomen and investigated signs of a pregnancy among them, so when it did not become apparent to him that any of them were pregnant, this became the basis of an objection to the affirmation of a son for al-Hasan al-'Askari.
3. The Third Missive: The will of al-Hasan al-'Askari to his family is well-known - he named his mother in it in a tradition narrated at her house in his presence and secured the conditions of the will with his payment of alms and her signatures, and there is no mention in that will of the Imam having a son, nor is he *al-Muntadhar* [the Awaited One].
4. The Fourth Missive: What evidence is there for his hidden birth, and the reason for his occultation and due to which he is afraid to take charge of his matter? Especially considering that the lineage of his forefathers and

¹⁸ Usually referred to as Ja'far al-Kadhhab.

their offspring and upbringing, their fame and their existence, are all apparent, and they resided in the times of *taqiyyah*¹⁹ in which no era was more severe than that of al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Muhammad, and their fear of the Umayyad kings and those who came after them was greater, yet none of them went into occultation, nor was the birth and existence of any of them hidden from people.

5. The Fifth Missive: The proclamation of the Imamiyyah concerning the occultation of the Imam establishes the condition of Allah's creation during his hiding as being like that of a mule calling out for its master, and the means of access to the Imam is cut off, nor is there recognition of his location in any way.
6. The Sixth Missive: The negation of the habit of calling to the longevity of his life and his remaining on the Earth since the belief in there being a son for Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari is based only on the saying of the Imamiyyah that the Imam had a son born to him two years before his death, and his death occurred in the 260th year according to our reckoning of time,²⁰ and it is now 410 A.H..
7. The Seventh Missive: It is ostensibly true that the Imamiyyah affirm the occultation of the Imam, which invalidates their need for him, as his existence in the world is as if he is nonexistent, because he does not appear to proselytise to anybody, nor does he manifest his divine authority, nor does he clarify the limits of Allah, nor does he implement any ruling, nor does he guide anyone upon whom guidance applies, nor does he enjoin good, nor does he forbid evil, nor does he guide people away from erring, nor does he struggle for the sake of Islam.
8. The Eighth Missive: The claims of the Imamiyyah during the occultation

¹⁹ Dissimulation; pretending to reject what one believes in their heart.

²⁰ The original Arabic text is as follows: وكانت وفاته في سنة ستين ومائتين إلى وقتنا هذا وهو سنة عشرة وأربعمائة. 'Our reckoning of time' in our translation obviously refers to the Hijri calendar used by all Muslims.

that the Imam is infallible are disputable because other sects have made the same claims on the same bases of argumentation as that which the Imamiyyah developed; indeed, Musa b. Ja'far is the living, existent and occulted Awaited One, on the same basis by which the Imamiyyah have denounced the Kaysaniyyah, the Nawusiyyah and the Isma'iliyyah for affirming the continued existence of their imams Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyyah, Ja'far b. Muhammad and Isma'il b. Ja'far, respectively, yet their claims are rejected.²¹

9. The Ninth Missive: The Imamiyyah implore others to recognise that Allah the Exalted allowed the Imam to hide himself from His creations, and justified his occultation so that none would be able to meet him in order to testify that he is a divine grace for them in that regard, and they affirm that Allah, glory be to Him, does not allow anything that is not right, nor does He justify anything that cannot be considered a correct measure, nor does He do anything with respect to His servants that is not according to their wishes,²² and He has not extended their ordeal, nor overburdened them with lasting legal responsibility, and all this contradicts the saying of the Imamiyyah in what they have borne witness to and the complete interest they have taken in the guiding principles of the religion, and that the reappearance of the Imam would completely satisfy all interests, requirements for governance and measures.

10. The Tenth Missive: Due to their saying with respect to the Occultation, the Imamiyyah are compelled to relegate proving the signs and miracles of their Imam to when he has reappeared, so no-one recognises when his person will have become apparent, and only then will anybody arrive at recognition of his miracle which is the proof for his sincerity and truthfulness, his lineage and the proofs of his *imamah* and the obligation

²¹ While the Imamiyyah insist that people accept their own claims about the son of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari.

²² Within the boundaries of what is *halal*.

to obey him. And this last one constitutes the release of signs as evidence for this obligation, and the affirmation of the appearance of obedience to Imam al-Mahdi on other than those who specialised in this matter from among the Prophets and Messengers, and that constitutes chaos in the evidences for prophethood and the signs of messengership, so it is falsehood as per the agreement of the people of all communities.

Missive 1

I say: Indeed, the concealment of the birth of Al-Mahdi, son of al-Hasan, son of 'Ali (عليهم السلام), from the majority of his family and others, and hiding that from them, and the continuation of his concealment from them, is not outside the norm, nor contrary to customary practices. Rather, knowledge about him is encompassed just like it is for the children of kings and nobles, for reasons that are justifiable and not objectionable to those who think rationally.

Among these reasons is that a person may have a child with a servant girl whom he has concealed, and she belongs to him through marriage and her family. She becomes pregnant by him, and he hides this from anyone who might fear mentioning it or revealing it to those who should not know about it, in order to avoid causing problems with his wife, her family, and her supporters. This would lead to harm for him beyond defending him, and the child grows up without anyone from the man's family, his cousins, his brothers, and his friends knowing him. This continues until the fear of revealing it subsides, and he becomes known at that time. Sometimes this might happen after the man's death, and he becomes known upon the occurrence of his death, out of embarrassment for not recognising his lineage and in favour of his rightful inheritance.

Kings sometimes have children who are not acknowledged until they grow up and mature, and when they see them in a favourable light...this has been mentioned about some Persian, Roman, and Indian kings during two consecutive reigns.²³ They documented the stories of their concealment, and the story of the Persian emperor Kay Khosrau the son of Siavash, who united the kingdoms of Babylon and the East, and the concealment of his mother's pregnancy and her giving birth to Kay Khosrau. His mother was named Ferigees, the daughter of Afrasiab, the king of the Turks. His matter was concealed even from his grandfather, who was Kay Khosrau's greatest predecessor, in the search and quest for him. This continued for a long time without achieving any success.

²³ It is not known what Shaykh al-Mufid was referring to here. One's best guess is that this is his way of introducing the apocryphal tale of Kai Khosrau from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. This legendary Persian emperor was born to a Persian prince and a Turkic princess at a time when the Persians and the Turks were deeply hostile to one another (according to the story). Shaykh al-Mufid goes on to mention the names of Kai Khosrau's parents in what follows of his argumentation.

The story of his matter is well-known, and the reasons for his concealment and the concealment of his identity are known. The Persian scholars have mentioned it, and it has been affirmed by Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari in his book *al-Tarikh*, which is similar to what the opponents have denied about the concealment of the birth of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari's son, and his hiding and his birth. Indeed, that is even more astonishing.

Among the people, there are those who conceal their children from their families out of fear of their wickedness towards them and their greed for their inheritance, as long as they do not have any children themselves. So, they remain concealed until they can reveal them safely, protected from those whom we mentioned.

Some people conceal this to negotiate marriage for their child with someone who would not prefer marrying the child's guardian. So, they continue concealing their child and hiding their identity and situation, pretending that they have never married before or had children with a free woman or a slave. We have witnessed such actions, and the news about women doing this is more apparent than men.

It is common for kings to conceal the birth of their children and hide their identity from their subjects for strategic purposes, to establish a successor, and to test their troops in obedience, as they believed it was not appropriate to appoint someone without lineage in governance. Later, they would reveal the matter of the child when they could do so with the consent of the people, diverting the matter away from the child to another, or to isolate the successor from the position in a way that would regulate the king's affairs as we have explained.

There are many other reasons for concealing children and announcing their death, for kings to conceal themselves, and for faking their deaths. These are well-known matters that have been practised by Muslims in accordance with their customs.

We have found many cases where a relative was acknowledged long after the father's death, and no one knew about it until two Muslim men testified to it after the father confessed to it in secret, and ordered it to be kept secret, or by the legal means of Islamic law, which attaches the child to his father.

An Addendum:

Scholars have unanimously agreed on the concealment of the birth of the prophet Ibrahim (عليه السلام), and his mother, for fear of the king of their time due to concerns for his safety.

The birth of the prophet Musa (عليه السلام) was also concealed, and the Qur'an provides an explanation for that. The news that his mother cast him into the river with trust in his safety and return to her was by divine inspiration for the benefit of the people.

What is denied by opponents of the Imamiyyah regarding the concealment of the birth of al-Hasan al-'Askari (عليه السلام) and his son al-Mahdi from their families, cousins, and others is more evident than the reasons we have mentioned and named. We will mention them when necessary, if Allah wills. The authenticity of al-Hasan's son's birth is confirmed by the most reliable sources of genealogy, just as lineage is established through the testimony of midwives and women who attend childbirth and assist women in childbirth. Only the owner of the servant would confess to that, without anyone else doing so, and the testimony of two Muslim men about the father's confession to the son's lineage is considered a strong proof of his lineage.

There are documented reports from a group of religious, virtuous, ascetic, pious, worshipful, and knowledgeable individuals regarding al-Hasan b. 'Ali (عليهما السلام) acknowledging his son al-Mahdi (عليه السلام). They testified to his existence and affirmed his *imamah* after him, with some of them witnessing him as a child, others as a youth, and others as a mature adult. They passed this knowledge on to their Shi'a after the death of his father, along with his commands, prohibitions, and answers to questions. They recognised his rights as an Imam among his followers.

The names of several individuals who were described in the condition they maintained with al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-'Askari (عليهما السلام), especially those known for their service and dedication to him, have been mentioned. They have conveyed what they learned from him about the existence of his son, his observation of him after his birth, and their hearing about his *imamah*, all directly from him.

This information is available in my books, especially in *al-Irshad fi Ma'rifah*

Hujjaj Allah ‘ala’l-‘Ibad, and the second one is *al-Ishraf fi’l-Imamah wa’l-Ghaybah*.

The presence of this information in what I have mentioned should suffice for the verification of its authenticity in this book.

Missive 2

As for the matter related to Ja'far b. 'Ali's opposition to the claim of the Imamiyyah that a child was born to his brother al-Hasan al-'Askari (عليهما السلام) during his lifetime, and his assertion of the right to inherit the estate left by his brother due to the absence of his own offspring, and his role in falsely accusing the Imam of that time of imprisoning the women of al-Hasan al-'Askari's household and impregnating them to ensure the continuation of his lineage, thereby legitimising the bloodshed of the followers of Imam al-'Askari after his death, he claimed that his position was in line with the prevailing norms. There is no reasonable doubt regarding these actions.

One of the reasons for this was that a person might have a child born from a maidservant whom he owned through his wife and her family, concealing this fact from anyone who might be concerned about revealing it and protecting it from those who might spread the news, to avoid causing harm to his relationship with his wife, her family, and her supporters. This could result in damaging his defence of the child and raising him without anyone among the man's family, cousins, brothers, or friends knowing about him, until the fear of disclosing the secret subsided, and the child could be acknowledged. This concealment might continue until the person's death, and the child would be revealed upon their demise, to avoid compromising his lineage and to ensure he received his rightful inheritance.

It was not uncommon for kings to have children whose existence was not acknowledged until they grew up. There are historical accounts of kings in Persia, Rome, and India who concealed the birth of their heirs for various reasons.

Many people hide their children from their families out of fear of their anger and their desire to secure their inheritance when they have no other offspring. They keep their children concealed until they are in a position to reveal them without fear of harm from those who might object.

Some hide their children to facilitate marriages with individuals who would not agree to marry someone with children from previous relationships. They continue to keep their child's identity and existence hidden, claiming that they have never married before and have no children from previous marriages. This practice is more common among women than men.

There were also cases where kings hid their children to ensure a smooth transition of power and to test their subjects' loyalty by introducing a successor they initially concealed from the public. After gaining their subjects' trust, they would reveal the child's true identity and rule with their support. This tactic allowed for better governance and political stability, as it prevented rival claims to the throne.

There are various other reasons for concealing children's identities and the circumstances of their births, and this practice has been prevalent among Muslims and has been accepted as customary.

