

ITHNA 'ASHARIYYA

OR

The Twelve Shi'ah Imams

BY

The REV. CANON SELL, D.D.

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The Rev. Canon Sell, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION

THE lives of 'Alí and of his two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusain are related in full detail by European writers on Islámic history ; but they are silent about the following nine Imáms. The great Sunni historians are equally reticent, and so we are dependent on Shí'ah authorities for information about a body of men, revered and respected by a large number of Muslim people. The following pages give an account of these Imáms, and, though it is dependent on much that is legendary and on tales of doubtful historical accuracy, it may fitly find a place in the Islám Series. Some of these Imáms were learned men ; some possessed an attractive personality ; and all, considering the deep affection Shí'ahs have for them, deserve to be kept in remembrance. Shí'ah historians seem to me to be, on the whole, rather credulous persons and this impairs the value of their writings as historical records ; but it is a great advantage to the student of Islám to know what the Shí'ahs believe about their revered and beloved Imáms, and for this reason this book is published.

EDWARD SELL.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

'ALI, the son-in-law of the Prophet was the fourth Khalifa of Islám and the first of the twelve Imáms of the Imámiyya sect of the Shí'ahs. Soon after his accession, a civil war broke out which led to much confusion and bloodshed. In the 'Battle of the Camel', so called because as an opponent to 'Alí, 'Ayisha was present, seated in a camel litter. Ten thousand men were slain. In the year A. D. 661 'Alí was murdered.

His son Hasan succeeded to the Imámat. He was elected Khalifa by the people of Kúfa, but he had little or no temporal authority for then the Mu'áwiya Ummayad Khalifa at Damascus was in full power. With him he made a treaty by the terms of which Mu'áwiya was to retain the Khalífate and after his death it was to pass on to Husain, another son of 'Alí. Hasan then retired into private life. It is said that Yazíd, the son of Mu'áwiya, caused him to be poisoned.

Husain, a younger son of 'Alí, became the third Imám and should have succeeded to the Khalífate, but Mu'áwiya set aside the treaty he had made with Hasan and appointed his son Yazíd as his successor. The men of Kúfa then urged Husain to assert his claim. He resided in Mecca and had never taken the oath of allegiance to Mu'áwiya. Husain, against the advice of his friends urging him not to trust so fickle a people as the Kúfans, responded to their call and set out for that city with a very small body of men. Yazíd sent troops to intercept him and on the plains of Karbala he was cruelly slain. A young lad had escaped to a tent, when a soldier was about to slay him, whom another man reproached for his brutality, so the life of 'Alí Asghar, afterwards Imám Zainu'l-'Abidín was spared.

So passed away in a tragic manner the three first Imáms. There were nine successors, the story of whose lives are little known. Before narrating that story in detail it is necessary

to give a brief account of the political state of Arabia and to describe the various factions which, opposed to one another, kept the country in a chronic state of civil war.

The people of Mecca and Madína were horrified when they heard of Husain's death. One man, however, was not sorry. It was 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, an ambitious, unscrupulous man who had aspired to the Khalífate. So long as Husain was alive his aspiration had no chance of being realized, and so he had persuaded Husain to respond to the call of the people of Kúfa and proceed on his fatal journey. He was also opposed to the Ummayyad Khalífas and when Mu'áwiya, desiring to get his son Yazíd recognized as his successor, came to Madína to consult and win over to his proposal the leading men there, 'Abdu'lláh with Husain, son of 'Alí, and 'Abdu'r-Rahmán, son of Abú Bakr, absolutely refused to acknowledge this form of transfer of the supreme power. They said they should either follow the example of the Prophet and let the people of Madína choose, or, like Abú Bakr, choose a successor from the Quraish, or, like 'Umar, appoint electors to choose the Khalífa. Finding argument useless he called his troops and made the people take the oath of allegiance to Yazíd as his successor. Mu'áwiya never forgave 'Abdu'lláh for the bold stand he made and said to Yazíd: 'The man who will attack thee with the strength of a lion and the subtilty of the fox is 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair; if you get him into your power, cut him to pieces.'

Such then was the man who soon attained power, and for nine years ruled in Mecca and defied successfully the armies of succeeding Khalífas. By birth and descent he was noble and so could appeal to the pride of the people. His father, slain at the Battle of the Camel, had been a great favourite of the Prophet, his mother 'Asmá was a daughter of Abú Bakr. 'Ayisha, a favourite wife of the Prophet, was his maternal aunt, and Khadíja, the first and best-loved of all Muḥammad's wives, was his paternal one. He was the first child born to Muslim parents after the flight to Madína, and as a boy was beloved by his grandfather. He had been a courageous and successful warrior, and above all had declined to take the oath of allegiance to Yazíd, and for safety had fled for refuge

to the sanctuary of the Ka'ba at Mecca where he was well received by the people.

When the sad news of the death of Husain reached Madína, the city was deeply stirred. 'Abdu'lláh, the most prominent of its inhabitants, stood forth in the great mosque and addressed an excitable crowd, setting forth the treachery of the Kúfaus which had brought such sorrow on them all. The people wound up to a high pitch of excitement saw in the fiery speaker a bold and capable leader; they thronged around him and hailed him as their Khalífa. Now, for the first time, though not for the last, there were two Khalífas in Islám.

The possession of the two cities of Mecca and Madína added much to the strengthening of 'Abdu'lláh's position and aided the growth of home patriotism among his followers, who had a common centre in the two sanctuaries, and thus claimed superiority over all other Muslims. Much as the Umayyads, who were strong in Syria, disliked the Shi'ahs, they could not easily give up the duty of making the Hajj, which so long as 'Abdu'lláh was supreme in Mecca and Madína was difficult. The Umayyads then desired to transfer the Prophet's pulpit from Madína to Damascus and so make it the religious as well as the political capital; but the scheme, like that of Manşúr's later on to make Baghdad take the place of Mecca, utterly failed.

The people of Madína revolted against Yazíd and appointed two leaders, one for the Anşár and one for the Quraish. Most of the Umayyads were banished, but the few who remained sent to Damascus for assistance, so Muslim bin 'Uqba with a strong force was sent. After a stout defence most of the Anşár were slain. The victor demanded unconditional surrender and then, amid scenes of great ferocity, slew a large number, ill-treated the women and sacked the city which had sheltered the Prophet. The mosque was desecrated by being turned into a stable and valuable offerings were stolen from the ruins of demolished shrines. The army then marched to Mecca and beseiged it. The sacred Ka'ba was reduced to ruins and much destruction was done to the city.

The siege which had lasted forty days was raised when the news of Yazíd's death arrived. Yazíd was a rude dis-

courteous man. One day Imám Zainu'l-'Abidín was brought into his presence. Yazíd was drinking and playing chess. When he had won his game, he went on drinking wine, pouring the dregs of his cup into a basin in which the head of Imám Husain was placed. He took no notice of the persons standing in his presence. At last Zainu'l-'Abidín gained permission to speak. He then reproached Yazíd for his conduct. Yazíd listened hoping to find some cause which would justify his putting Zainu'l-'Abidín to death, but found none. Further insults followed to which due reproaches were made. At length the Imám and his friends were allowed to depart, saying, 'O Yazíd may God Most High cut off your hands.' With this curse they left his presence.¹

The next Khalífa was a mere boy whose reign lasted only a few months and who was succeeded by Marwán the oldest member of the clan. The times were critical and required a strong man at the head of affairs. The removal of a ruler, in whom all law and authority is supposed to reside, is the signal for anarchy and disorder. 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair was at once proclaimed Khalífa by his partisans in the Hijáz, Yemen, Iráq and Egypt. The commander of the besieging force, before retiring, promised his assistance and wished 'Abdu'lláh to proceed to Damascus, where there was a party in his favour. He could there confer with Khalífa Marwán and perhaps persuade him to come to some terms acceptable to both parties; but 'Abdu'lláh was afraid to go. This was a grave error of judgement, for had he gone he would have consolidated his power and possibly have become the sole ruler. This hesitation gave the Umayyad faction time to rally round Marwán. Civil war again set in with all its horrors. There were now four distinct parties hostile to each other:² (1) the Umayyads at Damascus, (2) 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair at Mecca, (3) the Shí'ah supporters of Muḥammad ibn Ḥanasiyya at Kúfa, (4) the Khárajites, or men who after the battle of

¹ For a full account of the interview, see *Ṣaḥífatu'l-'Abidín*, p. 39.

² Marwán is not recognised by the Shí'ahs as a lawful Khalífa. They look upon him as a rebel against 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair. They regard the Khalífate of 'Abdu'l-Maḥk as rightful, after the death of the son of 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair. AMIR ALI, *A short History of the Saracens*, p. 93.

Siffin deserted 'Alí. They now all met at Mecca for the pilgrimage, displaying the banners which represented their separate factions. It was a curious sight, and tumults might have arisen; but they all respected the sacredness of the occasion and so no conflict arose. They then separated in peace to prepare for war. The next Khalífa at Damascus was 'Abdu'l-Málik.

'Ubaidu'lláh, the governor of Baṣra, on hearing of Yazíd's death exhorted the Baṣrians to claim independence, stating that they were the more important part of the empire, that their province was self-supporting, and that he was well qualified to be their chief. They highly approved of his proposal and bravery and sent a messenger to Kúfa, requesting the people there to join in the insurrection. The proposal was rejected with scorn and the Baṣrians, failing to get this support, renounced their allegiance to 'Ubaidu'lláh, who then had to flee away, leaving the city in great disorder. When he arrived at Damascus, he found Marwán inclined to come to terms with his rival, 'Abdu'lláh, at Mecca, but persuaded him from doing so.

At length in the year A.H. 61, the Krfaús came to the conclusion that they had behaved badly to Husain and that, as an atonement for the sin, they should revenge his death. They applied to some of the leading men of the sect, and listened to an earnest appeal to take action. 'What excuses' they were asked, 'would they have when they appeared before God, how would they be able to look the Prophet in the face, when they had slain his grandson.' There was no way of atonement but by revenging Husain's death. The appeal was successful, but as they were few in number a letter from Sulayman ibn Ṣard, now chosen with a few others as their leaders, was sent out far and wide to all the members of the Shí'ah sect and many heartily responded and promised aid.

They appointed five men, who had been Companions of the Prophet, to consult together as to what should be done. They met in Sulayman's house and agreed that the trouble suffered in Kúfa was on account of their action towards Husain, that they must repent and seek for pardon. Sulayman then told the people that their first duty was to repent,

and then act. They bowed their heads and sought pardon, and then stood up and drew their swords and upheld their lances, and unanimously agreed to clear the earth of the murderers of the family of the Prophet and make an end of them and their frivolous rulers and appoint Zainu'l-'Abidin Khalifa.¹

It was not, however, till the year A.H. 65, about the time of Marwán's death, that a large expedition set forth under the command of Sulayman Ibn Darad. They went with the intention of desposing the two and rivals, Khalifa Marwán and 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair. They were called 'the penitents' because of their sorrow for having caused the death of Husain. The governor of Kúfa and others begged Sulayman to wait until additional forces joined him, or, at least, till he could be furnished with money and material. The reply was that they were not going out for this world and so Sulayman declined to wait. The troops came to Husain's tomb, where they spent a day and night, praying for him and for pardon for themselves. They were sad and wept all day, Sulayman prayed to God to be merciful to Husain, the martyr, and his followers, the righteous martyrs, and said; 'O God, we call Thee to witness that we are the enemies of those who killed them.' In a battle soon after Sulayman was slain. The Shi'ah historians admit that the full object of the expedition was not gained, but say that the attempt was necessary to show to the world that earnest faith, true belief and priceless freedom existed amongst the Shi'ahs and that they were not terrified at the superior forces of their enemies.²

Meanwhile another adventurer comes upon the scene. Al-Mukhtár was born in the first year of the Hijra. As a lad he accompanied his father to war, and when he grew up to manhood he was famed for his bravery and generalship. An unprincipled man, he often changed sides. He opposed Hasan, but supported Husain, for which Ubaidu'lláh, the governor of Kúfa, arrested him and struck him a blow on the eye. He escaped, vowing that he would take revenge. He

¹ *Ṣahifatu'l-'Abidin*, pp 85.

² *Ibid.*

then aided 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair and by him was sent on duty to Kúfa. He joined in the proposal to avenge the death of Husain. The Governor, mistrusting him, put him into prison. The Shi'ah historian gives a graphic account of his sufferings there. A person alleged to be an eye witness says: 'I saw a man seated in the ground with fetters on his feet, an iron collar round his neck, his hands bound and his strength so reduced that he could turn neither to the right nor to the left.' It was Al-Mukhtár. 'Afterwards he offered his services to 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, who would only accept them on conditions which Mukhtár did not approve; so he then proposed to raise an army to aid Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafíyya, who replied that, if he thought of taking up arms he could get plenty of help, but that he was resolved to bear all with patience and leave the event to God, and bade Al-Mukhtár 'to fear God and abstain from shedding blood.'

