

# ALI 387: The Theological Doctrine of *Imamah*

Part III  
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# *Imamah*: Political or Spiritual?

- Amongst the major debates amongst the different theological schools: Is *Imamah* political or spiritual?
- Spiritual *imamah*; leadership of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a) that is encompassing of spiritual, political, and social needs of humanity.
- Political *imamah*; the idea that leadership is confined to political authority, leads to the establishment of the *caliphate* system.

# Was Imam Ali Appointed as Successor to the Prophet?

- What do the different theological schools believe?
  - Sunnis: do not believe the Prophet appointed a successor.
  - Shias: believe that the Prophet openly appointed a successor.
  - Zaidiyya: believe that Imam Ali was most qualified but accept first two caliphs.
  - Jarudiyya: the prophet implicitly selected Ali (by mentioning his qualities, not his name).



# Was Imam Ali Appointed as Successor to the Prophet? (II)



- Question #1: If Imam Ali was openly appointed as the successor of the Prophet, why do the majority fail to accept it?
- Question #2: Did Imam Ali ever protest?

# Was Imam Ali Appointed as Successor to the Prophet? (III)

- The followers of Ahlul Bayt (a) maintain that the most important appointment was at Ghadeer (Dhul Hajj 18, 10 AH) when the Prophet states *من كنت مولاه فهذا علي مولاه*
  - Reliability? Chain of transmission?
    - *Mutawatir*
  - Context of the narration?
    - The number of people present + the entirety of the sermon.
  - What does the word *مولى* mean?
    - The poet Hassan bin Thabit states: *قم يا علي فاننى رضيتك من بعدي اماما وهاديا*

# The Verse of Purity

- Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an,

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ  
الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى ۚ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ  
الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ  
اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ  
وَيُطَهِّرَ كُفْمَ تَطْهِيرًا

"And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all impurity from you, Oh members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless."





# The Verse of Purity (II)



- Who are the People of the House?
- The verbs and pronouns are in the feminine plural in the previous verses yet, in this verse, the pronouns are in the masculine plural.
- In the Arabic language, there are 23 meanings to the word الرجس and the Ahlul Bayt are purified of all of them.

# *Ma'rifah* of the Imam

- أَدْنَى الْمَعْرِفَةِ أَنْ تَعْرِفَ أَنَّ لِلْإِمَامِ مَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِلَّا النَّبُوءَةُ
- In regards to knowledge (they will never contradict either other and present rulings that are واقعي) and our obedience to them, the Ahlul Bayt are all equal, this the prophet says, كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ without any sort of exception.
- Imam Redha quotes Imam Sadiq (a), and says in knowledge and the right of obedience they are all the same, then says وَبَعْضُنَا أَكْثَمُ مِنْ بَعْضٍ (their statuses in front of God are different).



# *Wilayah* of the Imams

- *Wilayah Takweeniya*: universal authority over creation.
  - Qur'an (3:48); Jesus cures the blind and the leper, and brings the dead back to life *by the permission of Allah*.
- *Wilayah Tashree'iya*: authority over legislation.



# *Wilayah* of the Imams (II)

- In early Shia academic history, there were debates in regards to the scope of the authority of the Imams.
  - Sheikh Saduq: Believed the Prophet made a mistake in his prayers and anyone who believed otherwise was committing *ghuluw*.
  - Sheikh Mufid: Responded to Saduq and said *ghuluw* is attributing the Imams as partners to God.

# Wilayah of the Imams (III)

Allāmah Majlisī (in *Bihar al-Anwar*) says there are 8 signs for a *Ghali*:

- 1- Claiming they are gods
- 2- Claiming they are partners to God
- 3- To state they are a manifestation of God
- 4- The belief that God is inside of them
- 5- The belief that they know the ilm al-Ghayb without Gods permission.
- 6- To claim they are prophets
- 7- To claim the spirits of the imams are transferred
- 8- Those who say that believing in the imams is the only religion we have (and we can neglect everything else).



# Conclusions

- There are overwhelming textual evidences to suggest that the doctrine of *Imamah* is a foundational principle of Islam.
- The practice of *Imamah* is in 4 different dimensions (as mentioned earlier):
  - Love the Imams
  - Learn Their History
  - Reflect on Their Words
  - Honor Their Rituals