The case of Ja'far b. 'Ali denying the existence of his brother al-Hasan's son, the Mahdi, and his concealing his birth, as well as his continued denial of his existence and birth, is not questionable to any rational person. It is not only a historical fact but also aligns with common practices.

Missive 3

As for their concern about the will of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Muhammad (عليهم السلام), during his illness in which he passed away, to his mother known as Umm al-Hasan (رضي الله عنها), involving his standing wealth and charities, and assigning the consideration of that to her and not others, there is nothing substantial to rely upon in denying the existence of a successor for him after his death. It is clear that he ordered this as part of his intention to conceal his birth and protect his status from those in power during his time and from those who would follow his call to Allah the Exalted, anticipating the emergence of the true authority.

If he had mentioned a son in his will and assigned it to him, it would have contradicted the purpose of hiding his birth and covering his state from the rulers of his time and from those who would follow his call, neglecting to mention him, and instead protecting his son by refraining from indicating his presence. This would also avoid alerting his enemies to his son's existence, discouraging them from pursuing him and cooling their aggression towards his followers who believed in his existence and leadership.

Anyone who doubted the matter as we have mentioned it, to the extent that they thought it served as evidence of the invalidity of the Imamiyyah's doctrine regarding the existence of a concealed son of al-Hasan al-'Askari, hidden from the majority of people, was far from understanding and intelligence. They lacked insight and knowledge, incapable of comprehending the actions of the wise and their strategies in pursuing their interests, grounded in sound reasoning and the observed circumstances, guided by customs and conventions.

Moreover, there was widespread knowledge about the arrangements of Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far b. Muhammad (عليه السلام), and his precautions for his son, Musa b. Ja'far (عليه السلام), after his own death, to protect him from potential harm:

1. Through his will to him and the dissemination of this news among the Shi'a, implying their belief in his *imamah* after him.
2. He retracted his affirmation of his will upon his death and distributed it to five individuals: first, the 'Abbasid sultan al-Mansur al-Dawaniqi, who preceded his group and was the ruler of the time, then his

companion, al-Rabi', followed by the judge of his era, then his female slave and the mother of his child, Hamidah al-Barbariyyah. He concluded by mentioning his son, Musa b. Ja'far (عليه السلام), concealing his affair and protecting himself thereby.

3. In his will, he did not mention any of his sons except Musa, as he knew that some of them would claim his position after him and would insist on being included in the will. However, he mentioned them as we described.

This serves as evidence for the purpose we described for Abu Muhammad (عليه السلام) in his will to his mother and his neglect of mentioning a son, looking at its meaning as we explained.

Missive 4

Regarding the content in the fourth missive, which is the exclusion of the call for Imam al-'Askari (عليه السلام) to conceal his son, the deliberation of the matter in hiding his identity, and the prohibition for his Shi'a to reveal him by name, despite the numerous Shi'a in his time, their presence in different regions, their wealth, and their good conditions. The situation was complicated because the rulers of that time recognised the wisdom of the Imams and the prohibition of rebellion against the rulers. They criticised anyone from their family who engaged in such actions, and they considered it wrong. The Imams did not encourage their Shi'a to expose themselves.

However, the opponents' claim that this situation contradicts the behaviour of wise individuals is not correct, nor is it consistent with what was rejected.

What al-Hasan al-'Askari called for was to protect his son, hide his birth, conceal his identity, and discourage his Shi'a from publicly naming and mentioning him. This was important given the circumstances at the time, as the rulers were well aware of the strategies and beliefs of the Imams. They also prohibited rebellion against them, and they did not easily tolerate anyone who claimed *imamah*. Imam al-'Askari did not encourage his Shi'a to reveal his son or publicise his identity, which was communicated to the Shi'a as an order.

This approach was different from the time of his ancestors, as they did not call for such concealment of their children. The rulers of that time knew the Imams' tactics, which included the prohibition of armed rebellion against the rulers. They would criticise their family members for such actions, even though the rulers' rule was unjust.

When the time came for the reappearance of the Awaited Imam, who would bring justice, the Shi'a followed al-Hasan al-'Askari's instructions to protect his son's identity. This way, they could prepare for his leadership without risking their lives. By doing so, they removed any doubts regarding his connection to them, secured themselves against the dangers of the time, and ensured that they could openly refer to him and call for his support.

Had this approach not been adopted, it would not have been acceptable that Allah the Almighty would allow an Imam's predecessor to appear and not be safe. If he were to appear, his blood would have been spilled, which would not

align with wisdom, and it would have prevented the establishment of a successor after him. If the Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan were known at the time, it would have sufficed as evidence for his rightful position. Given what we have explained, there is no reason to deny the wisdom in concealing his identity and to object to Imam al-'Askari's approach.

Missive 5

As for the discussion in the fifth chapter, it pertains to the opponents' claim that the Imam of the Shi'a, from the time of his birth until our time, has remained concealed without anyone knowing his whereabouts, no one claiming to have met him, and no news about him or any trace of him.

This claim goes against common customs because when someone is in hiding due to fear of persecution or other reasons, the period of concealment usually has a limit and does not extend for decades. Moreover, during such concealment, some family members or close associates typically know the person's whereabouts, and there may be news of their meetings.

However, the Shi'a Imamiyyah refute these claims and state that a group of companions of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (عليه السلام) witnessed his successor during his lifetime. These individuals continued to be close to him after his death and acted as intermediaries between him and his Shi'a for an extended period. During his concealment, they conveyed religious guidance, provided answers to their questions, and collected the rights owed to them.

These individuals were known for their integrity, trustworthiness, knowledge, understanding, and vigilance. The rulers of the time respected them and valued their status in society due to their honesty and justice. They defended them against accusations from their adversaries. This protection was based on the rulers' confidence in their trustworthiness and their reputation for justice and wisdom.

The Imamiyyah assert that Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari appointed these individuals as his representatives during his lifetime. These companions were trustworthy and responsible for managing his affairs, including his financial matters, and they were well-known by name and lineage.

The Shi'a further claim that their belief in the prolonged concealment of the Imam is supported by authentic reports and references. They argue that the knowledge of the Imam's concealment was available to scholars of the Shi'a before the birth of Imam al-Mahdi, and it was later confirmed through his appearance and the testimony of trustworthy individuals.

In conclusion, the opponents' claims about the prolonged concealment of the

Imam do not align with the beliefs of the Shi'a. The Shi'a argue that there were reliable individuals who witnessed the Imam during his lifetime and continued to be intermediaries between him and his Shi'a for a considerable period. They maintain that this belief is supported by reliable sources and references.

In the case of the concealment of Nabi Musa (عليه السلام) from his people and his escape from Fir'awn and his followers, it is mentioned in the scriptures. During this period of concealment, no-one knew his whereabouts, and he did not appear to anyone until Allah saved him and sent him as a prophet. He called upon people, and both his supporters and adversaries recognised him at that time.

The story of Nabi Yusuf (عليه السلام) also contains elements of concealment.²⁴ He was a prophet of Allah who received revelation from Him day and night. His brothers, who interacted with him, pledged allegiance to him, and bought from him, did not recognise him. Years passed, and even his father, Ya'qub, became disheartened due to his absence, thinking he had left this world. This was a unique situation that does not align with our common customs.

Similarly, the story of Nabi Yunus (عليه السلام) includes concealment when he fled from his people due to their disobedience and disbelief. During this period, no one knew his whereabouts except Allah. He was in the belly of a whale in the depths of the sea, and even after being saved, he did not reveal his location.

These stories from the Qur'an are acknowledged by Muslims and others and are not in line with our usual customs. They are accepted by believers and are a matter of faith. Some may deny them, such as atheists, heretics, and

²⁴ We have an at least *hasan* narration in Shaykh al-Nu'mani's *Kitab al-Ghaybah* which validates Shaykh al-Mufid's appeal to the case of Nabi Yusuf here. أخبرنا أحمد بن محمد بن سعيد بن عقدة، قال: حدثنا محمد بن المفضل بن قيس بن رمانة الأشعري وسعدان بن إسحاق بن سعيد وأحمد بن الحسين بن عبد الملك ومحمد بن الحسن القطواني، قالوا جميعاً: حدثنا الحسن بن محبوب الزرادي، عن هشام بن سالم، عن يزيد الكناسي، قال: >> سمعت أبا جعفر محمد بن علي الباقر (عليه السلام) يقول: إن صاحب هذا الأمر فيه شبهة من يوسف، ابن أمة سوداء، يصلح الله عز وجل له أمره في ليلة واحدة، يريد بالشبهة من يوسف (عليه السلام) غيبته >>. Informed us Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Sa'id b. 'Uqdah, who said: Narrated to us Muhammad b. al-Mufaddal b. Qays b. Rumanah al-Ash'ari, Sa'dan b. Is'haq b. Sa'id, Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. 'Abd al-Malik and Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Qatawani, all of them said together: Narrated to us al-Hasan b. Mahbub al-Zarrad, from Hisham b. Salim, from Yazid al-Kinasi, who said: "I heard Aba Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (عليه السلام) saying: '**Indeed, the Master of this matter has a likeness in him to Nabi Yusuf**, he is the son of a black bondswoman, Allah (عز وجل) shall rectify his matter within one night, **and what is meant by his likeness to Yusuf (عليه السلام) is with respect to his occultation.**'" [Shaykh Ibn Abi Zaynab Abi 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Ja'far al-Nu'mani, "What has Been Narrated Concerning His Characteristics, His Biography and His Deeds, and What has Been Revealed in the Qur'an Concerning Him (عليه السلام), narration no. 8," in *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, thq. Faris Hasun Karim (Qum, Iran: Manshurat Anwar al-Huda, 1422 A.H.), p. 233.]

proponents of philosophical and materialistic ideologies, but they are established in religious texts and history.

The stories of the kings of Persia and their prolonged concealment from their subjects due to various political strategies, as well as the sages of Rome and India, who concealed their knowledge, are also examples that go beyond common customs. We have not mentioned these examples to suggest that the concept of *imamah* espoused by the Shi'a is similar to them, but rather to illustrate that extraordinary situations, including concealment, can be found in various historical and religious contexts. Our reliance on the Qur'an and the consensus of the Islamic community reaffirms the legitimacy of such situations, and we acknowledge the hostility of some individuals who rush to deny these concepts due to their ignorance.

We rely on the Qur'an and the consensus of the Islamic community to affirm the legitimacy of such situations, and we acknowledge the hostility of some individuals who rush to deny these concepts due to their ignorance.

We seek refuge in Allah from dissension and pray for His guidance.

Missive 6

The adversaries are concerned with challenging the norm by objecting to the total span of the Imam's entire life, and his remaining in full possession of his faculties, as per the Shi'a doctrine, since he was born in 260 A.H., and up to our present day, which is the year 410 A.H., in their claim regarding his longevity and his condition, which they describe differently from the norms, and assert that it indicates a corruption in the beliefs of the Shi'a.

The Response:

What the adversaries imagine is the corruption of the Shi'a doctrine in their claim of the length of his life, the completeness of his faculties, and his remaining until our time and his appearance among the community, in a youthful state, and with the vitality of intellect, strength, and knowledge about the affairs of religion and the world.

If he deviates from what we now know about the conditions of humans, it is not beyond the norms established by his fellow human beings and similar to them in humanity.

What was customary at some times does not preclude its existence at other times, and its ruling in the future is like its ruling in the past, based on clear evidence.

If the norm had not been established in that way, the community would have believed that Allah the Almighty is capable of doing so, which would invalidate the delusion of those who oppose the truth regarding the corruption of their claims.

Scholars from various religious backgrounds, as well as others, have unanimously agreed that Adam, the father of humanity, lived for nearly a thousand years, during which he did not change in appearance. He did not transition from childhood to old age, from strength to weakness, or from knowledge to ignorance. He remained in one form until Allah the Almighty took his life. This is a miraculous occurrence as he was created without a biological father, moulded from clay without procreation, and transformed from clay into human nature without intermediary, as agreed upon by the people of the scriptures, as we have explained.