Muḥammad and his friends then went on pilgrimage, but were seized by 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, who thought that so long as they refused to take the oath of allegiance and remained alone, his position was precarious; so he imprisoned them all in the Zamzam, popularly supposed to have been made out of the spring from which Hagar refreshed herself. The prisoners found means of communication with Al-Mukhtár who called the Kúfans together and reading the letter said: 'This is from your guide, and the purest of the family of the House of your Prophet, on whom be peace; they are shut up like sheep, expecting to be killed.' He said that he came to them as a counsellor from Muḥammad's grandson. He gained them over and when he had attained to power he proceeded to attack his old enemy 'Ubaidú'lláh, but the Kúfans, ever fickle, rose up against him. They were defeated and severely punished. Soon after his army defeated 'Ubaidu'lláh in a sanguinary battle and having slain him, sent his head to Kúfa, where Mukhtár received it 'on the same spot where six years before he had received the head of the Prophet's grandson.'

¹ *Ṣahifatu'l-'Abidin*, p. 100.

² MUIR, *The Caliphate*, p. 335.

In the year A.H. 67 Mkhutár was besieged in Kúfa. In desperation he sallied forth with a few followers and was slain. So passed away a great warrior, who had won victories over the armies of three Khalífas, who held a large tract of country in his possession and who, on the whole, had aided the cause of the Imám, had befriended the Shí'ahs and was eulogized by them.

In the year A.D. 687, the Khárajites leaving their stronghold in Persia stirred up trouble. They were enemies to all established governments, especially to that of the Umayyads. They advanced to the neighbourhood of Kúfa and committed great excesses on the way. Meanwhile the Khalífa 'Abdu'l-Malik had several insurrections to put down which he did with success, for a great leader Musáb, a friend of 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, was slain. 'Abdu'l-Malik now paid attention to the Khárajite invasion and, finally overcoming it, became master of all the eastern part of the empire. The only opponent left was 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair. Against him Hajjáj, a great warrior, was sent. The seige of Mecca lasted eight months and seven days and great damage was done. At last 'Abdu'lláh's friends began to desert him and he saw his cause was hopeless. His mother, a grand-daughter of Abú Bakr, was an old lady of ninety years of age who still possessed an undaunted spirit. To her he said, 'O Mother, the people desert me, if I submit they (the enemy) are ready to give what I desire, what do you advise?' She told him that, if he believed he was in the right, he should not give in and become 'the scorn of the boys of the Umayyad family. Death was better.' 'Abdu'lláh then kissed her and told her not to grieve for him. A few days after he again came in, kissed her and bade her farewell, for this was to be the last day of his life. He then went forth, fought valiantly, slew many of his foes and was, at last, himself slain. When Hajjáj heard the news he fell down and worshipped. Then 'Abdu'lláh's head was cut off, exhibited at Madína and then sent to Damascus. The mother pleaded in vain for permission to bury the body, which was impaled on a gibbet and hung up for some days. So passed away one who for nine years defied the Umayyad Khalífas and held Mecca against all foes. He was a man of great courage but was niggardly. Even

during the seige he kept his hoards with jealous care and neither used them to support his men or to get materials for war. It was said of him, 'There was never a valiant man but was also liberal, till 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair.' All Arabia now acknowledged the Khalífate of 'Abdu'l-Malik and Hajjáj and other leaders swore allegiance to him. The Shí'ah party now lost all hope of becoming temporal rulers, but continued to maintain the theory of the Imámat and kept up the succession of their Imáms as spiritual guides.

The rival factions of the Muḍarites and the Yemenites also kept up their tribal feuds. The cities were antagonistic to each other. In the early days Baḡra supported 'Uthmán and Kúfa was on the side of 'Alí. Later on Syria was for the Umayyads; Yemen against them. Political measures brought fresh combinations, and to add to all this confusion bitter religious animosities led to the formation of opposing sects. The whole country had been disturbed for years. The early days of Islám had witnessed constant civil wars and bloodshed. Unity there was none, and when at last, for a time, it came in the political world, it was largely due to the severity of Hajjáj. The religious schism remained and still remains to this day.

CHAPTER II

IMÁM ZAINU'L-'ABIDIN

THE plan which Mukhtár before his death had made was that some people of Madína should interview Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafíyya¹ about the retaliation and, if he was willing, they with Mukhtár's aid could bring it to a successful issue; if not the matter could drop. So they met some of the nobles of Kúfa and then entered into the presence of Muḥammad who received them kindly and asked why they had come. They said: 'We wish to aid Mukhtár to avenge the death of Ḥusain. If you permit us we will with entire devotion do this work, if not we remain at home.' Muḥammad approved, and with joy the men from Madína returned with many Shí'ahs and Alids to Mukhtár as their leader. Some attached themselves to Ibráhím and, in order to win him over, Mukhtár presented to him a letter from Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafíyya, the purport of which was that he should join with Mukhtár in seeking vengeance. Ibráhím consented.

Ayás, the Kotwal of the city, a subordinate of 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, seeing Ibráhím with armed Companions (Aṣḥáb) and Ansárs wanted to know what they were about. Their explanation he treated as subterfuge; and said that he would not allow them to go out. Ibráhím retorted; 'O wretch, thou also wert one of the slayers of Ḥusain,' and forthwith slew him when his men fled. The head of Ayás was sent to Mukhtár, who, after defeating in a several conflicts Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafíyya and Zainu'l-'Abidín² proceeded to Mecca

¹ The section of the Shí'ahs which supported Muḥammad are called the Kaisániyya: Másúdí, *Múruju' dh-Thatíals*, vol. v, p 180.

² When Ḥusain was slain at Karbala a sick lad was found in his tent with the women. An assassin wished to kill him, but was prevailed upon to take the boy to the General. He ordered men to slay the boy; but at the earnest entreaty of the women, who pleaded for the life of the sole survivor of the family, the order was rescinded and 'Al 'Aṣghar, surnamed Zainu'l-'Abidín, was set free.

and conversed about the succession to the Imámat. Muḥammad said that he was the most worthy, as he was the son of 'Alí ibn 'Tálib. Zaina'l-'Abidín replied to his uncle thus, 'Fear God, and make no such claim,' they then agreed to appeal to the Black Stone (Ḥájaru'l-aswad). Muḥammad prayed for a sign, but no answer came, then Zainu'l-'Abidín prayed, and the stone was so agitated that it nearly fell out of the wall of the Ka'ba. Then came, in eloquent Arabic, the answer that he was the true Imám after Ḥusain, to which decision Muḥammad consented.¹

When Zainu'l-'Abidín (ornament of the pious) returned to Madína, he led a quiet and retired life, and withdrew from society and only a few intimate friends visited him for religious purposes. He appointed Maḥammad Ḥanafíyya as his deputy. His mother was a daughter of the last King of Persia, so that he had a special hold on the affections of the Persian people. He died in Muharram A. H. 95 when he was fifty-seven years of age. It is said that he was poisoned by the order of the Khalífa 'Abdu'l-Malik.² He was buried in the cemetery of Baqí' in which his uncle Ḥusain was also interred. Before his death he nominated Muḥammad Bákir as his successor, and the chief men of Madína tendered him their allegiance. At the age of twenty-three he was betrothed to his cousin, a daughter of Imám Ḥusain. Zainu'l-'Abidín's good manners and disposition are highly praised. He was looked upon as a man unequalled in that age. He is said to have been a humble and very devout man, making 1000 *rak'ats*³ in the space of a day and night, and that when, on the Hajj he assumed the ihrám, or the pilgrims garb, his countenance changed, and his frame shook with emotion, and that when making waḍu', or the ceremonial ablution, his face became pale. When asked the reason he replied, 'You do not know into whose presence I am going.' When he received any favour from God, or at the prescribed place when reciting

¹ *Sahífatu'l-'Abidín*, p. 184.

² *Ibid* p. 85.

³ A *rak'at* is the prostration after a number of verses of the Qur'án have been recited in the Namáz. Sell, *Faith of Islám* (fourth ed.) p. 369.

the Qur'án, and on other occasions, he used to make *sijdah*.¹ This he did so frequently that on his bright forehead two corns formed, which in hardness were like the under part of a camel (i.e. hoof) which in Arabic is called *al-taftat*, so one of his titles was *Dhu'l-Taftat*. One day when making *sijdah* the mat set on fire and the people called out to him, 'Fire, fire', but he did not raise his head, and the fire went out. When asked how he had extinguished it, he replied, 'By the fire of the Last Day.'

He had a mosque in his own house and, when a third or one half of the night had passed, he used to get up, and pray to this effect: 'O thou cherisher of the poor, anxiety about rising and standing before Thee did not allow me to spread the carpet of rest or to sleep.' He then fell down with his cheek on the ground. The household gathered round him but he noticed them not.

When he went out he walked and did not ride, and so his pure body became disordered. Muḥammad Bákir asked him why he did this. He replied: 'I seek for nearness to God.'

He was generous and kind to the poor, and fed the indigent people of Madína. He was kind to animals. Just before his death he charged Bákir to look after his favourite she-camel. This faithful animal used to come frequently to the grave, and, lying down, sighed and showed her grief at the loss of her master.

The Imám manumitted a slave girl and married her. 'Abdu'l-Malik wrote and rebuked him for this. He replied: 'You have in the Prophet of God a good example. He manumitted Şafiyya and married her, I manumitted Zaid ibn Hāritha, and gave him in marriage to Zainab daughter of Jaḥsh.'²

He is reputed to have been a learned man, and a somewhat exaggerated description of his attainments are thus summed up. His comprehensive knowledge was priceless, and apparent. His great ability, studious attainments, humility, piety and caution in doubtful matters were completely fulfilled in him.

¹ *Sijdah* is also a prostration in prayer. Sell, *Faith of Islám* (4th ed.) p. 365.

² ZAYDAN, *Umayyads and 'Abbásids* p. 178.

The veneration in which he was held is shown in the following story. Hishám son of 'Abdu'l-Malik when on pilgrimage to Mecca was prevented from kissing the black stone (Hajaru'l-aswad) owing to the pressure of the crowd around it. He then went and sat down by the well Zamzam. Suddenly a man approached the Ka'ba; the crowd made way for him to pass through to the black stone, which he kissed. The Syrians who had come with Hishám asked him who this person was to whom the ignorant people paid such honour. He thought it must be Zainu'l-'Abidín (which it was) and from fear said, 'I do not know.'

In an interview with Zainu'l-'Abidín the *Khalífa* Yazíd declared that Ḥusain had tried to secure the *Khalífate* for himself and that thanks were due to God who had caused his death.

The Imám replied that the right to rule existed in his family long before he (Yazíd) was born, for his ancestors had borne the standards in the Prophet's army in the battles of Badr, Uhud and the Ditch, whereas Yazíd's ancestors had then carried the standards of the enemy; that, if he thought otherwise, he must be out of his senses and that punishment would be ready for him at the Day of Judgement. Yazíd, on hearing these brave words, became very angry and ordered the immediate execution of the Imám. The executioner led him forth, when suddenly a hand seized him by the neck. He was terrified and reported the case to Yazíd who was much troubled and so the Imám was saved.

In the Mosque at Damascus, Yazíd ordered the preacher (*Khaṭīb*) to preach a sermon against the Imám and his party. When it was over, Zainu'l-'Abidín requested permission to preach. Yazíd at first refused, but as those who were present demanded it, he gave a reluctant assent, and the Imám delivered a sermon. He pointed out that he was a child of Mecca, Madína, Zamzam, Şafá, a descendant of the Prophet, who made the night journey to heaven on Buráq, and who had received inspiration from God; that he was a relation of 'Alí, who fought heroically in battle and brought the infidels into obedience, who dispersed the *Khárájites* and defeated Ṭalḥa and Zubair; that Fátima the pure and her excellency *Khadíja* were his ancestresses, and so on through a long string

of claims. He then went on to show his own plans, and how God had given to him the banner of guidance to the faithful and the banner of destruction to their enemies, and so made him superior to all other persons in the love of God and of the Prophet. He also added much more in the same strain. Then all the people wept and Yazid began to fear lest they should be turned against him, so he ordered the Mu'adhhdhin to make the call to prayer. This he began to do when the Imam told him to be quiet and turning to Yazid said: 'Is Muhammad my grandfather or yours? Why hast thou killed his offspring?' Yazid was silent, and the people said to him, 'Thou hast caused this trouble in Islam,' and then again the whole congregation lifted up their voices and wept bitterly.

It was an impressive scene. Seldom had the great Mosque, formerly the Christian church of St. John, seen the like; the pleasure-seeking, cruel Khalifa on the one side, the persecuted, devout Imam on the other. The bold words of the latter struck terror into the heart of Yazid, and their earnest tones, recalling the events of the Prophet's days, stirred a deep emotion and called forth approbation of the claim the preacher made.

Zainu'l-'Abidin passed his time in meditation, devotional exercises and in collecting and arranging the commands of the Prophet. When he thought of the sufferings of his father he wept so bitterly that his servants became alarmed. When food was brought to him he wept and mingled his tears with the water he drank.