Despite this, the Qur'an speaks of the long life of Nabi Nuh (عليه السلام) among his people for 950 years, specifically for the purpose of warning them. Before that, he had a long life, free from weakness, old age, incapacity, or ignorance, with an extended lifespan in this world and the preservation of his faculties.

The phenomenon of grey hair did not occur in humans before it happened to Nabi Ibrahim, the friend of Allah (عليه السلام), as unanimously agreed upon by the knowledgeable Muslims, as we mentioned.

This is only denied by atheists among the astrologers and their associates in heresy from among the materialists. However, all religious groups unanimously affirm what we have described.

Historical accounts continue with the extended lives of various peoples, including Arabs, non-Arabs, and Indians, as well as different types of humans and their conditions during that time. The preserved accounts of their rulings during their long lives, as well as the narrations detailing their judgements by the people of their eras, their speeches, and their poems, do not differ from the accounts of transmitters regarding their ages and conditions, as we have described.

The names of many of them have been documented in my book known as *al-Idah fi'l-Imamah*, and their accounts can be found in the treasures of kings, numerous leaders, and scholars and in the collections of scribes. Anyone who wishes to investigate this further can refer to the mentioned sources, where they will find evidence to satisfy their curiosity and confirm the authenticity of their narrations, if Allah wills.

I have provided a comprehensive explanation, but examining all their accounts would be more effective in reinforcing our point, if Allah wills.

Among them is Luqman b. 'Aad, the elder. He lived the longest of all humans after al-Khidr (عليه السلام). He is said to have lived for 3,500 years according to the scholars' narrations, and it is also said that he lived for seven centuries. He used to capture the eaglet, place it on a mountain, and the eagle would live off it for as long as it lived. When it died, he took another one and raised it until it became an adult eagle. This process continued until the last one, which was named "Labd," lived the longest. It was said, "Labd's longevity lasted."

Regarding him, al-A'sha composed the following poetry:

“Choose for yourself seven eaglets;

When one dies, another will live.

For how long will souls last?

Do you not know?”

Among them is Rabi' b. Dabi'a b. Wahb b. Baghid b. Malik b. Sa'd b. 'Adi b. Fazarah. He lived for 343 years, and he lived during the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله), but he did not accept Islam. He said about himself when he was criticised for his old age:

“Morning has broken, and my youth has withered away,

If it moves away from me, the fawn will come to me.”

And he also said:

“I have grown tired of life's length,

And I have aged from the count of the years.

I have spent two hundred years after them,

And I have aged from the count of the months.”

Among them is Aktham b. Sayfi al-Asadi. He lived for 380 years and was one of those who lived during the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله), believed in him, and died before meeting him. He left behind many sayings, wisdom, eloquence, and parables. He is the one who said: ‘If a person has lived for ninety years, it does not tire him if life continues for another hundred, especially if they are few.’ His father was Sayfi b. Ri'ah b. Aktham, also among those who lived long lives.

He lived for 276 years, and nothing was amiss in his mental faculties. He was known as *Dhu'l-Hilm*, the forbearing one, about whom al-Mutalammis al-Yashkuri said: ‘Dhu'l-Hilm excelled before today, neither does a stick rattle nor does a man gain knowledge except for a purpose.’

Among them was Dabirah b. Sa'id b. Sa'd b. Suhm b. 'Amr. He lived for 226 years, and he never greyed. He embraced Islam and lived on, but he did not accept it. Abu Hatim and al-Riyashi reported from al-'Atabi, who reported from his father, saying: 'Dabirah al-Suhmi died at the age of 220 years. He had black hair and sound teeth.'

Qays b. 'Adi, his cousin, inherited him, and he said: 'Who will feel secure from events after Dabirah al-Suhmi, who died at the age of 220 years? He lived long, so be prepared and do not perish. Keep such people safe so they don't disappear.'

Darid b. al-Sammah al-Jashami lived for four hundred years. He is the one who said: 'I have grown old, and life has extended so much that it seems as if I were the one who would carry the load of the night and not return. Death did not exhaust me; rather, years passed by like a summer and a pasture. Three hundred have passed, completing them, and here I am, hoping to reach four.'

Among them was al-Harth b. Mu'dad al-Jarhumi, who lived for four hundred years. He said: 'It is as if there was no-one between the mountains of Hajun and al-Safa, an intimate friend, staying in Makkah for a long time. Yes, indeed, we were its inhabitants, and then we vanished, under the weight of long nights and generations.'

The Persians claim that their ancient kings lived for extended periods, surpassing the lifespans of those we mentioned among the Arabs. They mention that one of their kings, who established the festival,²⁵ lived for 1,500 years. We do not delve into discussing their accounts, as we have evidence from Arab sources about the lifespans of the long-lived people and the reports of their scholars.

As previously mentioned, those who deny the possibility of long lifespans are a group of astrologers and a community of atheists. As for the People of the Book and various religious groups, they concur on the accuracy and establishment of this fact.

If, among the long-lived, there was only one whose longevity is disputed, it would be Salman al-Farsi (رضي الله عنه). Most scholars maintain that he saw Nabi

²⁵ Shaykh al-Mufid does not say what this festival was, or who this king was. Perhaps the festival is the famous Nowruz?

‘Isa, lived through the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله), and continued to live afterward. His death occurred in the middle of the reign of ‘Umar b. al-Khattab at the time when ‘Umar was administering justice among the Muslims in the cities. It is also said that Salman worked in the fields and collected land taxes. The latter account is more authentic, and what we have mentioned in this chapter is sufficient for our purpose. All praise is due to Allah.

Missive 7

As for the opponents' argument: If the Imam's occultation continues in the manner believed by the Imami Shi'a, where no individual person appears as the Imam, and there is no establishment of Islamic law, no enforcement of judgements, no call to righteousness, and no struggle against enemies, then the need for him in safeguarding the *shari'a* and the community ceases to exist. His presence in the world is equivalent to his absence.

The Response:

The situation is different from what they assume. His occultation does not negate the need for him in safeguarding the *shari'a*, restoring it, ensuring that the community adheres to it, and recognising the conditions of the community at all times. His presence or absence makes a significant difference, as he is uniquely qualified to fulfil these roles among all his followers. Do you not see that the call to him is taken up by his Shi'a, and they establish the proof for him in this regard? He does not need to personally handle this responsibility, just as the prophets' call was carried on by their deputies who believed in their mission, and they cut short the excuses for rejecting the truth. This is the case in both the life of the prophets and after their passing, with their deputies being trusted with this responsibility.

Similarly, the implementation of Islamic punishments and judgements can be carried out by the rulers appointed by the Imams themselves, just as the prophets had rulers and governors who executed their commands. They do not need the direct involvement of the Imam. Likewise, when it comes to *jihad*, the leaders and commanders of the Imams can take charge without the Imam's physical presence.

It is clear from what we have mentioned that what is most needed from the Imam is his role in preserving the *shari'a*, which cannot be entrusted to anyone else. This responsibility includes ensuring the correct understanding and interpretation of the religion, preventing deviations, and upholding the faith. If someone from among his followers fulfils these duties, then he can remain concealed and silent. However, if he observes his followers deviating from the true path and failing in their religious duties, it becomes necessary for him to take charge personally to rectify the situation.

This explanation clarifies the matter for those who contemplate it. Another point to consider is that if the Imam goes into occultation out of fear for his life from oppressive rulers, it might lead to the neglect of Islamic laws and the deterioration of the community's affairs, as the unjust individuals, acting against Allah's will, will take control and impose their corrupt practices. In this case, the reason for this corruption will be the actions of these oppressors rather than Allah's will.

Therefore, if Allah were to cause the Imam's death or concealment, this would not justify corruption or elevate righteousness. Allah does not establish the cause of corruption or remove what promotes righteousness. This clarifies the distinction between the Imam's death and his occultation, concealment, and existence. It also refutes the objections raised by the oppressed and highlights the Divine grace.

Missive 8

As for the opponents' claim that we have equated our beliefs in the occultation of the Imam (عليه السلام), to various sects such as the Saba'iyyah who claim that Imam 'Ali (عليه السلام) did not die and is still alive, or the Kaysaniyyah who claim that the Imam is Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyyah, or the Nawusiyyah who assert that Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq (عليه السلام) did not die, or the Mamturah who claim that Musa b. Ja'far (عليه السلام) did not die but will reappear with the sword, or the early Isma'iliyyah and their predecessors who believe that Isma'il b. Ja'far is the Awaited One and that he is alive and has not died, or some who hold similar beliefs regarding Muhammad b. Isma'il, or the Zaydiyyah who have similar beliefs concerning their Imams who were killed, such as their claim about Yahya b. 'Umar who was killed in Shahi:

All of these assertions are false according to the Imamiyyah, and their claims regarding the occultation of their Imam and his continued existence have also been refuted. Therefore, we say that these are mere misconceptions held by the opponents, and if they were to reflect upon them, they would realise the falsehood of what they have relied upon in their arguments against the people of truth. These claims rely on the premise that the murder of those they call Imams was a tangible and observable event witnessed by many, and it served as evidence for the subsequent Imams' legitimacy, just as the Imams who came before them were established through tangible evidence. Denying observable events is irrational to all people of sound judgement. Moreover, the infallible Imams have testified to the death of those who preceded them in *imamah*, eliminating any doubts.

However, the Imamiyyah's claim about the existence of their Imam (عليه السلام) is fundamentally different because it does not involve negating tangible evidence, denying observable events, or having another infallible Imam who bears witness to the falsehood of the Imamiyyah's claim or the existence of their Imam in occultation.

The discrepancy between the two situations, if not for the distortion of the argument and the inclination to accept the first thought that comes to mind without further contemplation, should be clear.

In summary, we do not deny the occultation mentioned by the opponents due to its extended duration, but we deny it based on our knowledge and certainty

about the killing and death of some of them, as well as our knowledge of these events through sensory perception.

Also, some among those they claim did not have *imamah* in the sects they allege to have belonged to may indeed have held *imamah* in other contexts where they were established and recognised accordingly. Therefore, their claims about the occultation and concealment of an Imam do not harm those who assert that. By pondering upon what we have mentioned, the truth becomes apparent, and the distinction between our beliefs and the false beliefs of the Zaydiyyah, which we have elucidated, is clear. Praise be to Allah.

Missive 9

This is the argument presented by the opponents: The Imami Shi'a doctrine contradicts itself when it comes to their belief in the concept of *imamah*. They claim that the presence of an Imam is essential for the welfare of society, as the Imam is responsible for guiding, ruling, and managing affairs, as well as upholding justice and preventing corruption. They argue that this is in line with common-sense notions of governance and the role of a just ruler in society.

However, they also assert that Allah has allowed the Imam to be in occultation, hidden from public view, and concealed from the people. They argue that this hidden presence of the Imam serves the best interests of the community and is a wise way of managing affairs.

This contradiction is evident to anyone who reflects upon it.

However, I would like to clarify that this objection only arises due to the opponents' failure to consider the various circumstances and factors that can affect societal well-being. Societal interests can vary depending on different situations, and the strategies employed to achieve those interests may differ accordingly. Wise rulers adjust their methods and policies to the changing needs and behaviours of their subjects.

For instance, a wise human ruler takes into account the welfare, education, and well-being of their subjects, directing them towards virtuous actions that can bring benefit to society. This approach earns them respect and honour from their subjects and secures their prosperity. However, if the ruler deviates from this path and indulges in foolishness, oppression, and neglect, the interests of the people may be harmed. In such cases, it is appropriate to deprive them of resources, rebuke them, and punish them.

There is no contradiction in the goals of a wise ruler, and there is no inconsistency in the principles of sound governance.

It is important to note that Allah created human beings with complete intellectual faculties and assigned them righteous deeds, providing both worldly and spiritual rewards for adhering to them. By obeying Allah's commandments and avoiding prohibitions, humans can attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter.

If people adhere to Allah's orders and prohibitions, they will be rewarded with

well-being in this world and receive praise, honour, and respect. This is in line with the principles of sound governance. However, if they deviate from these principles and disobey Allah, their situation may change, and the means of attaining success may be cut off, leading to a life of punishment and hardship.

In conclusion, this objection raised by the opponents is based on their failure to consider the principles of wisdom and governance in different situations. The well-being of society can be achieved through various means, and the approach may change based on circumstances. There is no contradiction in the principles of sound governance, and they remain consistent with the goals of human well-being and adherence to divine guidance.

First Addendum:

Do you not see that Allah has called upon His creation to acknowledge Him, proclaim monotheism, and believe in His Messengers (عليهم السلام) for their own benefit? There is nothing wiser in His plan for them than this. So when they are compelled to express disbelief to save their lives, it is more beneficial and wiser for them to abandon the acknowledgement of Allah, turn away from proclaiming monotheism, and outwardly manifest disbelief in the Messengers. The interests of people change with changing circumstances. Allah's plan for them in their creation was to benefit the pious. What was necessary for the wrongdoers to do was reprehensible and harmful, deserving severe punishment.

Allah has prescribed *hajj* and *jihad* and made them beneficial for His servants. When they can fulfil these acts, it brings about their welfare. When they are prevented from doing so due to the transgressions of the criminals, it is more beneficial for them to abandon these acts, and they are excused in doing so. The criminals bear the blame for causing this, and it is appropriate for them to be punished.

This is analogous to the interests of creation in the appearance of the Imams (عليه السلام) and their governance. When the people obey them, support them, and seek their assistance, the circumstances are favourable, and the benefit lies in their appearance and presence. However, if they disobey the Imams and shed their holy blood, the situation changes concerning what serves the Imams' interests. Benefit then lies in the absence, disappearance, and concealment of the Imams. There is no blame on them for this. The

blameworthy party is the one responsible for the corruption and misguided beliefs.

The fact that the Imams are hidden and concealed does not prevent the obligation of their existence and appearance, with the knowledge of their existence and safety being the preferable and more appropriate course of action. It is the original plan underlying the creation of humankind, and they were commanded accordingly.

Second Addendum:

The objection that our opponents raise in this regard, claiming that the Imami doctrine contradicts itself by affirming *imamah* while acknowledging the necessity of concealment, is based on their misunderstanding and lack of knowledge of our doctrine, both past and present. It only applies to those who are ignorant and unaware of the beliefs held by our predecessors and successors regarding *imamah*. They are unaware of what is attributed to us in our discourse.

In essence, they divide into two groups:

1. Some affirm *imamah* both rationally and through narrations. These include the Mu'tazilah of Baghdad and many from the Murji'ah.
2. Others believe in the necessity of *imamah* based on textual evidence but deny its rational necessity. These include the Mu'tazilah of Basrah, the majority of the Zaydiyyah, and the Zaydis in general.

All of them, while differing from the Imami doctrine regarding the obligation of explicit designation of the Imams, acknowledge that the obligation of choice and the existence of *imamah* serve the general interests. They recognise that when the choice becomes impossible due to the tyranny of oppressors, the obligation to obey and support diminishes, and leaving it becomes more advantageous. At such times, they are excused, and the blame lies with those who caused their non-compliance. This is a similar concept to the concept of *taqiyyah* and refraining from proclaiming faith.

How can the issue be hidden from our ignorant opponents to the extent that they consider us contradictory in our doctrine? It is due to their lack of guidance and their severe deviation from the truth. We rely on Allah for assistance.

Missive 10

As for the opponents' claim that if the Imam has been absent since his birth until his appearance, calling people to Allah without anyone having seen him except for those who died before his appearance, then there would be no way for people to recognise him through sight, nor to distinguish him from others based on his call. If Allah does not manifest clear signs and miracles through him to indicate that he is the awaited Imam, then this contradicts their belief in his *imamah*. Moreover, if *imamah* were true, it would contradict the consensus of the entire Muslim community that there is no prophet after our Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله).

We say that there have been reports from the Imams of guidance, including the ancestors of the awaited Imam, which indicate his existence before his appearance and herald his rising with the sword before its time. Some of these signs include the emergence of al-Sufyani, the appearance of the Dajjal, the killing of a man from the progeny of Imam al-Hasan, who will call to Imam al-Zaman, and the occurrence of a sinkhole in al-Bayda.

The general public, in addition to the specific reports, have widely transmitted these signs, and they are considered definitive and certain. These signs serve as miraculous evidence that validates his lineage and his call.

Although these signs do not prove prophethood, as they are not specific to the call of the prophets, they do indicate the truth of the caller's message in its entirety, without specifying its details. If he calls to the belief in his *imamah*, this serves as evidence for the truth of his message in that regard. Similarly, if a righteous believer calls others to believe in the prophethood of a Prophet or the *imamah* of an Imam, and they accept it, it is due to the miraculous signs supporting the truth of his call.

These signs are not exclusive to the claim of prophethood but are part of the broader category of miraculous events. They do not contradict the belief that there is no prophet after our Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله). It is essential to acknowledge that Allah's wisdom and divine plan encompass various ways of conveying His message and guiding His servants.

Allah, in His wisdom, sent clear signs to Maryam, the daughter of 'Imran, to provide sustenance from the heavens to her. This sustenance was beyond the ordinary course of events and was a miraculous sign from Allah, although

Maryam was neither a Prophet nor a Messenger but a righteous servant of Allah.

Allah also revealed to the mother of Nabi Musa to place him in the river and not fear for his safety, as Allah would return him to her and make him one of the Messengers. Divine revelation is one of the miracles granted to the Prophets.

Therefore, recognising the truth through knowledge and clear signs, as well as the purpose of displaying these signs through Allah's chosen ones, is a valid method of distinguishing the rightful leaders and guides from others. The opponents' reliance on obscure doubts is due to their unwillingness to acknowledge these signs.

I have affirmed these points in my book known as *al-Bahir min al-Mu'jizat* and elaborated on them in my book titled *al-Idah*. If anyone wishes to delve deeper into this matter, they can refer to these two books, which should help dispel the doubts raised by our opponents, as Allah wills.

Appendices

Some Concluding Remarks from Shaykh al-Mufid:

These are the concluding chapters whose meanings have been confirmed, so that the truth in them becomes clear for those with understanding. I have fulfilled my guarantee in that, and success is from Allah, the Most High, alone.

May Allah bless our master Muhammad, the Holy Prophet, and his family, and grant him abundant peace. There is no power nor strength except through Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty, alone.

Some Concluding Remarks by the Translator

For the last 1,081 years since Imam al-Mahdi (عجل الله فرجه) went into his Major Occultation, the opponents of the Imamiyyah have derided and tried to discredit our belief in the existence, *imamah* and occultations of the son of al-Hasan al-‘Askari (عليهما السلام). They have alleged that it is impossible for him to have been alive for as long as the Imamiyyah claim, that he is nonexistent because he cannot be seen or heard or known by people, and that his occultation contradicts the purpose of his being an Imam,²⁶ and so on. These are common polemics which can be found in many books authored by non-Shi’a, in their attempts to sideline our creed and establish their own in its rightful place. For example, we find in the *Minhaj al-Sunnah* of Ibn Taymiyyah the following:

ويكفيك أن مطلوبهم بالإمامة أن يكون لهم رئيس معصوم، يكون لطفاً في مصالح دينهم ودنياهم، وليس في الطوائف أبعد عن مصلحة اللطف والإمامة منهم؟ فإنهم يحتالون على مجهول ومعدوم لا يرى له عين ولا أثر، ولا يسمع له حس ولا خبر، فلم يحصل لهم من الأمر المقصود بإمامته شيء، وأي من فرض إماماً نافعاً في بعض مصالح الدين والدنيا، كان خيراً ممن لا ينتفع به في شيء من مصالح الإمامة.²⁷

And how is it that their demands for *imamah* that is for them presided over by an infallible, which is a grace in their religious and worldly affairs, and they are not far behind among the sects from [securing] those interests and that grace through *imamah*? For indeed, they deceive [themselves] on the basis of the unknown and nonexistent [Twelfth Imam], whom eyes have never seen nor traced, from whom feeling cannot be ascertained nor any news [concerning him]? So they have not achieved their intended purpose in any thing through his *imamah*, and any Imam whose obedience is a duty and useful in some of the affairs of the religion and the world, is superior to one from whom none can benefit in any thing concerning the affairs of *imamah*.

The Isma’ili *da’i* Ja’far b. Mansur al-Yaman expressed similar sentiments in his

²⁶ Essentially, that he is useless - and may Allah protect him and us from such an accusation.

²⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, “Contradictions of the Rafidah Concerning *Imamah* With Respect to Words and Deeds,” in *Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, thq. ‘Abd Allah al-Ghunayman (Sana’a, Yemen: Dar al-Siddiq lil-Nashr wa’l-Tawzi’, 1426 A.H.), p. 44. The translation provided is my own.

Sara'ir wa Asrar al-Nutaqa:²⁸

...لأن الإمام القائم بالأمر بمنسوب الخلق ، والخلق فقراء إليه، وإذا كان مفقود العيان ينتظر الرجعة، فما منفعة من بعده به؟ وإلى من يرجعون في أمر حلالهم وحرامهم وفرائضهم وأحكامهم؟ ومن يقيم فيهم حدود الله، ويفرق بينهم في الأحكام؟ وإنا متى قدنا الموجود رجعنا إلى عبادته، ونسبنا الباري إلى الظلم، وأنه أحالنا على عدم. ومتى اختلفنا في حكم من الأحكام رجعنا إلى الرأي والقياس، وليس هذا من فعل الحكيم أن يأمرنا بالسمع، والطاعة لشخص مفقود. ولو جاز لنا ذلك، لأمرنا بعبادة من لم يلد، لنكون ننتظر حتى يلد كما ينتظر الغائب...²⁹

Because the Imam standing by the command [of Allah]...is positioned with respect to His Creation such that they are indemnified due to him, and when there was [only] a person invisible to eyesight and whose return is awaited, what benefit do those after him derive from him? And to whom do they refer their permissible and impermissible, their obligations and their rulings? And who stands by them with respect to [judging within] the limits of Allah, and who differentiates between them concerning the rulings? And indeed when that is the case, we are driven back to refer to His [fallible] servants, and our pedigree is made to reside in wrongdoing, and that refers to us not. And when [that is the case] we disagree amongst ourselves in a ruling from among the rulings so we refer to personal opinion and analogy, and it is improper that the All-Wise command us by hearing and obedience to one who is missing.³⁰ And if

²⁸ *Da'i* [داعي] connotes 'missionary'.

²⁹ Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman, "A Statement Concerning the Sects That Arose After Ja'far al-Sadiq," in *Sara'ir wa Asrar al-Nutaqa*, thq. Dr. Mustafa Ghalib (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Andalus, 1404 A.H.), pp. 249-250.

³⁰ The hypocrisy of Ibn Mansur al-Yaman is absolutely bewildering when one considers that it is standard Isma'ili doctrine that the imams of the Isma'iliyyah after Isma'il himself hid their true identities, which they call *dawr al-satr* [lit. 'cover role,' referring to their habit of assuming false identities]. Of course, a somewhat astute Isma'ili might quote the Imami perennialist Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his *Ideas and Realities of Islam* wherein he says: "The idea of being hidden (*mastūr*) must not, however, be confused with the occultation (*ghaybah*) of the Twelfth Imam. The first implies simply being hidden from the eye of the crowd and from public notice while the second means disappearance from the physical world" [Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Ch. 6 - Sunnism and Shi'ism - Twelve-Imam Shi'ism and Isma'ilism," in *Ideas and Realities of Islam* (Chicago, IL: ABC International Group, Inc., 2000), p. 154]. First of all, had the *istitar* of the Isma'ili imams not lent itself to the possibility that their faithful supporters would be totally cut off from them, then Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman's fellow *da'i* Ahmad b. Sulayman al-Nisaburi would not have noted in his *Istitar al-Imam* the following: "Know, reader (of this book),- may God make thee a knower of the truth!- that as soon as the *dā'īs* lost touch with the Imam, and remained in great confusion, the principal amongst them held a meeting in the town of 'Askar

that is permissible for us, then he should command us to obey one who has not yet been born, so we wait for him to be born as if we are waiting for one who has occulted.