The lot of the Shi'ahs was very sad in these days. They were persecuted and to be recognized as a Shi'ah meant a possible death, so they had to practice taqiya or subterfuge, by pretending that they were not Shi'ahs. During his last illness, caused by poison administered by the orders of the Khalifa Walid, he swooned away and on becoming conscious he prayed and thanked God, who had been so faithful and had given him a heritage in heaven, 'How good is His reward to those who do good deeds.' With these words of praise his spirit passed away.

His excellent qualities, wisdom, piety and other endowments are set forth in full detail by Shi'ah historians. Allowing

for some considerable exaggeration it appears that Imam Zainu'l-'Abidin was a simple-hearted, kindly man, intelligent and wise, though perhaps hardly vigorous enough to be the successful leader of a party in those days of conflict and turmoil, in which he took no active part, but led a quiet life giving counsel to and receiving homage from his followers.

The powerful clan patriotism was on the side of the Umayyads, the opinion of the legists and many religious people supported the Shi'ahs. Mu'awiya listened patiently to their reproaches, took little notice of their language and 'cut their tongues' by gifts and kind treatment. This moderation was shown until the time of 'Abdu'l-Malik, who, after making the Hajj, visited Madina, and to the adherents of the Prophet's family said: 'Please remember that I am not a weak Khalifa like Uthman, nor a flattering one like Mu'awiya, nor a stupid one like Yazid, that I shall not cajole this nation except with the sword, until you come into line. No person after to-day shall enjoin pity on me but I strike off his head.'¹ He was as good as his word and the persecution of the Shi'ahs was so severe that many remembered the milder character of Mu'awiyah's rule and said, 'We used to deceive him and he let himself be deceived.'

'Abdu'l-Malik's policy was carried out by his lieutenant Hajjaj, who broke the law that there should be no fighting in or near the Ka'ba, destroyed it and cut off the head of 'Abdu'llah ibn Zubair and sent it to 'Abdu'l-Malik and then exposed the mutilated body on a gibbet in Madina. He also did many other cruel acts. The collecting of skulls became a custom under the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. There was a storehouse in the royal palace and each skull was kept in a separate basket. The bodies were generally crucified and exposed. The heads of schismatics, amongst whom 'Alids were classed, were placed on lances and carried about for the populace to see.

The Shi'ahs were bitterly oppressed in the time of 'Abdu'l-Malik, one of the sternest and most vindictive of the Umayyad

¹ ZAYDAN, *Umayyads and 'Abbasids*, p. 101.

rulers. Hajjáj¹ prohibited the acting on any orders of the Khalífá 'Alí and put many to a cruel death. I give a few cases. Sa'íd ibn Jabir was brought before the Khalífa, and the following conversation followed: 'What is your belief about the first and second Khalífas, are they in heaven or in hell?' Sa'íd replied: 'If I go to heaven I shall know.' 'What have you got to say concerning the Khalífas?' 'I am not their agent' (Vakil). 'Which of them do you esteem your greater friend?' 'He whom God most approves and loves.' 'Which is that?' 'He who knows the interior and exterior state has this knowledge.' 'Why do you not like to give a true statement?' 'Because I do not want to tell a lie.' Hajjáj thus foiled became angry and ordered his execution. To another victim he said: 'Thou hast a long tongue, dost thou not know the Creator, thou art an infidel; tell me where is your God?' 'My God is always glancing at the tyrants so that he may punish them.' Hajjáj gave orders that his hands and feet should be cut off and his body impaled on a gallows. A second Shi'ah was brought in. All that could be got from him was that he agreed with the previous prisoner, so he too was impaled.²

¹ Hajjáj was a faithful servant to 'Abdu'l-Malik, whose orders he carried out with great severity. In crowded prisons men and women were cruelly treated, and it is said that he put 120,000 persons to death. His speech to the people of Kúfa shows his savage temper. He said: 'By God, I see glances fixed on me, and necks stretched forward, and heads ripe for the reaping ready to be cut off, and I am the man to do it.'

² For similar cases see *Sahifatu'l-'Abidin*, pp. 171.

CHAPTER III

IMAM AL-BAKIR

MUHAMMAD, son of Zainu'l-Abidin was born in Madína A.H. 57 (A.D. 676) and died in A.H. 143 (A.D. 731). He was three years old when his grandfather Husain was killed. He was educated and well brought up by his father. He was called Al-Bákir (the Ample) because he collected an ample fund of knowledge, or because he split open knowledge, that is, he examined it minutely and probed it to its foundations.¹ He took no part in secular government, nor did he interfere in secular affairs, except that he supported the establishment by the government of a mint and approved of the coining of money, so as to be free from the use of foreign coins. In the time of the Khalífa Hishám, pilgrims suffered much from the want of water on the journey from Syria to Mecca, and many died *en route*. The soil was very rocky at a certain stage where water was needed. Hishám sent a large body of men to construct a reservoir, and with great labour they dug the hard earth. At last they came near water, when from one side a large fissure appeared, from which such a stream of hot air came out that the workmen were burnt, their bodies weakened, and they lost their breath and their strength. The people above awaited in vain for the men to come up. They all sought for the cause, but the wise men failed to find it. No one could explain it and so the clerk of the works went to Hishám and in full durbar stated the case. The time of the Hajj was near and Hishám did not like to give up his project. He convened a great meeting of men from various tribes, amongst whom was Muhammad Bákir, who said that if he went there he might find out something. With Hishám's permission he went and found that in this place the men of Ahqáf,² who were destroyed for their unbelief, had dwelt. He said that this might account for its unprofitableness.

¹ Ibn Khallikan in article on Abú Ja'far.

² A tribe mentioned in *Súratu'l-Ahqáf* (xcvi).

Many stories are told of the miracles which happened in connexion with him. A poor man once asked for alms, Bákir replied that he had no money. Then a minstrel came along and sang in his praise. The servant was ordered to go into an inner room and bring a bag. He did so; when the minstrel saw that it was full of gold, he asked permission to sing again; so three times he sang and each time was richly rewarded. The poor man asked Bákir why he had said that he had no money. He was told to go into the room and see if there was any sight of money there. He went and found none. The fact that money was ready for the minstrel is held to be miraculous.

A man one day said to him: 'Was the Prophet heir to all the knowledge of the prophets?' He replied, 'Yes'; then he was asked whether he had inherited it. He said he had. He was then asked if he could raise the dead to life, restore sight to the blind, and cleanse the leper. He said, 'Yes, by the valour of God Most High.' He put his hand on the eyes of a man and blinded him completely and then restored his sight. Many more such stories are told.

He discoursed fully on many topics, such as the nature of the soul of man, the qualities of the 'Ulamá' and the nature and attributes of God. He discouraged arguments about the divine nature, saying that it was not possible for man to understand it. One day a Mu'tazilí leader asked what the anger of God meant. He said it was simply punishment, but that this anger was not to be compared to the anger of men. God's nature did not change. He defined a Rasúl as a prophet who hears the voice of the angel (of revelation) and sees the angel in a bodily form or in a dream; a Nabí, he said, is a prophet who also hears the voice of the angel under the same conditions, but does not see him; the Imám's condition is like that of the Nabí and not like that of the Rasúl.¹ He said that the Imáms were pure and that the 'men of the House'² were free from sin; that all the world was under their rule:

¹ A Rasúl is more correctly defined as one who is specially commissioned to deliver God's message to mankind. See *Faith of Islám* (Fourth edition), pp. 299.

² i.e. of the family of the Prophet.

that through them the eye of God's mercy falls on men; and that, if they did not exist, men would perish and that they should not fear though worthless fellows might deny all this.' Imám Bákir in defending his claims to the Imámat before Hishám quoted the verse, 'This day have I perfected your religion unto you and fulfilled my mercy upon you and appointed Islám to be your religion.'³ He went on to say that the open revelation being thus perfect, the Prophet made known other secret matters to 'Alí. From amongst the men of the house 'Alí appointed one special person as his confidant, to whom this heritage of the knowledge of secret things came down. Hishám replied that as God allowed no partner in the matter of knowing the secret things, how could 'Alí make such a claim? In reply Bákir repeated many sayings of the Prophet, showing the mutual relationship between himself and the high position accorded to 'Alí. On hearing all this Hishám was silent for a while, and then permitted Bákir and his companions to return home. Neither the pomp nor the power of the Khalífa influenced the Imám, who boldly without fear answered all the questions put to him.

Hishám gave orders that no one was to entertain them on their return journey, for, as descendants of 'Alí, they were well known as magicians and enchanters. In consequence of this, when they came to the city of Madá'in,³ the inhabitants refused to show them any hospitality and closed their doors against them. At length, after a stirring appeal from an old man, the inhabitants opened their doors and received the travellers as their guests. After resting a short time, the party proceeded on its way to Madína.

Now trouble arose in another quarter. Zaid, a grandson of Husain, said that he had the precedence and should have succeeded Zainu'l-'Abidín. Bákir consulted his brother, Abú

¹ *Mátharu'l Bákir*, p. 83.

² *Súratu'l-Má'ida* (v) 5.

³ The city was then one of some importance with a fine mosque, near which Salmán, the Persian, a Companion of the Prophet was buried. The Khalífa Mansúr held his court there for a time. It is now in ruins.

Ja'far, who advised him not to place any reliance on the Kúfans, or to look to them for help. 'It was in that city,' he said, 'thy grandfather 'Alí was slain and thy uncle Ḥusain wounded.' When he saw that Zaid persisted in his intention, he said: 'Brother, I fear that you will be impaled on a gibbet, set up in a sewer.' He then bade him farewell. Zaid went to Hishám to prosecute his claim to the Imámat. The Sunni account of the interview is that when Zaid entered the hall of audience he found it full and had to take a place at the end of it.

Hishám would not listen to him and said, 'Silence! bastard child! dost thou not aspire to the Khalífate, thou son of a slave?' Zaid pointed out that the slave status of a mother did not prevent her sons from seeking a high destiny, just as Ishmá'il, the son of a bond-woman, became the father of a nation and the ancestor of the Prophet. The interview then ended.¹ The Shí'ah account is as follows:

Hishám said: 'If I order Imám Bákir to come to Damascus, would you kill him?' Zaid replied that he would do so. An order was then sent to the Governor of Madína, directing him to send Imám Bákir to Damascus. The governor, a cautious man, wrote to Hishám and said that to arrest so great a man would be dangerous and begged that it should not be done. Hishám accepted this advice much to Zaid's annoyance. He declared that Bákir had bribed the governor. He then suggested that Hishám should call on the Imám to send to Damascus the Prophet's armour, coat of mail and ring. If he did not send them there would be a cause of action against him; but the Imám saw the trick and sent the articles. When they arrived, Zaid said that they were not the genuine ones, but Hishám was satisfied. Foiled again, Zaid made another plan. He asked Hishám to send to Bákir a saddle as a present; and said that he would put some virulent poison on it. The saddle was sent and one day the Imám went out for a ride using this poisoned saddle. He soon fell from the horse seriously ill. For three days he lay unconscious and then expired. So passed away another Imám, a victim to the disordered state of Islámic society

¹ *Muruju' dh-Dhahab*, vol. v, p. 46.

and the many bitter feuds amongst its leaders. Bákir died A. H. 143 (A. D. 731) at the venerable age of seventy-six. He followed the peaceful policy of his father and took no active part in insurrections. Zaid, a grandson of Ḥusain, and a brother of Imám Ja'far raised a rebellion and fifteen thousand men of Kúfa recognized him as their lawful Imám and the Imámat of his son Yahyá after him. They marched against the Khalífa's governor of 'Iraq and war commenced; but after a while Zaid's men said to him: 'Tell us thy opinion about the Khalífas Abú Bakr and 'Umar, who were unjust to thine ancestor 'Alí ibn Tálíb.' He refused to denounce them and said that he fought the Umayyads because they fought against his ancestor Ḥusain. The men were not satisfied with this reply, and all but two hundred deserted him, and from that time they were called Ráfidah (Deserters). With his small force he continued to fight but he and his band were all slain. His body was afterwards exhumed, crucified and burnt. His son, Yahyá, fled to Khurásan. There he raised a rebellion against the governor and was slain. This was the third time the Kúfans proved false. They had recognized Ḥasan ibn 'Alí as Imám, but proved faithless, and in order to seek peace with Mu'áwiyah, murdered him. They invited Ḥusain to Kúfa and deserted him; and now, by their desertion of Zaid, they caused both his death and that of Yahyá. So a proverb became current 'More stingy than a Kúfite and more perfidious.' Zaid's followers formed a new sect, called the Zaidiyya, which finally split up into minor sects. One subdivision of the Zaidiyya, to justify their election of Zaid, held that the Imámat was not hereditary, and that the Imám must be elected by the leaders of the sect and that he must be a good warrior. To this Imám Bákir had replied that, in that case, Zainu'l-'Abidín could not have been Imám, as he never engaged in warfare. Yahyá's successor raised insurrections in the time of the Khalífa Mansúr which were put down. It is said that Imám Ja'far aṣ-Ṣádik foretold this disaster and this prophecy is considered to be one of his miracles. The Zaidites settled

¹ Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farq bain al-Furuq*, pp. 25-6; Masudi, *Muruju' dh-Dhahab*, vol. vi., pp. 204-5.

chiefly in Yemen and some authors of repute arose amongst them. A small body of Zaidites, more or less independent, has existed in Yemen since 1660. Through this sect the Zaidiyya Imámat passed on to Indrís who fled to Morocco and founded a new dynasty which ignored the Sunni Khalífas. After it passed away the Zaidites appear to have lost influence in that part of Africa. There is, of recent origin, a small autonomous Idrísi State in Arabia. The Zaidiyya sect is also to be found in India. A much respected leader is said to belong to a lineal descendant of Zaid. Some of them are also said to be found amongst the Borahs of Western India. Anyhow, the sect is still in existence though it is comparatively small.