Our purpose here in translating the book *al-Fusul al-Asharah al-Ghaybah* of our eminent Shaykh al-Mufid, may Allah sanctify his soul and illuminate his resting place, was to communicate to the wider English-speaking Shi'i community and other interested parties why the suppositions of the above authors, and others who make the same arguments, are gravely mistaken. As for our own answers to these arguments, we refer firstly to the Book of Allah:

{الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ}.³¹

Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them...

As demonstrated by Allah in the aforementioned verse, the argument that the Mahdi of the Imamiyyah is nonexistent because he cannot be seen, or heard,

Mukram...When the people, mentioned above, met, they said: **“We have lost touch with our Imam. Without him our prayer, fast (etc.) is of no use. We do not know, to whom we should hand the religious tax (zakāt).”** [Wladimir Ivanow, “Ch. 6 - Translations, no. 1 - *Istitāru’l-Imām*,” in *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (Calcutta, India: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 157-158]. Secondly, Seyyed Hossein is most likely ignorant of a narration in Shaykh al-Nu’mani’s *Kitab al-Ghaybah* which is at least *hasan* if not *sahih* (depending on whether or not Yazid al-Kinasi is the same person as Yazid al-Qammat) wherein Imam al-Mahdi is compared to the prophet Yusuf: أَخْبَرَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ بْنِ عَقْدَةَ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُفَضَّلِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ بْنِ رَمَانَةَ الْأَشْعَرِيِّ وَسَعْدَانُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ وَأَحْمَدُ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ الْقَطَوَانِيُّ، قَالُوا جَمِيعًا: حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ زُرَّادٍ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ سَالِمٍ، عَنْ يَزِيدِ الْكَنَاسِيِّ، قَالَ: >> سَمِعْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيِّ الْبَاقِرِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) يَقُولُ: إِنْ صَاحِبَ >> هَذَا الْأَمْرِ فِيهِ شَبِيهٌ مِنْ يُوسُفَ، ابْنِ أُمَّةٍ سَوْدَاءَ، يَصْلُحُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ أَمْرُهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ، يَرِيدُ بِالشَّبِيهِ مِنْ يُوسُفَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) غَيْبِيَّتَهُ. Informed us Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Sa’id b. ‘Uqdah, who said: Narrated to us Muhammad b. al-Mufaddal b. Qays b. Rumanah al-Ash’ari, Sa’dan b. Is’haq b. Sa’id, Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Malik and Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Qatawani, all of them said together: Narrated to us al-Hasan b. Mahbub al-Zarrad, from Hisham b. Salim, from Yazid al-Kinasi, who said: “I heard Aba Ja’far Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Baqir (عليه السلام) saying: ‘Indeed, the Master of this matter has a likeness in him to Nabi Yusuf, he is the son of a black bondswoman, Allah (عز وجل) shall rectify his matter within one night, **and what is meant by his likeness to Yusuf (عليه السلام) is with respect to his occultation.**” [Shaykh Ibn Abi Zaynab Abi ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Ja’far al-Nu’mani, “What has Been Narrated Concerning His Characteristics, His Biography and His Deeds, and What has Been Revealed in the Qur’an Concerning Him (عليه السلام), narration no. 8,” in *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, thq. Faris Hasun Karim (Qum, Iran: Manshurat Anwar al-Huda, 1422 A.H.), p. 233.] And it is obvious from his story in the Qur’an that Yusuf *had not* physically disappeared from the world, but rather that he went by unrecognised for a significant period of time as being Yusuf b. Ya’qub; likewise, Imam al-Mahdi has *not* physically disappeared from the world, rather he lives among the people and goes by unrecognised. Seyyed Hossein’s assertion otherwise is simply the insertion of his own baseless philosophical presumptions into what is one of the key doctrines of the Imamiyyah.

³¹ Al-Baqarah - 2:3.

or otherwise accessed by the masses, is completely invalid. The Imamiyyah have consistently maintained on the basis of reliable narrations from the A'immah that there will always be a divine authority on the Earth, *whether he be apparent or hidden*, and that is exactly what Imam al-Baqir says in a *sahih* report in *al-Imamah wa'l-Tabsirah*:

الحميري، عن السندي بن محمد، عن العلاء بن رزين، عن محمد بن مسلم: عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام، قال: لا تبقى الأرض بغير إمام ظاهر أو باطن.³²

Al-Himyari, from [Aban] al-Sindhi b. Muhammad [al-Balaji], from al-'Alaa b. Razin, from Muhammad b. Muslim: from Abi Ja'far al-Baqir (عليه السلام) who said: "The Earth would not remain without an Imam, *whether he be apparent or hidden*."

To add to the credibility of the content of the above report, the Ahl al-Sunnah have included a well-known narration in their books wherein 'Ali b. Abi Talib makes the same statement within a larger speech to his companion Kumayl b. Ziyad al-Nakha'i. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti included a version of this narration without a chain of transmission in his *Jami' al-Ahadith*:

عن كميل بن زياد قال: >> أخذ بيدي علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه فأخرجنا إلى ناحية الجبّانة، فلما أحصر تنقّس ثم قال: يا كميل! إن هذه القلوب أوعية نغيرها أوعاها، احفظ عني ما أقول لك: الناس ثلاثة: عالم رباني، ومتعلم إلى سبيل نجاة، وهمج رعاع أتباع كل ناعق، يميلون مع كل ريح، لم يستضيئوا بنور العلم، ولم يلجأوا إلى ركن وثيق، يا كميل! العلم خير من المال، العلم يحرسك، وأنت تحرس المال، والعلم يزكو على العمل، والمال تنقصه النفقة، يا كميل محبة العالم دين يدان بها، العلم يكسب العالم الطاعة لربه في حياته، وجميل الأحدث بعد وفاته، وصناعة المال تزول بزواله، والعلم حاكم والمال محكوم عليه، يا كميل! مات خزان الأموال وهم أحياء، والعلماء باقون ما بقي الدهر، أعيانهم مفقودة، وأمثالهم في القلوب موجودة، هاهنا لعلماء - وأشار إلى صدره - لو أصبت له حملة، ثم قال: اللهم بلي، أصبته لقناً غير مأمون، يستعمل آلة الدين للدنيا، ويستظهر بحجج الله على كتابه، وبنعمه على كتابه، أو منقاداً لأهل الحق لا بصيرة له في أحيائه، يقتدح الشك في قلبه بأول عارض من شبهة، اللهم لا ذا ولا ذاك، أو منهوماً باللذات سلس القياد الشبهات، أو مغرماً بجمع الأموال والأدخار، وليس من دعاة الدين، أقرب شياً بهما الأنعام السائمة، كذلك يموت العلم بموت حامله، ثم قال: اللهم بلي لا تخلوا الأرض من قائم لله بحجة، إما ظاهر مشهور، وإما خائف مغمور لئلا

³² 'Ali b. Babuwayh al-Qummi, "Ch. 2 - That the Earth is Not Devoid of a Divine Authority, narration no. 14," in *al-Imamah wa'l-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah*, thq. Hawzah al-'Ilmiyyah, Madrasah al-Imam al-Mahdi (عج) (Qum, Iran: Madrasah al-Imam al-Mahdi, 1404 A.H.), p. 31.

From Kumayl b. Ziyad, who said: << Once ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (رضي الله عنه) held my hand and took me out of the city to the desert. When we reached the desert, he heaved a sigh and said: “O’ Kumayl, no doubt these hearts are containers, and the best of them are those that retain the most. Memorise from me what I say; people are of three categories: the divinely guided scholar, the students on the path of salvation, and the riffraff of society, following every crowing of the crows, bending as the wind blows; never benefiting from the light of knowledge, nor finding a refuge with a strong supporter. O’ Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth; for knowledge guards you while you have to guard wealth; knowledge grows and increases when you put it to use, while wealth is diminished when spent. O’ Kumayl, to have liking and affinity for the scholar of religion is the best way to entrench one's faith in Allah, it enables one to be obedient to Him during one’s lifetime, and to be worthy of praise after one’s death. The benefit of wealth fades when the wealth fades, while knowledge guards, wealth needs protection. O’ Kumayl, the hoarders of wealth have died, while the scholars exist as long as the world does; their bodies are missing but their teachings and wisdom are ingrained in the hearts.” And then pointing to his chest said: “Here is well-grounded, plentiful knowledge;³⁴ I wish it had true

³⁴ The astute reader familiar with Imami *hadith* will have noticed how this particular expression perfectly corresponds to what the Imams have said about themselves. Refer to the following report in *al-Kaḥfi*: (عليه السلام) محمد بن يحيى، عن محمد بن الحسين، عن يزيد شغري، عن هارون بن حمزة عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال: سمعته يقول: {إِنَّ هُوَ عَايِنَتْ بَيِّنَاتٍ فِي صُورِ الَّذِينَ أَوْثَرُوا الثَّعْلَمَ} قال: هم الأئمة (عليهم السلام) خاصة (عليه السلام). Muhammad b. Yahya, from Muhammad b. al-Husayn, from Yazid Shaghar, from Harun b. Hamzah, from Abi ‘Abd Allah (عليه السلام). Harun narrated: “I heard him mention: ‘{Rather, the Qur’an is distinct verses

recipients and adherents. But unfortunately, some unscrupulous men of understanding have tried to misuse it, using religion as a weapon to earn worldly gain, and seeking undue power by divine authority over Allah's creatures, abusing His bounties which He bestowed upon them. People took them as compliant with divine wisdom. Such people (who they have adopted as their guides) have no insight into its ramifications; with the result that with the slightest confusion, doubt enters their minds. Neither of them could be the true carrier of knowledge. And then there are those with insatiable lust, easily misled by the pleasures of flesh, or enticed by accumulating wealth, not at all among those who care for religion. They very much resemble the grazing cattle. Thus knowledge dies with its carrier's death. But, O' Allah! Yet, the earth is never devoid of one who stands firm as a divine authority from Allah, either apparent and known or fearful in concealment, ensuring that His Proofs are not lost among you. But where are they? Surely, they are few in number, but of enormous value. Allah protects His proofs with them, till they succeed to transmit it further to their likes, and plant it deep in their hearts. They are the ones overwhelmed by the true knowledge of certitude, and have made it easy for themselves to tread on the path which men in luxury found difficult. They derive pleasure and enjoyment from things which repel the ignorant. Though they live on earth with their bodies, their souls hang unto the higher plane. O' Kumayl, They are the caliphs of Allah on His earth, the ones who invite people to His religion. Alas! How keen I am to have sight of them! May Allah forgive me and you >>.³⁵

On the reliability of this tradition with the Ahl al-Sunnah, we convey the statement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his *Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi*:

preserved within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge} [29:49], whence he commented: "They are the Imams (عليهم السلام) in particular." [Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, "Vol. 1, book 4 - The Book of People with Divine Authority, ch. 80 - The Imams (عليهم السلام) are the Recipients of Knowledge Which has been Preserved in Their Breasts, narration no. 4," in *al-Kafi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Manshurat al-Fajr, 1428 A.H.), p. 127.]

³⁵ The Imamiyyah also have this tradition in our books. The reference is as follows: Shaykh al-Mufid Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu'man al-'Ukbari al-Baghdadi, "Session 29, narration no. 3," in *al-Amali*, thq. 'Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Tayar al-Jadid, 1414 A.H.), pp. 247-250.

وقال علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه لكميل بن زياد النخعي - وهو حديث مشهور عند أهل العلم، يستغني عن الإسناد لشهرته عندهم.³⁶

As for the saying of 'Ali b. Abi Talib (رضي الله عنه) to Kumayl b. Ziyad al-Nakha'i - it is a narration renowned according to the people of knowledge, so its chain of transmission is dispensed with due to its notoriety with them.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah also transmitted from Ibn 'Abd al-Barr the same statement in *I'lam al-Muwwaqi'in*:

قال أبو عمر: >> وقال علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه لكميل بن زياد النخعي - وهو حديث مشهور عند أهل العلم، يستغني عن الإسناد لشهرته عندهم.³⁷

Abu 'Umar [Yusuf b. 'Abd al-Barr] said [in his *Jami' al-Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi*]: "As for the saying of 'Ali b. Abi Talib (رضي الله عنه) to Kumayl b. Ziyad al-Nakha'i - it is a narration renowned according to the people of knowledge, so its chain of transmission is dispensed with due to its notoriety with them."