CHAPTER IV

IMAM AL-JA'FAR

THE Imám Ja'far son of Imám Bákir, surnamed as-Şádiq or the Veracious, was born A.H. 80 (A.D. 699) died in A.H. 148 (A.D. 765) and was buried in the cemetery at Madína, where his grandfather Zainu'l-'Abidín and Hasan the son of 'Alí were also interred. His mother was a granddaughter of the Khalífa Abú Bakr. His lot was cast in troublous times for the Umayyad Khalífate was coming to an end and civil war was constant and severe. A descendant of 'Abbás, an uncle of the Prophet, named Muhammad ibn 'Alí, conceived the idea of setting up an 'Abbásid Khalífate in the place of the Umayyad one. I have given full details of this rising in another book,¹ so only a short summary is needed here. He said that after the death of Husain, the Imámat came to Muhammad ibn Hanafíyya, a son of 'Alí, that he was translated from the earth, but was still alive though concealed, that he had before his departure made his son Abú Hášim the Imám, and that he, on his death bed, had appointed as his successor Muhammad ibn 'Alí. This legend had the desired effect. It was approved by the sect of the Kaisámiyya or followers of Muhammad Ibn Hanafíyya. Naturally the Shí'ahs held a different view, but they were appeased by the declaration that the Umayyads were enemies of them all, and that the revolt was to establish 'the rights of the family of Muhammad and the victory of the men of the House.' This ambiguous term included both 'Abbásids and 'Alíds and deceived the latter, who thought that the claims of their Imáms would be asserted. The 'Abbásids, however, did not deal fairly with the Shí'ahs and so when Abú Salma wrote a letter to Ja'far, the latter without reading it burnt it

¹ *The Umayyad and Abbásid Khalíffates* (C.L.S.) pp. 47-57. See also Zaydan, *Umayyads and Abbásids*, p. 146.

and said to the bearer, 'That is my answer.' But the 'Abbásids got many of the people of Madína and its neighbourhood on their side. The Shí'ahs fell into the trap, and when too late found that they were set aside and that the new dynasty which arose was that of the 'Abbásids. After a while Baghdad was made the capital and the history of the later Imáms is connected with that city. At Kúfa, Abú Salma addressed a large congregation in the Mosque. He said Abú Muslím had determined to set the world free from the tyranny of the Umayyads; that he (Abú Salma) had found a new leader in Muḥammad, a descendant of the house of 'Abbás, and that he hoped they would approve of him. The people of Kúfa, ever fickle, shouted their approval. So the revolt went on until, in the fatal battle of the Záb (A.D. 750), the Umayyad Khalífa, Marwán, was defeated. He found refuge in Egypt, but his enemies found him and slew him. The first 'Abbásid Khalífa, surnamed Aṣ-Ṣaffáh the blood-shedder, bitterly persecuted the 'Alíds, destroyed their houses in Kúfa, and put a great many to death. The survivors fled from home. Under the Khalífa Manṣúr their lot was little better. He wished to get rid of Ja'far Šádiq and at his instigation the house in Madína where the Imám was living was set on fire,¹ but he and his friends escaped safely. The 'Abis declare that the hatred thus shown to the Imám was misplaced for Ja'far Šádiq had no wish to obtain the Sulṭánate, though he was diligent in his spiritual rule over his followers, duly instructing them in all religious matters. The people of Khurásán were on the side of the 'Abbásids; the inhabitants of Kúfa supported the 'Alíds, and they, annoyed at the broken promises of the 'Abbásids, swore allegiance to Aṣ-Ṣaffáh, in A.H. 132.

Aṣ-Ṣaffáh gave orders that Shí'ahs should be killed. Their houses in Kúfa were destroyed and, though in order to save their lives some flattered the 'Abbásids, it was all in vain. Aṣ-Ṣaffáh had Umayyad graves opened and the bodies of the Khalífas found were treated with much dishonour and

¹ *Athar-i-Ja'fariyya*, p. 65.

then destroyed. Few Shí'ahs, except women and children, were saved. Those who escaped fled to Spain. The fact that the Shí'ahs had largely helped the 'Abbásids to power was urged upon Aṣ-Ṣaffáh and, at length, he cancelled his order for their indiscriminate slaughter.

At this time the Shí'ahs hoped that the 'Abbásids would fulfil their promises, but they proved faithless, and Manṣúr, for the strengthening of his power, deemed it necessary to search for and to kill the Shí'ah leaders. In accordance with his order the governor of Madína seized all the descendants of Imám Ḥusain and sent them to Kúfa and there imprisoned them, for it was from amongst them that a rival was most likely to arise. When Ja'far Šádiq saw the hard lot of these Sayyids he wept; for some were in fetters, some had to wear iron collars, and some had their hands fastened behind their backs. Mecca and Madína were no longer places of safety.

It is said that Manṣúr showed favour to Muḥammad ibn Hanafíyya in the hope that Ja'far would contest his orders, and so place himself in a position in which he might be punished, but the Imám was too wise and self-possessed to be caught by such a stratagem. The Shí'ahs say that Manṣúr sent to the governor of Madína some poisoned grapes and directed that, in whatever way possible, they might be placed for the Imám to eat. A way was found; the Imám partook of them and died.

Just before his death, he summoned his friends and followers, gave them good advice, told them not to lighten or shorten the Namáz, for, if they did, he would not intercede for them. They were to be diligent in all good works. He appointed his son Músa Kázim as his successor.

He was given to hospitality. He had a beautiful garden full of fruit trees. In the season it was thrown open, so that all might come and feast therein. His piety, learning, friendship and other good qualities are told at great length by Shí'ah historians.² He distinguished an Imám from a Nabí (prophet) thus: an angel appears and speaks to a Nabí, but, to an Imám a voice comes to his ear, but no angel or person is seen.

¹ *Athar-i-Ja'fariyya*, p. 138.

² *Ibid*, p. 146 et seq.

Ja'far was well instructed by his father and when he came to the prime of life he still remained in his paternal home. He conversed with all sorts of persons and heard with patience what they had to say and gave answers to all questions. He knew many Traditions and his interpretations of verses of the Qur'án are largely quoted by Shi'ah theologians. He was a man of philosophic turn of mind and an excellent teacher. Some of his pupils became famous. Abú Hanífa and Málík later on founded the schools (Mazhabs) of law, called after their respective names. Hæan, the Bassite, was one of his pupils and became a divinity lecturer. It was in one of his classes that Wásil ibn Aťá, the founder of the Mu'tazila sect, propounded theories which led to his expulsion from the class. Ja'far is said to have been well versed in all the occult sciences and that Jábir ibn Hayyán, a famous alchemist, was his pupil. Ja'far left seven daughters and seven sons, of whom Ismá'il was the eldest and Músa the fourth.

Imám Ja'far aṣ-Ṣádiq had appointed his eldest son Ismá'il as his successor; but he predeceased his father, and so Músá Kázim was appointed. Many Shi'ahs held that Habíb, son of Ismá'il was the true heir and supported his claim. A further split in the Shi'ah community now occurred and the famous sect of the Ismá'ilians thus took its rise. The Fátimid dynasty in Egypt was founded by this sect. This booklet is concerned with the Imáms of the Imámiah sect who accept Músá and the four succeeding Imáms as the only rightful ones, and so are called 'The Imámians (Ithna 'Ashariyya). They hold that Imám Mahdi will be the twelfth in line from 'Alí ibn Ṭalib, and so the reader is referred to the books named in the foot note¹ for a further account of the Ismá'ilian sect. They became more active in North Africa than in Arabia. A small branch of the sect is found in Bombay still, known as the Borahs.

¹ *The Druses* (C.L.S.), *Muslim Conquests in North Africa* (C.L.S.) pp. 39-55, Osborn's *Islam under the Khalifs of Baghdad*, pp. 236-65; Henri Fournell, *The Berbers* (Paris 1875) vol. i, Osborn's *Islam under the Arabs*, pp. 167-84, Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 409, Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. i, pp. 391-415.

Shi'ah historians say that the Imám Ja'far had no desire to obtain the Sulṭánate and that he gave no support to rebels against the Khalífa; but Manṣúr neither believed his words nor trusted his actions. He ordered the Governor of Madína to put poison on some grapes and send them as a present to Imám Ja'far, who, not suspecting treachery, ate some and soon after died.¹ He was then sixty years of age. His son Músa buried him in the garden-cemetery of Al-Baki where 'Abbás, the uncle of the Prophet, and four Imáms were interred.

Manṣúr was alarmed at the popularity of Abú Muslim, a famous general and king-maker, and who would be able with his loyal troops to secure the throne for an 'Alíd ruler, and so he was treacherously slain by Manṣúr's orders. Two sects now arose: the Khurámiyya, who said Abú Muslim was not dead and would re-appear and make justice known; the Muslimiyya who held that he was the true Imám and that the Immámate passed on to his daughter Fáṭima.² Manṣúr next turned his attention to the Shi'ahs and persecuted them, especially their leaders, whom he looked upon as dangerous to the 'Abbásid dynasty. He died on his way from Baghdad to Mecca in the year, A.D. 775. These sectaries gave much trouble in the reign of Al-Ma'nún.

¹ *Athár-i-Ja'fariyya*, p. 85.

² Masúdi, *Murúju'ah-Dhahab*, vol. vi, pp. 166-7.; Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. i, p. 246.

CHAPTER V

IMAM MUSA KAZIM

IMAM MUSA KAZIM was born in Madína in A.H. 129 (A.D. 746) and died in Baghdad in A.H. 183 (A.D. 799). His mother was a native of Barbary. The title *Kázim* means 'one who restrains', and was bestowed on him because he restrained his desires and suppressed his anger. He was a devout man, and was greatly venerated in Madína. It is said that one day in the mosque at Madína he made in the namáz a prostration and remained in that same position all night, and prayed thus: 'O Thou, who art the object of love, let Thy pardon be granted to me whose sin is so grievous.'

He suffered much ill-treatment from the Baghdad *Khalífas*, who forgetting that the 'Alíds had aided the 'Abbásid cause, now seemed to treat them as enemies. Probably there was much ill-feeling, but no overt or concerted act of rebellion. The 'Abbásid *Khalífa*, Al-Mahdí, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, taking Músá Kázim with him. He then brought him to Baghdad and imprisoned him for a year. Then in a dream he saw 'Alí who reproached him for his conduct towards the Imám. On the morrow Músá was called to the presence of Al-Mahdí, and, on promising not to oppose in any way the existing government, he was set at liberty. The Mahdí then gave him a present on his return to Madína. The Imám resided there for a while in peace, until Mahdí, suspecting the Sayyids of the 'Alíd party, thought it well to secure the person of the Imám; so again he was imprisoned in Baghdad. The *Khalífa* Hárúnu'r-Rashíd followed the example of his predecessor and, so it said, at the instigation of Yaḥyá, the Barmakide gave much trouble to Músá Kázim. He made him leave Madína and go to Baṣra where he thought there would be less likelihood of adverse intrigues. 'Isá, in whose charge Músá had been left, was so struck with his devotion to religious exercises, and his entire

detachment from worldly affairs, that he wrote a letter to Hárún stating that Músá should be released, or that he should be relieved of his charge. Hárún, being very angry, brought Músá to Baghdad and placed him first in charge of Faḍl Abú Rábí', and then of Yaḥyá the Barmakide. He moved him about from place to place, in charge of different persons, hoping that some one of them would put him away, but all seemed attracted by his quiet behaviour. At a personal interview Hárún promised to allow Músá to return to Madína, but put him in prison instead. He then sent a beautiful damsel to him, hoping to establish a charge of adultery against him, but this failed. On the advice of Yaḥyá, Hárún agreed to release the prisoner on condition that he confessed his faults. This Músá declined to do on the ground that, as he had committed none against the *Khalífa*, he could not tell a lie, and that in any case his trouble would soon be over, for he could not live long. At length Hárún induced Sindi Abú Shábík to give the prisoner some grapes. Músá ate one, and, after a few days illness died from the poison placed in it.¹ It is admitted that the Sunni-historians do not believe that the Imám died of poison. So passed away another Imám of the house of 'Alí. His life had been full of trouble.²

The Shí'ahs had a real grievance at the way in which the 'Abbásids had, on a false pretence, gained their aid, and so the presence in the empire of a compact body of them under an Imám, believed to be divinely appointed, may have caused, at times, some anxiety to the administration; but they scarcely justify Hárún's constant persecution of Músá. It must, however, be borne in mind that the circumstances narrated above are all from Shí'ah sources and must be received with caution, especially the story of the poisoned grapes.³

¹ Some say that molten lead was poured down his throat. Wollaston, *The Sword of Islám*, p. 244.

² *Ulúm-i-Kázimiyya*, p. 96.

³ The historians As-Syúṭi and Masúdi make no mention of the persecution; and Amír 'Alí, in *A Short History of the Saracens*, p. 241 give a favourable account Hárún's conduct.

The Shí'ah writers give the usual fulsome account of the varied moral qualities of Imám Músá, and of his piety. He is said to have spent many hours in prayer and whole days in the reading of the Qur'án, and to have been generous to the poor and affable to all. It is also said that Músá made no claim to any political rule, or any attempt to form a political party, and that Hárún's assumption that he did so was utterly wrong, and that his persecution of Músá was therefore unjust.

A long account is given in the '*Ulúm-i-Kázimiyya*' (pp. 119-126) of a discussion between the Imám and a Christian priest. The Imám was asked to produce a verse from the Qur'án which named Muḥammad. He referred to the letters Há, Mím, prefixed to some of the Súras and said the Mím stood for Muḥammad. However, the priest is said to have been converted to Islám with the other Christians. The account is interesting, though one-sided, the arguments narrated being entirely in favour of the Imám, whose obedient disciple each convert is said to have become. In those early days there was much difference of opinion as to which Imám, at the end of the age, would re-appear as Al-Mahdi, the guided one, able therefore to guide others. The work of Al-Mahdi is described in many Traditions.¹ A full account will be given in the last chapter of this book.

The Kaisamíyya sect said Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafíyya did not die, but retired to Mount Riḍwa, where in seclusion he lived, nourished by water and honey, which flowed from two springs near by, and that he was guarded by a lion and a panther. He will re-appear as Al-Mahdi.² The Muḥum-madiyya sect hold that another Muḥammad, a great grandson of 'Alí, retired to Mount Hájjar, where in concealment he will remain until he comes as Al-Mahdi. The Bákiriyya sect believe that Imám Bákir will be Al-Mahdi. The Músawíyya sect say that Imám Músá will re-appear as Al-Mahdi.

This was one of the many disputes of those early days.

¹ Hughes, *Dictionary of Islám*, p. 305.

² Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farq bain al-Firūq*, p. 48.

CHAPTER VI

IMAM AR-RIDA

IMA'M 'ALI RIDA was born in Madína A. H. 151 (A.D. 770) and died at Tūs in A. H. 200 (A.D. 819.) Many marvels are related in connexion with his birth, such as his singing praise to God (*tasbīḥ* and *taḥmīd*) and holding his infant hands to heaven in adoration. His father Imám Músá Kázim appointed Ar-Riḍa his successor, as being the most suitable one of his sons for the office. A new sect, the Waqfiyya, now arose. They said that Músá Kázim was still alive in concealment, and that he was the Mahdi who would appear at the end of the age and, therefore, no new Imám could be appointed. Though not so powerful as the Zaidiyya or the Ismá'iliyya, they for a while were able to give much trouble; but after a few years the remaining members rejoined the orthodox Shí'ah party.¹

The chief point of interest in the life of Ar-Riḍa is the friendship with the *Khalífa* Ma'mún. There was much confusion and disorder in the Empire. Ma'mún was now under the influence of his minister Al-Faḍl ibn Sahl, who persuaded him that the best way of settling the feud between the Sunnis and the Shí'ahs was to recognize Imám Ar-Riḍa as his successor in the *Khalífate*. Ma'mún, in contradistinction to previous rulers, was well-disposed towards the Shí'ahs. He informed Ar-Riḍa of his wish and sent Riḍa ibn Dahbak to bring him in comfort and safety to Baghdad. Rich presents were also sent. The Imám said that he had never sought the honour, but, as it was his fate, he would make the journey. So in the year A.H. 200 he left Madína and on the advice of his principal men went to Baghdad by way of Basra instead of by Kúfa. At Mecca he performed the usual ceremonies. His young son Muḥammad Taqí was with him and, seated on the shoulders of a servant, also made the circumambulation

¹ *Tufah-i-Riḍwanniya*, p. 32.

(tawáf). At various halting places on the way the Imám was received with great respect. In one place he put the seed of an almond tree in the ground, and later on the fruit of that tree was found to be most efficacious in the curing of all manner of diseases.

When he arrived in Merv, Ma'mún met him most kindly and placed at his disposal a large mansion and also a second one for his retinue. Ma'mún then offered him the Khalífate which he declined saying that, as God had given to Ma'mún the robe of office, he had no authority to put it on another person. He further added that worldly affairs were not attractive to him. Ma'mún replied that if he refused his life would be in danger, so through fear the Imám assented on condition that he should not be called upon to administer the purely secular affairs of the State. Then the Imám prayed thus: 'O God, Thou knowest that being helpless, I have accepted, chastise me not for this act, just as the actions of Joseph and Daniel were not questioned.' At a durbar Ma'mún gave him his daughter Umm Habib in marriage. The high state officials were present, and although they did not approve of the Imám's appointment as heir apparent, they received him with respect. Then orders were sent to the provincial governors to make known to the people Ma'mún's wish. The Imám's name was now included in the public prayers, and for the national black standards of the Abbásids the green ones of the Shí'ahs were substituted, and the people had to discard their black clothes, a rescript to that effect being sent unto all the provinces. The Imám's name was stamped on the current coins. Many years after coins were found at Merv on which was the inscription, 'The king of God and the Faith, al-Mamún, Amír and Khalífa of the Faithful and Ar-Rida Imám of the Muslims.' Ma'mún requested the Imám to say the Ramaḍan prayers in the mosque, and so make it clear to the people that he was heir apparent. The Imám declined as it was a royal duty which Ma'mun should perform. At last he consented on condition that he might conduct the service as the Prophet Muḥamad and 'Alí ibn 'Tálib used to do. Ma'mún told him that he could do it just as he pleased. A great and enthusiastic crowd accompanied

him to the mosque and gave him almost royal honours. When the news of Ma'mún's intention reached Baghdad, the Abbásid leaders protested strongly against it. They suspected that Faḍl had persuaded Ma'mún to change the order of the succession. They took steps to depose Ma'mún and proclaimed his uncle Ibráhím as Khalífa with the title of Al-Mubarak (the blessed) and threatened to kill Ma'mún if he persisted in his intention. Ibráhím proceeded to advance pay to the army. Al-Faḍl kept all this secret from Ma'mún. Ar-Riḍa, however, heard about it, and not wishing that a civil war should be raised on his account at once went to Ma'mún and acquainted him with the real state of affairs. Ma'mún was astonished at Al-Faḍl's conduct and soon after instructed men to murder him, but in order to conceal his share in the assassination had the men executed for the crime. An army sent against Ibráhím was defeated and Ma'mún saw that it would be impossible to carry out his plans about Ar-Riḍa's future. His attitude towards the Imám now began to change.

Outwardly he continued to show marks of friendship, though inwardly he was moved by suspicion and mistrust. Many stories are told of the minor causes which lead to this. Here is one. The Imám one day saw Ma'mún in the act of making the ceremonial ablution (waḍú') before saying the prescribed prayers (namáz) and noticed that a servant was pouring the water over his hands. Ar-Riḍa said: 'You ought not to employ another one in your worship of God.' Ma'mún suppressed his anger and taking the pot finished the ablution by himself. Now Ma'mún did not think that such minute attention to the ritual of ablution was needed. The Imám did, and fearlessly rebuked the Khalífa. Ma'mún thought that this showed a want of respect for his royal dignity and was an assumption of undue authority, and so the seeds of anxiety were sown in his mind.¹ He now eagerly seized every opportunity of humilitating the Imám.

It is said that Ar-Riḍa foretold his martyrdom. Briefly the account is that when the Hárún visited Madína, Ar-Riḍa said that his grave would be by the side of Hárún's tomb. He informed his secretary, Ḥasan ibn Abád, that he (the Imám)

¹ *Tuḥfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, p. 192.

would never see Baghdad again, and to Harthuma he gave long and minute directions about the funeral.

Harthuma says that two days before his death, the Imám said: 'O Harthuma, my end is near. I shall return to God and meet my pure ancestors. O Harthuma, this traitor (Ma'mún) intends to poison me.'¹ He then went on to say that Ma'mún would wish to bury him at the back of Hárún's tomb on the eastern side, but that on account of the hardness of the ground it would be impossible to dig there. He was to be told to try the western side. When dug the grave would fill with water, in which there would be many small fishes; then a big one would come and swallow them all and instantly disappear, and the water would subside.² It is said that this prophecy came to pass, much to Ma'mún's astonishment, who confessed his belief that Ar-Riḍa was a true Imám.

Ma'mún summoned the Imám to his presence and received him with great courtesy and called upon an attendant to bring is some choice grapes and pomegranates. The Imám ate some and a few hours after expired. Another story is that when visiting Ma'mún a tray of luscious fruits was placed before the Imám, who smiling to himself said, 'The grapes of Paradise are pleasanter.' He did not take any, but on Ma'mún pressing him to do so he ate three grapes and rose up to depart. 'Where are you going to?' said Ma'mún. 'To the place whither you are sending me,' was the prompt reply.³ Yet another account is that Ma'mún privately gave him some poisoned sherbet. He did not entrust it to a servant, for he feared that he might be affected by the piety and behaviour of the Imám and so abstain from giving it, or, if he did not know its dangerous nature, would set it down and depart, when the Imám might forget to drink it. So he personally attended to the matter.

¹ *Tuhfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, p. 211.

² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

³ *Tuhfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, p. 214. The Shí'ah historians accuse Ma'mún of the crime of poisoning. This is also the opinion of Athir and of Fakhri, quoted by Zaydan (p. 208). As-Syūṭi simply records the death and Mas'ūdi (vol. vii, p. 61) says that the Imám died of indigestion and that 'some pretend that he died from eating poisoned fruit.'

Ma'mún performed the funeral ceremonies and apparently showed real grief, but the Shí'ah historians say it was done to cover up his crime and that it was only sorrow simulated. He made the tomb of the Imám exactly like that of the late *Khalífa* Hárún, in order to render it difficult for Shí'ahs to know which one to revere. It seems, however, that they found a way to distinguish them, for the great traveller, Ibn Baṭūṭa, long after visited the shrine, and he describes it as richly furnished. He says that the adjacent tomb of Hárún was not held in honour, for 'every Shí'ah on entering kicks with his foot the tomb of Hárúnú'r-Rashíd, while he invokes blessings on that of Imám Riḍa.'¹

The insurgents at Baghdad were now informed that the Imám was dead. The reason for the revolt no longer existed and the people returned to their allegiance to Ma'mun. Ibráhím had reigned for two years. He remained in concealment for eight years. The black colour of the 'Abbásids was now restored for standards and garments. Thus the trouble ended with the passing away of another Imám, a victim to the troubled political state, to the mutual hatred of large sections of the Muslim people and to the waywardness and weakness of a *Khalífa*.

Long accounts are given of the good qualities of the Imám.² They are doubtless exaggerated, but are worthy of a short notice as showing the way in which the Shí'ahs are taught to reverence their Imáms. Ar-Riḍa is described as a courteous, well-mannered gentleman, friendly with all whom he met, kind and generous to his servants, a man of piety, humble in deportment and devoid of all pride. He was generous to the poor, sympathetic with sorrowful Shí'ahs.³ He was so strict in the performance of religious exercises that in the twenty-four hours he made a thousand rak'ats, or ceremonial prostrations, when saying the namáz (or stated prayers)⁴, and, with slight intervals for rest, spent much time in his devotions. When on a journey in the early morning

¹ Le Strange, *The Land of the Eastern Caliphate*, p. 390.

² *Tuhfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, p. 227-43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴ For definition of a rak'at, see *The Faith of Islám* (ed. 4th) pp. 99, 367.

he said in full the *tasbīh*, *tamjīd*, *takbīr* and *tahlīl*.¹ The whole *namāz* was repeated many times during the day. During these devotions, he repeated at various times the *Súras Manáfiqún*, (lxiii), *Jumu'a* (lxii), and *Ghāshiya* (lxxxviii), and when lying awake during the night he repeated prayers from the *Qur'án*. When the name of heaven and hell occurred he wept and asked for pardon. It was his habit to say the *Bismilláh* in a loud voice. His theological knowledge is said to have been profound and his dialectical skill unsurpassed.²

His disputations (*manázarah*) with Christians and others are related at great length and he is represented as always coming off victorious.³ Altogether according to the Shi'ah historians, he was a perfect scholar and saint.