Ibn Qayyim also transmits the opinion of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi on this tradition in *Miftah Dar al-Sa'adah*:

قال أبو بكر الخطيب: >> هذا حديث حسن، من أحسن الأحاديث معنى، وأشرفها لفظاً، وتقيسهم في غاية الصحة ونهاية السداد؛ لأن الإنسان لا يخلو من أحد الأقسام التي ذكرها مع كمال العقل وإزاحة العلل؛ إما أن يكون عالماً، أو متعلماً، أو مغفلاً للعلم وطلبه ليس بعالم ولا طالب له.³⁸

Abu Bakr al-Khatib says: "This narration is *hasan* (good), of the best narrations in its meaning and the most noble of them in words; the division of people into categories at the beginning of it by Amir al-Mu'minin is completely accurate

³⁶ Abi 'Umar Yusuf b. 'Abd al-Barr, "Vol. 2 - On the Disorderliness of *Taqlid* and its Negation, and the Difference Between *Taqlid* and *Ittiba'*, report no. 1,878," in *Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi*, thq. Abu'l-Ashbal al-Zuhayri (Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1414 A.H.), p. 984.

³⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, "Vol. 3 - The Speech of 'Ali to Kumayl b. Ziyad," in *I'lam al-Muwwaqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin*, thq. Mashhur b. Hasan Aal Salman Abu 'Ubaydah (Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1423 A.H.), p. 459.

³⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, "Vol. 1, Part 129 - Concerning the Narration of Kumayl b. Ziyad from 'Ali," in *Miftah Dar al-Sa'adah wa Manshurat Wilayah al-'Ilm wa'l-Iradah*, thq. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Hasan b. Qa'id (Al-Makkah al-Mukarramah, Saudi Arabia: Dar 'Alim al-Fawa'id, 1432 A.H.), p. 349.

and highly firm, because human beings cannot be outside of these categories that he has mentioned with high intelligence and with clearing the reasons; he can either be a scholar, or a student, or someone neglectful about knowledge and seeking it, neither a scholar nor a student who seeks knowledge.”

Finally, we relay from Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi the conditions of a *mashhur* (renowned) narration, as the tradition of Kumayl from ‘Ali has been described as such according to other Sunni authors, from al-Sakhawi’s *Fat’h al-Mughith*:

ولكن لا اعتبار إلا بما هو مشهور عند علماء الحديث... فالمشهور أعم، ولذا قال شيخنا: >> إن كل متواتر مشهور، ولا ينعكس <<، يعني فإنه لا يرتقي للتواتر إلا بعد الشهرة.³⁹

But there is no reliability for it unless it is renowned among the scholars of *hadith*...so ‘renowned’ is a more general term, and our shaykh said: “Indeed, every *mutawatir* [mass-transmitted] narration is a renowned one, and vice-versa is not at all the case,” and that means that a narration cannot be mass-transmitted unless it is first renowned.

So, Ibn Taymiyyah and other Sunnis who have had a mind to reject the beliefs of the Shi’a have no legitimate basis to dispute the authenticity of {Yet, the earth is never devoid of one who stands as a divine authority from Allah, either apparent and known or fearful in concealment, ensuring that His Proofs are not lost among you}, as it is part of a tradition which is reliable due to being so renowned that its chain of transmission is irrelevant. Those who argue against the son of al-Hasan al-‘Askari on this illegitimate basis ought to apply the same reasoning to their professed belief in Allah - Who cannot be seen, or heard, or otherwise accessed by the masses - and thus proceed to the only conclusion there is of such an argument, which is to blatantly affirm atheism.

And while we acknowledge that Ibn Taymiyyah is doubtlessly guilty of the fallacy of special pleading here, we would particularly like to emphasise our Isma’ili opponent’s astounding hypocrisy. In the same book of his which we quoted earlier, Ja’far b. Mansur al-Yaman purports that Imam al-Sadiq’s son

³⁹ Shams al-Din Abi’l-Khayr Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi al-Shafi’i, “Vol. 3 - The Meaning of the Singular, the Esteemed and the Renowned Narrations,” in *Fat’h al-Mughith bi-Sharh Alfiyyah al-Hadith*, thq. ‘Abd al-Karim b. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Khudayr & Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah b. Fahid Aal Fahid (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Maktabah Dar al-Minhaj, 1426 A.H.), p. 396.

Isma'il actually went into an occultation of his own, and that he supposedly invested responsibility for handling the affairs of his faithful adherents in his son Muhammad, much the same as our Imam al-Mahdi, or more appropriately *the* Imam al-Mahdi, *actually* did in deputising four individuals during his minor Occultation. Ibn Mansur al-Yaman even uses the past-tense verb form of the exact same word the Ahl al-Bayt and the Imamiyyah have used to describe the condition of Imam al-Mahdi (صلوات الله عليه):

ولما غيب شخصه في حياة أبيه سراً عن أعدائه، ومحنة لأوليائه كما تقدم القول في اسماعيل بن ابراهيم، قال ما بدا لله في شيء كما بدا في اسماعيل، إذ قبضه في حياة أبيه، وقد رويانا نحن وأتم عن الصادق أنه قال: إن البداء والمشية لله في كل شيء إلا في الإمامة. فعظمت القرية على الله وقطعت ما أمر الله به أن يوصل، وجاءوا ليطفئوا نور الله بأفواههم ورجعت بالأمر القهقري ولم تعلموا أن اسماعيل لم يغيب عن الدار حتى خلف ولداً كاملاً وأن الأمر قد رجع إليه بأمر الله ووحيه إليه، وأنه لما حضره ما أراد الله من أمره أوحى إليه أن يسلم الأمر إلى ولده محمد، وعن نقبائه، وخواص أصحابه، وسلم إليه بمحضر من خواصه سراً عليه...⁴⁰

And when his [i.e. Isma'il's] person disappeared in the lifetime of his father, it was as a secret from his enemies and a trial for his *awliya*, as was preceded by what has been said about Isma'il the son of Ibrahim, when he said: 'Allah has not effected a *bada*' as He has done so in the case of Isma'il,'⁴¹ when he was caught [by the Angel of Death, i.e. he died] in the lifetime of his father, and both you and ourselves have reported the saying of al-Sadiq: 'Indeed, the *bada*' and the decree of Allah applies on all matters except *imamah*'. So how great is the lie you have ascribed to Allah and how you have cut off the command of Allah that was connected to him, and it came that they extinguish the Light of Allah with their mouths, and you cancelled the divine command, but you did not know that Isma'il had not disappeared from the world until he had deputised his grown son and that the matter [i.e. *imamah*] would return to him by the command of Allah and His Inspiration. And when the intention of Allah became apparent to him [i.e. Isma'il] by an Inspiration by which he was to

⁴⁰ Ibn Mansur al-Yaman, op. cit., in "A Statement in Refutation of Those Who Dispute the Imam of the Time," pp. 246-247.

⁴¹ That is, a correction in the perception of the people by the revelation of the true command or decision of Allah.

submit his matter to his son Muhammad, and he invested the matter in his son in the presence of his dignitaries and his specially trusted companions, in secret...

The Imamiyyah respond to these assertions by firmly stating that they are simply baseless, fanciful delusions, and that no other Islamic sect has contested the historical reality that Isma'il died during his father's lifetime. Even the most eminent adherent of the Isma'ili sect, al-Qadi al-Nu'man, affirmed the same in his *Sharh al-Akhbar*:

وكان إسماعيل أحبهما إليه وأثرهما به. وولد لإسماعيل [محمد] بن إسماعيل، وبلغ مبلغ الرجال في حياة أبيه، وتوفي أبوه في حياة أبيه جعفر بن محمد عليه السلام بالعريض، فحمل على رقاب الرجال حتى دفن بالبقيع. وكان أبوه جعفر بن محمد عليه السلام يأمر به، فينزل، ثم يكشف عن وجهه، وينظر إليه، ففعل ذلك، وهو يُسار به إلى البقيع مراراً. وكان ذلك سبباً (١). وكان قوم من الشيعة يقولون: توفي إسماعيل في حياة أبيه. يقولون: إنه عهد إليه، وأنه هو عهد إلى ابنه محمد (٢) وهم على ذلك إلى اليوم يقولون بامامة ولده واحد بعد واحد.

(١) هكذا في الاصل.

(٢) أقول كيف يعهد إليه أبوه وهو لم يستلم العهد بعد، لأن أباه كان حياً ومات هو في حياة أبيه.⁴²

Isma'il was the most beloved of the two of them [i.e. himself and his brother, 'Abd Allah al-Aftah] to him [i.e. Imam al-Sadiq] and the one who most influenced his father. And he had a son, Muhammad b. Isma'il, and he [Muhammad] reached the age of maturity in the lifetime of his father, and his father [Isma'il] died in the lifetime of his father, Ja'far b. Muhammad (عليه السلام) in the village of 'Urayd, so he had men carry [the body of Isma'il] on their necks until they buried it in al-Baqi'. And his father, Ja'far b. Muhammad (عليه السلام), ordered to lower the body, then he unveiled his face, and looked at it, so he did that, and returned with him [Muhammad b. Isma'il] to al-Baqi' repeatedly. And that was for a reason [1]. And the Shi'a used to say: 'Isma'il has

⁴² Al-Qadi al-Nu'man b. Muhammad al-Tamimi al-Maghribi, "Vol. 14, section 3 - On Some Subsects of the Shi'a," in *Sharh al-Akhbar fi Fada'il al-A'imma al-At'har*, thq. Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni al-Jalali (Qum, Iran: Muwassassah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1431 A.H.), pp. 309-310.

died in the lifetime of his father.' And they say: 'It is a covenant [i.e. *imamah*] deposited in him [Isma'il], and indeed he passed it onto his son Muhammad [2]. And they are [firm] on that till today, whence they say that *imamah* passes from one son to another.

[1] That is how it is in reality.

[2] It is said: 'How could his father [i.e. Ja'far al-Sadiq] pass the covenant [of *Imamah*] when he did not receive it afterwards, because his father lived while he [i.e. Isma'il] died in the lifetime of his father?'

And the deluded hypocrite Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman *himself acknowledged that Isma'il died while his father Imam al-Sadiq was still alive* in the same book in which he tried to argue for the *imamah* of Isma'il b. Ja'far:

ومما يدل على إمامة إسماعيل أيضاً أن الصادق لما قبض أقامه في مجلس مسجى ثلاثة أيام، وهم مكشوف الوجه والناس يدخلون إليه فيعرفونه من بني هاشم وغيرهم، وسائر أهل المدينة والزوار، وإنه يقول لمن دخل إليه وعزاه فيه: أليس هذا ولدي / إسماعيل؟ ولا يستبدل المسؤول من قول نعم عندما رأى ما رآه، فعند ذلك يأخذ خطه في محضر حضره وأنه لم يزل على ذلك حتى أخذ خطوط كل من في المدينة من بني هاشم، وغيرهم من الزوار، وأهل المدينة، وأنه خرج به في اليوم الرابع إلى البقيع وهو مكشوف الوجه، وأنه كان ينزله ويقبله، ويقول: والله ما أسفي على موت إسماعيل أسفي على ما أودعته إياه، ويشهد جماعة من معه، ويأخذ بذلك خط من لم يحضره من قبل خروجه، وأنه لم يزل على ذلك مرات ثلاث. ومع المرة الرابعة أنزله إلى قبره وفعل به مثل ما فعله في غيره، وأشهد الخلق بذلك، ودفنه بمحضر منهم، وكتب أصحاب الأخبار بذلك إلى المنصور ضده...⁴³

And what is also from among the evidences for the *imamah* of Isma'il is that when he died his father Imam al-Sadiq stood by his resting, shrouded body for three days, while his face was uncovered and people from Bani Hashim and others would enter upon the Imam and recognise that the dead body was that of Isma'il, as would the rest of the people of Madinah and visitors, and indeed the Imam would say to those who came to him and to his esteemed companions: "Is this not my son Isma'il?," and he would not absolve the one who affirmed as such from the responsibility of having seen what he had seen,

⁴³ Ibn Mansur al-Yaman, op. cit., p. 262.

and on that basis he took signatures from all those who were present and he did not refrain from taking these testimonies from every Hashimi in Madinah, and others from among the people of Madinah and visitors, and he left his house with the body of Isma'il and headed towards al-Baqi' on the fourth day while Isma'il's face remained uncovered, and he would constantly reveal that the dead body was that of Isma'il and accept the testimony to that being the case from whomever gave testimony, and he said: "By Allah, I am not as hurt by the death of Isma'il as I am by that which I have promised him," and those who had gathered with him for this occasion bore witness that he had said that, and he took signatures from those who were not present before he had left his house to bury Isma'il in al-Baqi', and he did not refrain from doing that three times over. And on the fourth occasion he revealed Isma'il's grave and did as he had done so the previous three times, and the creatures of Allah testified to that, and he buried Isma'il with those who were present among them, and spies reported that to the 'Abbasid sultan al-Mansur against Imam al-Sadiq...⁴⁴

Somehow, an esoteric reinterpretation of these events is justifiable - one which allows Ibn Mansur al-Yaman to maintain his Isma'ili sensibilities in the face of the blinding truth that *the son of an Imam who dies before his father could not possibly have ever been his successor to begin with, and neither would Allah inculcate imamah in this deceased sayyid's offspring when the deceased sayyid himself could not exercise his supposed responsibility for guiding man to his Lord in his own right.* And yet Ibn Mansur al-Yaman evidently supposed that he had legs to stand on to attack the Imamiyyah for believing in the occultation of the son of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari.