He was extremely fond of dates, and when asked the reason why, replied that the Prophet and the Imáms, including his own father *Músákázim*, were all lovers of dates (*tamari*)

He loved perfumes and daily used sweet-smelling scents. He carried about a small ebony box in the various compartments of which were different kinds of scents, for they, he said, were amongst the things which gladdened the heart of man. He also said a man should anoint his body daily, or at least weekly, with oil of musk or ambergris. There are certain verses of the *Qurán*,⁴ the recitation of which is supposed to keep away evil men, *Jinn* and devils. Over the paper on which these were written sweet scents were sprinkled.

¹ Ibid. pp. 364-70.

² *Tuhfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, pp. 240-4.

³ Ibid. p. 244 et seq.

⁴ *Tuhfa-i-Riḍwaniyya*, p. 234.

⁵ *Ayatul-kursi al-Ḥamad: Mu'ūdhataín [Súratu'n-Nás (cxiv. 1-6)]*.

CHAPTER VII

IMAM TAQI

MUHAMMAD, son of *Ar-Riḍa* succeeded his father. He was born in the year A. H. 195 (A. D. 811) and died in *Baghdád* in A. H. 220 (A. D. 835) and was buried there in the *Quraish* cemetery, in which his grandfather *Músá Kázim* had been interred. He was surnamed *Jawwád*, the generous, and *Taqi*, the pious, by which latter title he is now known. The sect of the *Wáqifiyya* (the enlightened) had given much trouble to *Imám Ar-Riḍa*, because he was childless. The reply was that God would give him a son and, a year after *Muḥammad Taqi* was born, *Imám Riḍa* was asked who would succeed him in case of his death. He replied, '*Muḥammad Taqi*.' The objection was then raised that he was only three years old. The objector was referred to the verse which represents the child *Jesus* as saying: 'I am the servant of God. He hath given me the book and he hath made me a prophet,'¹ and so his age was no barrier to *Taqi's* proceeding to the *Imámat*. With such disputes the sect of the *Wáqifiyya* showed their opposition. Notwithstanding his youth it is said that *Taqi* showed such skill and learning that his adversaries were silenced. This showed that the capacities of a God appointed *Imám* are not dependent on his age.

The *Khalífa Ma'mún* went out with a big cavalcade for hunting. *Taqi* was playing with some children who ran away when they saw *Ma'mún's* retinue. *Taqi*, then nine years old, remained and looked on. *Ma'mún* was pleased and said, 'Child who are you, why did you not run away?' *Taqi* replied: 'O *Amír* the road was not so narrow that from fear I should flee.' 'Who is your father?' '*Imám Muḥammad 'Abi ibn Riḍa*.' Then *Ma'mún* was sad and rode off. When he returned he saw the same group of children, and the same

¹ *Súratu Maryan (xix) 31.*

thing happened again and Ma'mún was delighted with Taqí's apt replies. To the objection that it was not dignified for the young Imám to be playing with other boys, it is said that he was simply looking on and standing apart. Ma'mún, being highly pleased with him, invited him to stay in the royal palace and attend the meetings held with learned men of all kinds, which he did. When questions were put to him he answered them in a way which gratified all who heard them. Ma'mún then determined to marry Imám Taqí to his young daughter Umma'l-Faql, but the 'Abbásids strongly objected to this union, which would strengthen the powers of the 'Alids. Ma'mún made light of these objections, declaring that Imám Taqí was a suitable and learned man, a fact that they could verify if they examined him. For this purpose he convened a meeting of the most learned men he could get together. The Imám had many curious and intricate questions (masá'il) put to him, all of which he answered promptly and well, to the discomfiture of his opponents.

At one assembly Ma'mún placed the Imám by his side on the royal seat and gave orders that the interrogations should begin. It is said that the Qáđi on hearing the clever way in which the Imám replied to an intricate question was so confused that his countenance fell, his eyes became dim, perspiration poured down from his body and he became silent and humbly sat down by the door. The final result was that the 'Abbásids gave up their contention and the marriage took place. About a year later on, Ma'mún allowed Imám Taqí and his wife to proceed to Madína, to which the 'Abbásid leaders made no objection, and indeed were probably glad, as they disliked Ma'mún's leaning toward the 'Alids. They were, however, always watching and working for disagreement between Umma'l-Faql and her husband. The marriage was not a happy one, for the conduct of Umma'l-Faql was not conducive to the friendship and the mutual love which should exist between husband and wife. In order to create enmity against him, she used to write to her father disparaging letters about her husband, saying that he associated with slave girls. He rebuked her for making such charges, and for making unlawful what God had made lawful. She lived some three years at Madína,

but was always wishing her husband evil and seeking for some cause of repugnance; on another day she went to her father and told him that a woman who said she was the wife of the Imám had come to her. Now Ma'mún had been drinking and scarcely knew what he was doing. He drew his sword, went to the Imám's house and found him sleeping. He struck him on the mouth and injured him. When his drunken fit had passed away he was sorry and sent a servant to enquire about the Imám's state. He returned with the news that Imám Taqí was safe and well. This is looked upon as a miracle. Ma'mún, on hearing the good news, made the prostration (sijdah) of praise, and sent a present to the victim. He also told Umma'l-Faql not to bring any more complaints, for if she did he would see her no more. Her conduct, however, did not change, for she was always intriguing with her husband's 'Abbásid enemies.

Imám Taqí remained eight years in Baghdad wholly engaged in teaching, and then returned to Madína, where he died of poison in the twenty-fifth year of his age. It is said that, at the instigation of the Khalífa Musta'sim, Umma'l-Faql gave him poisoned grapes and, if so, she concluded thus her long series of acts of hatred.¹ Others say that Musta'sim sent poisoned sherbet to be given by the hands of a servant. Another story is that he directed one of his officials to invite the Imám to his house and to mix poison with the food. The Imám courteously declined the invitation but, on its being pressed, gave way. During the meal he partook of the poisoned food, but was able to return home, where after a night and day of pain he died in the year A.H. 220. Thus passed away, in his twenty-fifth year, another victim to the political jealousies of the age and to the timid fears of the reigning Khalífa. Intrigues, barbarity and murders were the constant, if not daily occurrences at Baghdad in its prime, and, in some respects, a brilliant era of the powerful 'Abbásid Khalífate.

¹ *Tuḥfa'u'l-Mutaqin*, pp. 63. It is said that Umma'l-Faql wept when she saw the result of her act; whereupon the Imám rebuked her and said that she would soon die of an incurable disease. Soon after she had a large swelling on the shin, and when the sore became septic, the physicians were helpless and she died in agony. Op. cit. p. 66.

During the eight years Imám Taqí spent in Bagdad he employed his time in instructing all who came to him, in hearing and answering questions. Men of all classes and of different schools of thought sought his society and listened to the instruction he gave. The Shí'ah historians are lavish in their praise of his character. The Wáfiqabbiyya, a sub-sect of the Wáqifiyya, spent a whole day in examining him and found him perfectly acquainted with the sciences of interpretation and of tradition ('ilm-i-tafsír and 'ilm-i-ḥadīth) and in law (fiqh) and theology (kalám). He received people of all classes in a friendly way and conversed with them in a general manner. Although he was the son-in-law of the Khalífa, he never boasted about his position, but remained a humble-minded man. Like his predecessors he was a generous man and kind to the poor and indigent. He secretly aided the believers in Madína with money when they were in need. He was simple in his dress and frugal in his diet. In reply to a request to explain the nature and the attributes of God, he preached a sermon which presumably sets forth the Shí'ah view.¹

¹ The *Khutba* is given in full in the *Tuhfa'u'l-Mutaqin*. pp. 74-6.

CHAPTER VIII

IMAM NAQI

MUHAMMAD NAQI was born in Madína in A.H. 214 in the reign of the Khalífa al-Ma'mún. He was six years old when Muḥammad Taqí died, so that he was not long in his company. His father appointed him as his successor. Though he was so young he displayed great learning and capacity. According to a Tradition it is said that Muḥammad Taqí, when on the way to Madína, was asked about the succession in case of his death. He wept and the tears fell on his beard. He said: 'This journey is not without its danger for me, and the Imámat after me will pass on to my son 'Alí Naqí.' It is true he was very young in the year A.H. 220 when he became Imám, but so was his father when he succeeded to the Imámat. The Khalífa was busy elsewhere and took no heed to this accession to the Imámat. Naqí was living quietly in Madína when trouble arose. For twelve years he had been engaged in teaching and in performing the duties of the Imámat. His fame had spread far and wide in Iráq, Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt, and from these provinces men came in large numbers to be benefited by his teaching.

'Abdu'lláh ibn Hákim, governor of Madína gave much trouble to the Imám. He reported to the Khalífa Mutawakkíl that Imám 'Alí Naqí remained in his house and collected the materials for assuming the Amírship and all things necessary for gaining the Sultánate. He amassed gold and silver and purchased implements of war and wished to oppose the Khalífate. When 'Alí Taqí knew of this letter he wrote to Mutawakkíl and clearly stated how the governor of Madína had troubled him and had now sent in an utterly false report. These two letters, one after the other, reached Mutawakkíl in Sámárrá. He had no confidence in 'Alí Taqí's letter and proceeded to make plans for getting him into his possession, but thought it well to adopt the plan of appearing to be

friendly, and so he invited the Imám to come to him. He wrote him a long and friendly letter and sent it by the hands of Yaḥyá ibn Harthuma, who was accompanied by a large retinue of Amírs and men of high position in the State. At the same time he dismissed 'Abdu'lláh Ḥákim and appointed 'Abu'l-Faḍl, governor of Madína in his stead, and said that he had had no idea of the trouble the late governor had been giving. He added that he had strictly charged the new governor to pay due honour and respect to the Imám. All this, however, was a clever trick. Again he wrote telling the Imám that he (Mutawakkíl) considered it his duty to respect all his rights, and to further the desires of his household, that he entirely disapproved of 'Abdu'lláh's conduct. He went on to say that he had heard of the Imám's fame and had long been desirous of seeing him, and that it would be a happy thing if the Imám and his friends would pay him a visit for a few days. For this reason he had sent Yaḥyá ibn Harthuma, with a large retinue, who would bring him in great comfort. With many more compliments and expressions of deep friendship the letter concluded.

Imám Naqi, in response to the invitation, set out for Sámarrá. He did so with some misgivings, but seeing that Yaḥyá ibn Harthuma was present with a large force and could compel obedience, and possibly thus impair the dignity of the Imámat and destroy the homes of the Sayyíds, the Imám's friends, he thought it wise to go as invited. His friends were sad when he departed. Yaḥyá describes the journey thus: 'I was astonished and, when I saw his baggage, I said to myself how can the Shí'ahs accept such a man for a leader, who in this hot season takes with him things for use in cold weather and snow storms, and burdens himself with useless things on the journey, but I said nothing. Day by day we travelled on, and one day halted in a desert place, totally without even the shade of a tree, and nowhere could any signs of a habitation be seen, and our provision and water were not sufficient. I had with me a friend and he and one of my guards held a religious discussion. One was a Shí'ah and one a Sunní; each one was trying to convince the other of the superiority of his religion. The Sunní said: "Your Khalífa 'Alí ibn Tálíb said that there was no place without graves.

There are none here." The answer came in a strange way. When evening came, the sky was clouded and a cold strong wind blew, and as the night drew on rain and snow fell and it became very cold, and the people suffered greatly. Harthuma says that he felt the cold intensely and had no means of keeping warm, when at midnight a servant of the Imám stood at the door of his tent, bringing a small bundle of clothes, which the Imám had sent for him and his secretary to wear, and so keep out the cold, I thanked the Imám for this thoughtful kindness. The bundle contained two quilts, two coats and two pairs of pants, all stuffed with cotton. I divided them between my secretary and myself, with all sincerity of heart I accepted the Imámat of 'Alí Naqi and wondered at the foresight he had shown in bringing with him these things which, on starting out, seemed useless and unnecessary. I and the secretary put on the warm clothes to our great comfort. In the morning the storm abated and I went out, and found half of my men dead, amongst whom was my Sunní friend who had taunted the Shí'ah about the absence of graves, whereas 'Alí bin Tálíb had said that there was no place without them. Now he found his own grave here. I at once went to see the Imám and found him reading the Qur'an. When he had finished he told me to go and bury the dead, and learn that God is great and powerful in all the earth, and that the words of the Amíru'l-Mumínún cannot fail to come to pass.' This wonderful event had such an effect on Yaḥyá that he also cast aside his vain beliefs and unreservedly acknowledged the true way. Such is the Shí'ah story.

At last they arrived at Sámarrá and the Imám came into the hands of Mutawakkíl who now forgot all his promises and protestations of friendship. In this he was not peculiar, for other 'Abbásid Khalífas had done the same. Mansúr with Imám Ja'far Šádík; Mahdí, Hádí and Hárún with Imám Músá had done the same, when the object of apparent friendship had been obtained. Mutawakkíl entertained him as a guest for two years and then began to alter his attitude towards him.

He now proceeded to arrange for another place of residence. He selected a very mean house, situated in a part of the city inhabited by poor persons and beggars. The Imám quietly

submitted to the indignity and took up his abode in that wretched quarter. After a short time, Mutawakkil put the Imám in the charge of Zarrika, an officer of his army, in order that his conduct might be carefully watched; but the officer was so impressed with the Imám's conduct that, though he could not openly espouse his cause, he treated him kindly.

One day a person named Safrá called upon Zarrika and, in response to enquiries, said that he was a follower of the Khalífa. Zarrika guessed the true object of the visit and said that he knew it was the Imám he really wished to see. He also spoke kindly of the Imám and indeed professed his own belief in him. Then calling a servant he told him to take the visitor to the Imám, who was now a prisoner. He used the latter term in order to conceal (taqiya) his own views. He was a high court official and it would have been dangerous for him, before a servant, to have shown any special regard for the Imám.

Safrá found the Imám sitting on a mat by the side of an open grave which made him very sad and he wept. The Imám bade him not to grieve, for he himself had suffered no loss by these evil doings and that he kept the open grave to make himself humble before God.

Mutawakkil was informed of Zarrika's newly formed attachment to the Imám: but, as it was difficult to punish a high official, he ignored what to him was an offence, and said nothing to Zarrika, but simply transferred the Imám to the charge of a man named Sa'id. The visitor who to gain admittance said he had received orders to kill the prisoner, was allowed to see the Imám and found that his new warder did not treat him as kindly as Zarrika had done, but gave him much trouble. This state of increasing severity of treatment by Mutawakkil's orders went on for years, but the good behaviour, resignation and devotion of the Imám so impressed all those who came into contact with him that they became his disciples. For a while he was allowed to live in his own house, but spies were always watching his actions and reporting them to Mutawakkil, who continued to persecute and trouble the Imám, and at length gave orders for his execution. In open durbar he ordered his chamberlain to bring the Imám to his presence, and summoned four servants

with naked swords to stand ready when the order was given to slay the Imám.

When the Imám left the hall of audience the four servants stood by the door with drawn swords, but instead of striking him, they threw away their swords, fell at his feet and humbly saluted him. Mutawakkil enquired the cause of such strange conduct. They said that they saw near the Imám a person with a drawn sword who said: 'If you give any trouble to the Imám I will slay you all,' so they dared not obey the Khalífa's order to slay the Imám. It is said that by divine aid the life of the Imám was saved. Many other plans, which it would be tedious to relate, were tried to silence the Imám, but they all failed. After a while Mutawakkil became very ill with a boil, so bad that he could neither sit nor rise up. The royal physicians wished to lance it, but the patient did not agree. Other remedies failed. Then Mutawakkil's mother secretly sent to the Imám for advice. He recommended a plaster made from the dung of goats. When the prescription was read the assembled doctors laughed and said it was useless, but Fatah ibn Khaqán recommended that it should be tried. This was done and the boil at once burst and the patient was cured. His mother sent 10,000 dinars in a golden purse to the Imám as a present. Soon after this Mutawakkil declared that he had received information that arms were being collected and the Shi'ahs called together for a revolt. His former desire to punish the Imám was renewed. In order that no time might be lost he sent at once for Sa'id, who formerly had charge of the Imám and ordered him to take men and search the house of the Imám and bring away whatever he found therein. Sa'id with his thirty soldiers placed a ladder against the wall, but could not get into the house for it was then very dark. The Imám hearing the noise said: 'O Sa'id, wait a little and I will have a lamp lit.' Then says Sa'id: 'We entered and found the Imám wearing a woollen robe, reading the Qur'an. He said; "search every corner and take what you like." We did so and found nothing except the golden purse in which the Khalífa's mother had sent her present. The Imám said; "Well what weapons and material for a revolt have you found?" He then took them all over the house and when nothing could be found, and told

Sa'id to report to the Khalifa the true state of the case. Sa'id then lifted up a mat and found under it an ancient, rusty sword without a scabbard and the purse already referred to. This was all that the soldiers could find. Then Sa'id and his men took leave and departed. Mutawakkil on hearing Sa'id's report was much ashamed, but did not give up his desire to injure the Imám. He then summoned a full durbar, in which nobles of the highest rank, officers of the army, preachers, poets and the royal chamberlains were present. The foreign body-guard and African servants stood in ranks around the hall, sweet voiced minstrels stood around the throne. It was a grand ceremonious occasion. Delicious wine in golden cups and crystal goblets were also brought in. The Imám arrived punctually in the durbar. The whole assembly rose and saluted him which he returned and then approached the throne, when Mutawakkil was seated. In order to preserve his royal dignity he did not rise, but he asked the Imám to recite some poetry, which with some reluctance he did. The effect on the assembly was soon apparent for all began to weep. Then Mutawakkil gave the Imám permission to return home. Just as the preceding Khalifas had done to his father and grandfather, so Mutawakkil continued, what the Shi'ah historians call, Satanic proceedings. In the year A.H. 237 he issued an order that throughout his dominions pilgrimages in veneration of Imáms 'Alí and Husain should not be made and, in order to carry this out, he sent an officer to Karbala with a large military force and instructed him to expel the pilgrims and all who disobeyed the order. It would be tedious to describe further the animosity which Mutawakkil showed towards the Shi'ahs. He razed to the ground the Mausoleum of Imám Husain and persecuted the Dhimmis (Christians and Jews who paid the jizya or poll-tax), destroyed their synagogues and churches, and placed many restrictions on their manner of life. He also bitterly persecuted the Mu'tazilis.¹

So we must pass on to the last days of Imám 'Alí Naqi, who notwithstanding Mutawakkil's enmity survived him. In the

¹ Sell, *The Umayyad and Abbasid Khalifates* (C.L.S.) pp. 97-7. Judged by the facts given by reliable historians, it may be presumed that the Shi'ah accounts which I have recorded are also fairly reliable.

year A.H. 256 in the reign of the Khalifa Al-Mu'atazz bi'llah he was poisoned. His son Hasan Askari performed the funeral ceremonies and buried him in a sacred place in his own house. His high qualities are duly set forth by Shi'ah historians. Allowing for the fulsome flattery which characterizes their accounts of the Imám, it does appear that Imám 'Alí Naqi was a good-tempered, quiet man, who all his days suffered much from Mutawakkil's hatred, and under it all preserved his dignity and exhibited his patience.

CHAPTER IX

IMAM ASKARI

IMAM ḤASAN 'ASKARI was born at Madīna in A. H. 234 (A. D. 845-6) and died at Sámarrá A. H. 260 (A. D. 874). He was about six years old when he accompanied his father to Sámarrá. He lived there all his days and was well instructed. In matters other than what related to education he was not engaged. His Imāmat began in the reign of Mu'atazz bi'lláh, whom the people did not trust, and disorders arose. This Khalífa was entirely in the hands of the Turkish mercenaries by whom he was finally deposed and put to death.¹ The power of the 'Abbāsids was declining, and their hatred of the Shí'ahs was not abated. The Khalífa Musta'in bi'lláh bought a high spirited horse which no one could ride. It was suggested to him that he should send for Imám 'Askari and ask him to ride it, when he would probably be killed to the great satisfaction of Musta'in bi'lláh who welcomed the suggestion as an inspired one. He was invited and Aḥmad ibn Hártha, whose father was a veterinary surgeon in the Imám's stables, tells the story as he heard it from him. The narrator says: 'I found in the Khalífa's stables a beautiful mule which no one could ride or suggest any remedy.' Musta'in requested 'Askari to saddle and ride him. He did so and tamed the animal and put it through all its paces, exhibited some fine horsemanship and received the animal as a present. Thus the design of Musta'in on the Imám's life was frustrated.

To return to Mu'atazz bi'lláh, who fully engaged as he was with the affairs of the State never forgot his desire and intention of putting the Imám to death. He arrested him and

¹ The Khalífa Mu'tasim's residence near Sámarrá was called Al-'Askari, the camp, and thus gave his name to the Imám.

² As-Syúfi, p. 374.

placed in charge of a cruel man, named Shagí'ul-Qáb, well known to be an enemy of the Shí'ahs. The Imám was brought to Baghdad, 'Ali ibn Yárash, who for a while had charge of him, after seeing his good conduct and piety came to him and begged to be forgiven for his rudeness, and afterwards did nothing but praise the Imám. The Shí'ah historians say that this shows that God had guided him and that all the devices of Mu'atazz, notwithstanding his pomp and glory, were in vain against the decrees of God. The Khalífa al-Muhtadi bi'lláh, afterwards assassinated, like his predecessor persecuted the Imám and imprisoned him. The Imám bore all these troubles with patience and remained constant in his devotions. The effect on his guards was so great that they dared to disobey orders and showed the prisoner much kindness. Then other guards were employed and the lot of the Imám became worse, for he was often deprived of his daily requirements. Even water for the ceremonial ablutions was sometimes forbidden to his great distress.¹ One day Mu'tamid ordered his men to take the Imám to the place where the lions were kept, to open the door of the enclosure and then to thrust him inside.² His guards, standing by the door, watched with intense interest the result. What did they behold?

The Imám entered the enclosure and all the lions stood around him. Without showing the least fear he patted them kindly and then all bowed down at his feet, and remained silent. Then the Imám spread his prayer mat on the ground and began calmly to say the namáz, whilst these man-eating animals formed a circle round him. The officer-in-charge asked the Khalífa to come and see the extraordinary sight. Mu'tamid came and stood by the door of the enclosure and both he and his officers were so astonished that the fear of God came into their hearts, and they were speechless. Being utterly ashamed they opened the door and the Imám came forth, safe and sound. The Imám was, however, kept in solitary confinement and as he was up till now childless, it was hoped that the line of Imáms would come to an end. In

¹ Al-'Askari, p. 30.

² Ibid. p. 32.

order that he might be under close observation his prison now was a room in the lower part of the royal palace, and his favourite wife was not allowed to be with him. The room had only one door and no windows, through which light or air could come in, and from the dampness of the ground there was no escape. He was confined here for two years, and though a young man of twenty-four years of age he had the appearance of an old man of seventy. The Imám bore all this calmly and quietly.

About this time there was a great drought and famine in Baghdad, and a Christian priest before a great crowd lifted up his hands towards heaven, then prayed, and rain fell. Seeing this miracle the faith of the people was shaken and there was a great danger of their forsaking Islám. Mu'tamid was much troubled at this and so the Imám was told about it. All he said was, 'If all the people gather together, please God, I can remove all their doubts.'

Mu'tamid then released the Imám and when all the people were assembled the Imám said 'seize the hand of the priest.' They did so and found in it a bone, which they took from him. Then the Imám told the priest to call for rain. He did so, but the clouds dispersed and the sun shone and no rain fell. The people were astonished and Mu'tamid asked the Imám what this bone was. He replied that it was a bone from the body of some prophet of God which this priest has obtained from a grave. He added that when a prophet's bone was lifted up immediately the sky became overspread with clouds, and rain fell, as had now been seen. The doubts of the people were now removed and the Imám went back to his prison. Another account says that the Imám before retiring prayed for rain and it fell.

Mu'tamid now gave orders that the Imám should be released and allowed to return to his own home and dwell there, which he did for five years. On hearing this glad news many persons came to visit him. Mu'tamid, however, continued to have him closely watched and received reports of all he said or did. No cause of disloyalty could be found for he carefully avoided the discussion of political affairs.¹ The

¹ *Al-'Askari*, p. 40.

Shí'ah historians complain that Mu'tamid now did another unlawful act, that is he restricted the payment of what is known as the Rasm-i-Khams, or the payment by way of alms of one-fifth of the produce of certain articles.¹ The garden of Fidak, which belonged to the Prophet and so to his family, had been appropriated by the Khalífa Marwán. The good Khalífa 'Umar II restored it to his descendants. After his just reign, however, Khalífas appear to have taken it and the Rasm-i-Khams, intended for charitable purposes, was applied to their own use, or to meet the necessities of the State. Anyhow, the poorer Shí'ahs, especially the Imáms, suffered greatly by the misappropriation of funds.