⁴⁴ Later in the book, Ibn Mansur al-Yaman discusses the measures which Imam al-Sadiq took to protect his grandson and supposed successor, Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ja'far, so it cannot be denied that the author of *Sara'ir wa Asrar al-Nutaqa* affirms that Isma'il 'died,' although the chainless, contradictory and apocryphal retelling of these events by Ibn Mansur al-Yaman makes his understanding seem (perhaps deliberately) vague, as he consistently never says in the original Arabic text of *Sara'ir* that Isma'il actually died, but rather he uses words such as غيب [i.e. disappeared]. This is an implicit pointer to the inclination that Isma'il b. Ja'far was in fact the occulted Mahdi prevalent among the 'pure Isma'ilis' who were mentioned by Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ash'ari al-Qummi in his *Kitab al-Muqalat wa'l-Firaq*. It is also in general an indication that Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman himself believed that Isma'il had *not* predeceased his father.

Furthermore, the necessity of Imam al-Mahdi's existence is *not* invalidated by the Shi'a having taken up the dissemination of religious teachings and the fulfilment of religious obligations while the Imam is in occultation, as Shaykh al-Mufid has already argued above. For there is an important difference between upholding the *shari'ah* and safeguarding it; namely, an ordinary adherent and loyalist of the Ahl al-Bayt (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً) can fulfil their religious obligations and judge by the command of Allah even as the Imam is in occultation, for as Allah has said in His Book; {*And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers*}⁴⁵ but by no means is the adherence of ordinary Shi'a expected to be perfect, nor does even the most knowledgeable Shi'i jurist compare to the *hujjah*, i.e. the person invested with divine authority from Allah, on the earth. So the existence of the Imam is a rational necessity so that he will reappear in order to correct the errors of the Shi'a, and this principle is expressed in a tradition in *al-Kafi* which 'Allamah al-Majlisi graded *hasan-muwawatha*q (good/reliable) and Shaykh al-Bahbudi considered *sahih*, as below:

علي بن إبراهيم، عن أبيه، عن محمد بن أبي عمير، عن منصور بن يونس وسعدان بن مسلم، عن إسحاق بن عمار، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال: سمعته يقول: إن الأرض لا تخلو إلا وفيها إمام، كيما إن زاد المؤمنين شيئاً ردهم، وإن نقصوا شيئاً أتمه لهم.⁴⁶

'Ali b. Ibrahim, from his father, from Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr, from Mansur b. Yunus and Su'dan b. Muslim, from Is'haq b. 'Ammar, who narrated from Abi 'Abd Allah (عليه السلام) - He (Is'haq b. 'Ammar) said: "I heard al-Sadiq saying: 'Indeed, the Earth is not devoid of an Imam, so when the believers exceed in a matter he would eliminate their excesses, and when they are deficient in a matter he compensates for their deficiency therein.'"

Because the Imam is the one bestowed with complete knowledge of the *shari'ah* and other related matters, and invested with divine authority, and graced with complete infallibility, only he can be the safeguard of the *shari'ah* to the exclusion of all other living persons.

⁴⁵ Al-Ma'idah - 5:44.

⁴⁶ Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, "Vol. 1, book 4 - The Book of People with Divine Authority, ch. 62 - That the Earth is Not Devoid of a Divine Authority, hadith no. 2," in *al-Kafi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Manshurat al-Fajr, 1428 A.H.), p. 103. The translation is my own.

There is yet another variation of this objection to our belief in the existence of Imam al-Mahdi which has been proposed by a Nizari Isma'ili apologist known as 'Ismaili Gnosis' in his article wherein he attempts to prove that Isma'il b. Ja'far was the successor to his father Abi 'Abd Allah al-Sadiq.⁴⁷ This inept dig at the Twelfth Imam is based on the twelfth verse of Surah Ya Sin:

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَرَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾⁴⁸

Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have inculcated in a manifest Imam.⁴⁹

And doubtlessly we say that this apologist for the false Isma'ili sect has committed a category error; an إمام مبين [*imamin mubinin*] is not the same thing as an إمام ظاهر [*imamin dhahirin*], because ظاهر [*dhahir*] and مبين [*mubin*] are not actually synonymous, as many people ignorant of Arabic grammar might assume. The word ظاهر is derived from the root ظ-ه-ر which relates to things which are visible - which is why *salat al-dhuhr* (صلاة الظهر) is named as such, because the time for performing this prayer commences when the Sun is at its zenith, which is when it is most visible in the sky on a sunny day. The word مبين, on the other hand, is a compound of the prefix م-ب-, which is used to create nouns or adjectives wherein a defining characteristic is attributed to the original word to which the prefix is attached, and the root ب-ي-ن, as in the word بين [*bayn*], which means 'between'. So the purest meaning of the word *mubin* is 'the possessor of a fundamental distinction from other things'. Strictly speaking, nothing can really be perceived with the eyes unless it is first distinguished from other things; one cannot perceive that the Sun is not

⁴⁷ Ismaili Gnosis, "Who Succeeded Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq? Seven Proofs for the *Imamat* [sic] of Imam Isma'il Ibn Ja'far [sic]," *Ismaili Gnosis*. October 2, 2014, <https://ismailignosis.com/2014/10/02/who-succeeded-imam-jafar-al-sadiq-seven-proofs-for-the-imamat-of-imam-ismail-ibn-jafar/> (Accessed July 14, 2023).

⁴⁸ Ya Sin - 36:12.

⁴⁹ Saheeh International's original translation ends with {...and all things We have enumerated in a clear register}. We have replaced the words *enumerated* and *clear register* since it is a translation based on mere Sunni opinion while the actual words Allah uses are *ahsaynahu* and *imamin mubinin*, which can be taken to mean *inculcated* and *manifest Imam* just as fairly as Saheeh International took them to mean *enumerated* and *clear register*, and furthermore Ismaili Gnosis (who as we will demonstrate clearly does not know Arabic very well) had already preconceived that this verse is about *imamah*, so we will refute him on that same basis. We also have traditions that relate {وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ} to the *wilayah* of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, although the authenticity of these reports is an open question. At least some of them can be found in volume 6 of Mullah Muhsin al-Fayd al-Kashani's *Tafsir al-Safi*, on pages 145-146, in the edition published in Tehran in 1419 A.H. by Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

merely a large orange spot in the otherwise blue sky of a clear day and that, rather, it is the Sun, unless one subconsciously recognises that it is something distinct from the blue sky and other objects in it. The reverse of this principle is an absurd impossibility; one does not need to see a thing with their eyes in order to recognise that it is distinct from other things and, as we have already noted, one cannot even really see a thing at all unless they have already subconsciously recognised that it is distinct. So, when Allah (عز وجل) says that He has inculcated {*all things...in a manifest Imam*}, this merely shows that there must always be an Imam in whom Allah has deposited the knowledge of all things by which he may judge correctly according to the will of Allah between the people and that the Imam's divine authority from Allah is manifest, based on explicit textual evidences. Neither the verse itself nor its underlying grammatical foundations suggest that an *imamin mubin* must literally be visible to the eyes. And there are many authentic textual evidences for the birth, *imamah* and occultation of Sahib al-Zaman (عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف) in the books of the Imamiyyah, so his authority as an Imam is clear and it is not necessary that he be seen for his existence, divine authority and right to judge between the people to be accepted.

And that is how it is in reality, as Shaykh al-Mufid has demonstrated in his own words. So, the related allegation that Imam al-Mahdi's occultation renders him useless holds no weight. For the very word *imam* connotes 'leader,' and the word *imamah* connotes 'leadership,' so the son of al-Hasan al-'Askari is our leader regardless of whether he is apparent or in occultation. And the purpose of an *imam* is explained by Allah in Surah al-Anbiya as follows:

{وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ} ^ط 50

And We made them imams guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of salah, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us.

And indeed we say that Imam al-Mahdi is fulfilling the purpose of his *imamah*

⁵⁰ Al-Anbiya - 21:73. The translation is my emendation of that of Saheeh International; أئمة [a'imma] is the plural of *imam*, and *salah* means prayer, so the latter word replacement was made for consistency with the use of *zakah* rather than the English word 'alms,' so the emendations are justified.

in guiding us even while he is occulted, because those who recognise him, having been guided to do so, obey him and his immaculate forefathers, uphold the *fara'id* [i.e. religious obligations] and the *shari'ah*, and are conscious of Allah and supplicate to Him so that they may be counted among the companions and trustees of Imam al-Mahdi after he inevitably reappears. And this is in line with the saying of Allah in Surah al-Naml:

{وَأَنْ أَتْلُوا الْقُرْآنَ^ط مَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ^ط وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ^{٥١}}

...And to recite the Qur'an." And whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] himself; and whoever strays - say, "I am only [one] of the warners."

So the opponents cannot insist on any legitimate basis that these loyal supporters are striving to please a nonexistent man and that he does not guide anyone, because firstly we reiterate that the negation of the Imam's existence is utterly absurd and completely baseless, and secondly because he absolutely guides those who willingly take up his cause. And this consistent action by his adherents in striving to please Allah and fight for His Truth as martyrs and companions for the Imam of the Time can only be recompensed with goodness, so the Imam is fulfilling his obligation to guide the Shi'a. To support our argument, we firstly cite a narration in *al-Kafi* which 'Allamah al-Majlisi graded as *majhul* and Shaykh al-Bahbudi considered *sahih*. Nevertheless, the contents of this narration explain the nature of the goodness with which the faithful supporters of the Imam during his occultation are compensated:

عدة من أصحابنا، عن أحمد بن محمد، عن علي بن النعمان، عن محمد بن مروان، عن فضيل بن يسار قال: سمعت أبا جعفر (عليه السلام) يقول: مَنْ مات وليس له إمام فميتته جاهلية، وَمَنْ مات وهو عارف لإمامه لم يضره، تقدم هذا الأمر أو تأخر وَمَنْ مات عارف لإمامه، كان كَمَنْ هو مع القائم في فسطاطه.⁵²

A number of our companions have narrated from Ahmad b. Muhammad from 'Ali b. al-Nu'man from Muhammad b. Marwan from Fudayl b. Yasar who said: "I heard Abu Ja'far (عليه السلام) saying: 'Whoever died without an Imam, he has died a death of *jahiliyyah* [i.e. the pre-Islamic era of ignorance], and whoever died having recognised his Imam it does not harm him whether this matter

⁵¹ Al-Naml - 27:92.

⁵² Al-Kulayni, op. it., "Ch. 141 - That He who Recognises his Imam is Not Harmed Whether This Matter Proceeds Sooner or Later, narration no. 5."

proceeds sooner or later, and whoever died having recognised his Imam, it was as if he is with the Qa'im in his war-tent."

In support of our argument that the Shi'a are guided by Imam al-Mahdi due to the mere fact of his existence even while he is occulted, we also cite the following *hasan* tradition from Shaykh al-Ta'ifah's *Kitab al-Ghaybah*:

وروى سعد بن عبد الله الأشعري، عن محمد بن الحسين بن الخطاب، عن الحسن بن علي بن فضال عن ثعلبة بن ميمون، عن مالك الجهنبي، عن الأصبع بن نباتة قال: أتيت أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام فوجدته متفكراً ينكت في الأرض فقلت: يا أمير المؤمنين ما لي أراك تنكت في الأرض؟ أرغبة منك فيها؟ فقال: لا والله ما رغبت فيها ولا في الدنيا يوماً قط، ولكن فكّرت في مولود يكون من ظهر الحادي عشر من ولدي وهو المهدي، الذي يملأها قسطاً وعدلاً كما ملئت ظلماً وجوراً، تكون له حيرة وغيبة يضلّ فيها أقوام ويهتدي فيها آخرون.⁵³

And reported Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ash'ari from Muhammad b. al-Husayn b. al-Khattab from al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Faddal from Tha'labah b. Maymun from Malik al-Juhani from al-Asbagh b. Nubatah who said: "I came upon Amir al-Mu'minin (عليه السلام) and found him engrossed in thought, drawing in the ground, so I said: 'O' Amir al-Mu'minin, what is in this for me that I see you drawing in the ground? Do you desire from it something?' He replied: 'No, by Allah, I have never desired anything from it nor of what is in this world even for a day, but rather I was thinking that there will be born from my seed my eleventh descendant and he is the Mahdi, who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it had previously been filled with wrongdoing and transgression, there will be for him confusion and occultation during which some peoples will err and others will be guided.'"

As for the argument that due to his occultation, the Imam cannot guide his adherents by making judgements in matters of the *fara'id* and in disputes

⁵³ Shaykh al-Ta'ifah Abi Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi, "Ch. 5 - In Mentioning the Reason for Which the Reappearance of the *Hujjah* (عجل الله فرجه) has Been Delayed, narration no. 282," in *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, thq. 'Ibad Allah al-Tihri and 'Ali Ahmad Nasih (Qum, Iran: Muwassassah al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyyah, 1411 A.H.), p. 336. Imam al-Mahdi is Amir al-Mu'minin's eleventh descendant, rather than his tenth as some might mistakenly assume, because Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba is also a descendant of Amir al-Mu'minin, being his eldest son (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً).

between people, and thus the loyalists of a nonexistent Imam⁵⁴ must then resort to personal opinion [*r'ayy*] and invalid analogical reasoning [*qiyas*] to compensate for that loss, we reiterate that we, the Shi'a, have taken the responsibilities of issuing rulings and judgements upon our own shoulders and that the occultation of Imam al-Mahdi has made resorting to *r'ayy* and *qiyas* neither permissible nor necessary, for our jurists are able to derive rulings based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet and the Imams (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً) and upon rational principles [*usul*]⁵⁵ based on the Word of Allah and our corpus of narrations without falling into making judgements based on personal opinion and invalid analogy. But we Shi'a and our jurists, however pious, just, intelligent and able to serve our needs and fulfil their obligations to the Imam, are nevertheless fallible, so may Allah forgive us our errors, mistakes and our sins, and expedite the relief of Imam al-Mahdi (صلوات الله عليه) so that he may correct whatever errors and mistaken judgements we have made during his occultation.

As for the last of the three popular allegations some of our opponents lay at our feet for our belief in the Mahdi in occultation, wherein they say that it is far-fetched for the son of al-Hasan al-'Askari to live for as long as the Imamiyyah claim,⁵⁶ we cite only the words of Allah regarding the eponymous people of the cave in Surah al-Kahf:

{وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا}.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ According to our opponents, who argue as such because the Imam cannot be seen, heard or recognised by the masses. However, as we have already shown, this line of reasoning is totally invalid for anybody who affirms the existence of Allah, and it is imperative that the imbecile who tries to use this argument against Imam al-Mahdi be logically consistent with respect to his argument and become an atheist. But atheism is objectively false, as the existence of Allah is the ultimate rationally inevitable conclusion (this is not a matter of personal belief or purporting that "He's the best explanation we've got!," rather *He is the only explanation*, because all possible others *do not even get off the ground*), and the atheists have totally failed to effectively rebut the arguments for Allah's existence. So, none of the adherents of any Islamic sect, whether they be the Ahl al-Sunnah, or the Zaydiyyah, and *especially not* the Isma'iliyyah (considering they affirm the *istitar* of some of their imams), nor any other, have any legitimate reason to reject the existence of al-Hasan al-'Askari's son.

⁵⁵ There is an undercurrent of Shi'i laymen who would most politely be described as pseudo-Akhbariyyah who contest not only the necessity of referring to these *usul* but their very existence. To this we simply say that one cannot make any legal judgements without appealing to some underlying rational principles, and the *ahkam* of the Holy Prophet and the A'imma are doubtlessly no exception. Due to this we conclude that Muhammad and his family are *khayr al-'uqul* - the best intellects.

⁵⁶ It has now been approximately 1,153 years since the Imam was born.

⁵⁷ Al-Kahf - 18:25.

And they remained in their cave for three hundred years and exceeded by nine.

Adding the findings of Western scientists with a philosophically empirical mindset that it is possible for a human being to live for even longer is not needed, because those of our opponents who reject belief in Sahib al-Zaman typically do profess belief in Allah and His unlimited Power and Grace, so it is not at all implausible that Imam al-Mahdi has continued to live for as long as we Shi'a purport, for as Allah Himself states in Surah Aali 'Imran, {*And it is not [possible] for one to die except by permission of Allah at a decree determined*}.⁵⁸

In any case, we have merely annotated the refutations of such arguments made by our opponents from our eminent Shaykh al-Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu'man b. al-Mu'allim al-'Ukbari al-Baghdadi, in the book *al-Fusul al-'Asharah fi'l-Ghaybah* whose translation into English we have produced and disseminated so that the wider world may understand the rational bases on which the Imamiyyah continue to believe in the existence, the *imamah*, the occultation and the inevitable reappearance of the son of al-Hasan al-'Askari. Many of those {*firm in knowledge*}⁵⁹ neither entertain doubts about the Twelfth Imam nor see any reason to, but most of those who profess Shi'ism and belief in the *imamah* of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali and eleven of his descendants (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً) are vulnerable to the prospect of questioning the doctrines of their professed sect and entertaining such doubts, which is why we have produced this translation of Shaykh al-Mufid's *al-Fusul al-'Asharah fi'l-Ghaybah*, earnestly hoping to thereby obliterate the suspicions our less knowledgeable brothers and sisters in the faith may have on the

⁵⁸ Aali 'Imran - 3:145.

⁵⁹ Ibid., verse 7. There are many traditions on this verse in the Imami corpus which explain that those {*firm in knowledge*} are the A'immah (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً), and one with a *sahih* chain of transmission [Ayyub b. al-Hurr, one of the two people who narrate from Abu Basir therein, is *thiqah*] can be found in volume 1 of *al-Kafi*, ch. 79, in the fourth book of the volume [i.e. The Book of People with Divine Authority], on page 126. The edition is the same published in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1428 A.H. cited earlier. As demonstrated in the aforementioned report from Shaykh al-Ta'ifah's *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, part of that knowledge of the Imam concerns the A'immah who would come after him, including Sahib al-Zaman (عجل الله فرجه), so it does not violate the standard for *tafsir b'il-r'ayy* [i.e. exegesis of the Qur'an based on personal opinion] that Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i set in *al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* [wherein according to him, acting by the general statements within the Qur'an without referring to the A'immah in determining and limiting the applicability of these statements constitutes one kind of *tafsir b'il-r'ayy*] to say that those Shi'a who are absolutely certain on the matters concerning the Twelfth Imam because of the knowledge they have gained on these matters are thereby {*firm in knowledge*} in a qualified sense, firstly because said knowledge has come to them on the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً) and secondly because that knowledge has sufficed in giving them *itminan* [i.e. certainty] in their belief in Imam al-Mahdi (عجل الله فرجه).

matter of Imam al-Mahdi. We must mention that the purpose of this effort is so that they can reach our degree of certainty in Sahib al-Zaman, as his immaculate forefather Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq (صلوات الله عليهم) implores his Shi'a to do so in the following *sahih* narration in *al-Kafi*:

علي بن إبراهيم، عن أبيه، عن حماد بن عيسى، عن حرّيز، عن زرارة قال: قال أبو عبد الله (عليه السلام):
اعرف إمامك، فإنك إذا عرفت لم يضرّك تقدم هذا الأمر أو تأخر.⁶⁰

'Ali b. Ibrahim narrated from his father from Hammad b. 'Isa from Hariz from Zurarah who said: "Abu 'Abd Allah (عليه السلام) has said: 'Recognise your Imam, for indeed when you have recognised him it does not harm you if this matter proceeds sooner or later.'"

May Allah magnify the rewards of the believers, forgive us our sins, mistakes and errors on the basis of our sincere work in advocating the cause of the Imamiyyah which is the one objectively true, correct and saved sect due to clear evidences, assist us in our struggles in this short life and protect us from the Fire in the next. May the same apply to all those who earnestly profess loyalty to Haydar al-Karrar and the eleven Imams after him (صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً) from among his offspring with Fatimah (صلوات الله عليها), the pearl of Allah's Messenger, on the same basis by which we all have professed loyalty to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله) and to his Lord and ours, Who is Allah (جل جلاله), the Lord of the Worlds, the One and Only, the Possessor of Control over all, the Almighty, the Restorer, the Majestic, Swift in Taking Account and Severe in Punishing, but also the Beneficent and the Merciful Whose Mercy cannot be fathomed,⁶¹ the King of Kings and the Master of Glory and Honour. And may He expedite the relief of the one to whom Shaykh

⁶⁰ Al-Kulayni, op. cit., narration no. 1.

⁶¹ In a *hasan* tradition in chapter 193 of *al-Kafi*'s second volume, in the Book of Belief and Disbelief, either Imam al-Baqir or his son Abi 'Abd Allah al-Sadiq (صلوات الله عليهما) relate the story of Adam (صلوات الله عليه) when he pleaded to Allah for forgiveness of his error, and the Imam relates that Allah has made it thus that if a servant of His only intends to commit a good deed, He writes down the reward for one good deed thereby, while if that servant actually acts on their intention, the reward for ten good deeds is written in their record. And the case for misdeeds is such that if one such is only intended, nothing is written thereby, while if that intention is acted upon, only that one misdeed is recorded. And if the sinning servant thereby pleads to Allah for forgiveness of their misdeed then forgiveness is granted, and the time available for sincere repentance is extended until the servant's soul is separated from their body. And this is only one of the countless mercies of Allah! The report is the first in its respective chapter, on page 242 of the same edition published by Manshurat al-Fajr in Beirut which has been cited earlier [with respect to volume 1 of *al-Kafi*].

al-Mufid dedicated his book in the defence of, and the one to whom we dedicate our translation of the Shaykh's efforts, the lonesome son of al-Hasan al-'Askari (صلوات الله عليهما) whom this lowly slave of Allah recognises as in fact alive and well in occultation, and that he is the only Imam obedience to whom is obligatory and who is worthy of this obedience in this era, and that all the arguments of the opponents against this matter are categorically invalid.

May Allah forgive me for my transgressions past, present and future, which I am both obligated not to disclose and too ashamed to relate even if that were not the case, and I hope in my heart that He rewards me duly for my efforts in this exercise in disseminating the objective truth and makes me of the trustees of the Authority of the Age regardless of whether that be now while he is occulted or when he inevitably reappears.

Abu'l-Husayn al-Bahaduri,

1445 A.H. / 2023 C.E.