At last Mu'tamid finding all his plans for the destruction of the Imám fail, determined to adopt the one so successfully used by his predecessors, the plan of using poison. The Imám being unsuspecting, drank some liquor sent as a present by Mu'tamid. He was ill for three days and then died. Thus in the twenty-eighth year of his age, passed away in the year A. H. 260 another Imám in the same sad way that previous ones had done. When the news spread, the city was moved, and an uproar and hartal took place in the bazaars, which quieted down when the officials and Háshimites joined in the procession to the cemetery. He was buried near the grave of his father at Sámarra. A great concourse of the people attended the funeral and standing in rows joined in the funeral prayers. There was sadness amongst all classes in the city, and the people not needing to use dissimulation (*bila qaid-i-taqiyya*) were able to openly show their grief. Such at least is the Shí'ah statement. Glowing accounts are given of the high moral qualities, the learning and the piety of Imám 'Alí 'Askari. One day Bahlúl saw him when a lad, watching some boys at play and, thinking that he would like to join, offered to buy for him what was necessary for the game received the answer: 'O, senseless one, I was not created for playing games, but for wisdom and worship.' As-

¹ The author of *Al-'Askari* (p. 62) gives a long list of articles or produce on which one-fifth was to be paid: other authorities give a different proportion; see *Faith of Islám* (4th ed.) pp. 396-9. The action of Mu'tamid gave great offence and many pages are devoted to this subject. See *Al-'Askari*, pp. 86-100.

a young man he was exceedingly polite. A narrator says that he asked his father to describe the young man to him. He replied that if the 'Abbásid dynasty came there was no one so well fitted for the Khalífate as Imám 'Askarí who was famed for his piety and devoutness, wisdom and learning, chastity, nobility and perfect qualities. Many such like stories are narrated; but the Shí'ah imagination is very vivid and all such panegyrics need not be treated as serious history. As it is a cardinal article of belief that all the accepted Imáms are perfect and sinless men, nothing but praise of them can be found in accounts given by their followers.

Allowing for all this, it still remains fairly certain that they were very badly treated by the Umayyad and the 'Abbásid Khalífas, though they do not seem to have taken part in any revolution, yet the fact remains that the Zaidite sect and the Imámiyya Shí'ahs did now and again rise against the ruling authorities. Though it does not appear that the Imáms took any active part in these affairs, or were responsible for them, it does to some extent explain why the various Khalífas found it necessary to keep a close watch on them, and sometimes to imprison them. Still when this is said it may be admitted that the treatment the Imáms received was harsh and cruel, and tended to keep alive to this day a deep feeling of resentment.

CHAPTER X

IMAM AL-MAHDI

MUHAMMAD, the son of Al-'Askari was born in A.H. 255 (A.D. 869) and was surnamed Al-Muntazir (the Expected); Hujjatu'lláh (Proof of God); Imámu'z-Zamán (Imám of the age); and Al-Mahdi (the Guided). He is generally called by the last name, which implies that he is able to guide others. He was five years old when his father died. His mother's name was Narjis Khatúm, a favourite slave girl of his aunt's, with whom his father had fallen in love. The marvels attending his birth led his father to declare that he was the promised Mahdi.¹ For his safety he was kept in strict seclusion,² and only a few trusted friends were allowed to see him. The wonderful events connected with his birth were kept quite secret lest the animosity of the 'Abbásid Khalífa should be aroused. As a boy he showed such capacity that his promotion to the Imámat commended itself to the believers,³ but the work of the office was kept secret from the general public. This period of seclusion is called the Minor Occultation (Ghaibatu's-Saghra). It continued until the time of the Major Occultation (Ghaibahu'l-Kubra) and it lasted for sixty-nine years. During all this time a few selected friends were permitted to become intimate with him, and a few others to pay him occasional visits. To the former he made known his plans and wishes. They are called the Abwáb (doors) through whom he held communication with the outer world⁴ and thus no opportunity

¹ *Núr-i-Maqsúd*, p. 11.

² According to Al-Khallikan (ii, 581) he entered into a cistern in his father's house and never came out again. This story is hardly credible as a few confidential friends were allowed to see him.

³ *Núr-i-Maqsúd*, p. 41.

⁴ For the connexion of Abwáb with the formation of the modern Bábí sect in Persia, see *The Bahá'ís*, (C.L.S.), pp. 5-4.

was given to other persons to lay claim to the office, though after his final disappearance some unsuccessfully claimed to be his successor. He had no need for secular power, though by his right guidance of people and the preservation of the sacred law, he rendered, though it was not admitted by non-Shi'ahs, real service to the state.¹ Between a God-appointed Imám and a man-appointed leader, as the *Khalífa* was said to be, there could be no connexion. They belonged to different spheres of existence and influence. The Imám, though in seclusion, duly performed the spiritual duties of his office.

The *Khalífa* Mu'tamid, a pleasure-loving man, imprisoned the Imám's mother, Narjis *Khatúm* for six months, and so intimidated the Shi'ahs that they had to practice religious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) in order to escape persecution. Many left their homes and fled to other countries, where they lived in peace and propagated their religion. The geographer, Mustanfi, says that in 1340 there were many Kurds who had become Shi'ahs and believed in twelve Imáms.² They split up into numerous sects, others wandered in the deserts and in mountain regions in great distress and perished. A friend of Mu'tamid told him that the Imám had appointed envoys and agents to collect taxes from the Shi'ahs. He sent spies to watch the house and to search in every city for these envoys, in order that he might find a solid ground of complaint against the Imám, but news of Mu'tamid's plan had leaked out and so it failed. For a few years the Shi'ahs were left in peace, but Mu'tamid, the next *Khalífa*, was their bitter enemy and troubled them greatly. The Shi'ah historians love to dwell upon what they call the wonderful personal influence of the Imám over all who came into his presence. Here is one story: Mu'tamid sent for a friend named Rashíq and told him to take two companions and to ride in haste to Samarra, and there, after finding the house of the Imám, to enter and search it in order to find out whether anything suspicious could be found. They at last discovered a beautiful mansion, outside of which a servant was at work. They asked him to tell them the name of the person who dwelt

¹ *Núr-i-Maqsid*, p. 47.
² *RASJ*, October 1921, p. 571.

there. With great unconcern he worked quietly on and simply said that the house belonged to its owner. They then entered through the outer gate and saw a stream of running water, into which two of their number in their eagerness to rush on fell and were nearly drowned. At last they entered the house and wandered through richly furnished rooms, but found no living person in them. Finally they came to a room in which they saw a venerable, dignified man engaged in prayer. He took no notice of them and continued his devotions. They were so struck with his calmness, devotion and general bearing that they gave up the object of their visit and were about to return in great astonishment. Rashíq at last was able to say to the Imám that he was profoundly impressed by what he saw, and begged pardon for the intrusion; but the Imám took no notice of him. He then returned to Mu'tamid, who, on hearing what had happened, was also duly impressed and left the Imám at peace for a time. A period of political disorder now set in. Insurrections in various parts of the Empire broke out, and were suppressed with much cruelty. The Shi'ahs also suffered bitter persecution.

Now also the period of the Minor Occultation was drawing to a close, and in A.H. 329 (A.D. 940) the Major Occultation commenced.¹ The Imám suddenly disappeared in an underground passage in Samarra, and is supposed to be now living in the mysterious cities of Jabalka and Jabalsa, from whence he will return at the end of the age. No one saw him go, but it is said that, in order to keep alive the faith of his followers, he does now and again for a brief term show himself to his favoured ones. Many such fanciful stories are told. I select only one. A *Hájí* when making the circuits (*Shaut*) around the Ka'ba saw in a crowd a handsome young man addressing the people in eloquent language. The *Hájí* asked the bystanders, who this person was. They replied, 'A son of the Prophet, who comes every

¹ A few years before the *Búyid* family became the virtual masters of the empire, deposed and appointed *Khalífas* at their will, but were friendly to the Shi'ahs (*Zaydan*, p. 241). The *Fátimid* dynasty was now growing strong in the Islámic world and the Sunnis were depressed for a time. *Op. cit.* p. 243.

year to instruct his followers.' The Hájí went down the road after him and asked for instruction. The young man gave him some gravel and passed on without saying a word. The Hájí said, 'I told the people what he had done, but on opening my hand found the gravel had disappeared. On another part of my person were several pieces of gold.' I went after him. He said, "Now you know Hujjatu'llah (the proof of God) and that by the Amri'llah (order of God) your nature is changed. Do you know me?" I replied, "No". He said, "I am Al-Mahdi, who will come and fill the world with justice and equity. There is never a time when the Hájí-jatu'lláh is not. All you have seen and known must not be told to any except the seekers after truth". Another account is that Al-Mahdi and Christ, both of whom are declared similar, will unite in the sacred war (Jihál) and slay Antichrist.¹ These 'doors' lived on after the Mahdi's disappearance and when Abú'l-Hasan, the last of them, approached his end, the Shí'ahs, dreading lest all connexion with the Imám would be lost, begged him to appoint a successor. He refused, saying that communications between the Imám and his followers would entirely cease until the full time of the Major Occultation was over. Then the Imám would return and be known to all. It is believed that before Al-Mahdi reappears, Sufyán, a descendant of the hated Khalífa Yazíd, will come with a large army and plunder Madína and dwell in Kúfa. He will promise a thousand pieces of gold to anyone who brings to him a head of a Shí'ah. His appearance will strike terror in the hearts of those who see him and his actions will be brutal. He will be destroyed with other workers of evil. Then Antichrist will enter on the stage and rule for forty years with great tyranny. His followers will be Jews, women and Arabs. He will have ruling powers over all the earth, except Mecca and its two mountains. It is said that he was born during the life time of the Prophet and claimed to a Prophet, whereupon Muhammad ordered an angel to cast him down a well, where he remains a chained captive until the near advent of Al-Mahdi. He is a great magician and Satan dances before him and devils cause him to look so beautiful,

¹ *Núr-i-Maqsúd*, p. 229.

though in reality his appearance is repulsive, that people are attracted to him. The ass on which he rides is of abnormal size.¹

Then Al-Mahdi and Jesus Christ, the two pure and immaculate ones, will come and engage in the holy war (Jihád) and destroy Antichrist. The Mahdi will then cause equity and justice to prevail and bring all the world to the obedience of the faith of Islám. He will possess the rod of Moses and the seal of Solomon; the one with which to rule, the other with which to seal the lips of unbelievers.² Many Shí'ah traditions assert that the Prophet foretold the divine appointment of Al-Mahdi for the work assigned to him. They are too numerous to quote.

When the Báb in Persia in the year 1847 claimed to be the Mahdi³ the Shí'ah divines wanted to know how it was that those signs did not appear. They said, 'What has happened to Jabulka? Where has Jabulsa gone? Where is the air of Antichrist? When will Sufyan appear?' And on this and other considerations they pronounced the Báb as an impostor.

¹ The above is the account given in the '*Aqá'idu'sh-Shí'ah*', quoted in the *Episode of the Báb*, pp. 304-5.

² *Núr-i-Maqsúd*, p. 344: Further details are given in the Persian book, *Tuhfa-i-Ithna 'Ashariyya*, chapter vii.

³ *The Episode of the Báb*, p. 288.

APPENDIX A

ACCORDING to Al-Baghdádí, there was some difference of opinion as to the number of Imáms preceding Al-Mahdí. The Kaisámiyya sect say that Muḥammad al-Hanafiya did not die, but retired to Mt. Ridwa, where he will live long, nourished with water and honey and protected by a panther until he re-appears as Al-Mahdí. The Muḥammadiyya sect affirmed that Muḥammad, a great grandson of 'Alí went to live at Mt. Hajar in concealment until he returns to public life as Al-Mahdí. The views of the Zaidites and of the Ismá'ílians have been already described (ante pp 19-22.) The Bákiriyya sect maintain that Imám Bákir is the coming Mahdí. The Qat'iyya sect believe in twelve Imáms and are called 'The Twelvers' (Ithna 'Ashariyya). They are better known as the Imámians to which body the greater number of Shí'ahs now belong.

In Mysore there is a small sect, called Ghair-i-Mahdí. (without Mahdí). They believe that Sayyid Muḥammad of Jaipur was the twelfth Imám. On one evening in the year they meet together and pray thus: 'God is Almighty, Muḥammad is our Prophet, the Qur'án and Mahdí are just and true. Imám Mahdí is come and gone. Whosoever denies this is an infidel.' The founder of the sect was named Maḥmúd (A.D. 1370-1405.) His followers were also called Nuqtawiyya, because they said that all things proceeded from Nuqta-i-Khák, or an atom of earth. Sháh 'Abbás expelled the sect from Persia, but about the same time Akbar (A.D. 1560-1605) treated them kindly.

The enthusiasm with which the Shí'ahs show their devotion to their Imáms can only be understood when it is realized that they believe them to be the divinely appointed successors of the Prophet and endowed with great spiritual gifts. They must be lineal descendants of Muḥammad through 'Alí and Fátima, whereas the Khalífa of the Sunnis

may be a person of any nationality. The present system of hereditary succession in Turkey is contrary to the earliest Muslim usage.

The Imám as a successor of the Prophet is endowed with all his qualities. He is the wisest of men, and is free from all original or actual sin. His authority is the authority of God. To know the Imám is the essence of true religion.¹

The extravagant claims for 'Alí and the Imáms are clearly set forth in the Shí'ah commentary, known as the *Qur'án-i-Majid, Maqbúl Tarjuma* (Maqbúl Press, Delhi), to which is added a volume of notes, called *Damína*. This is devoted to an exposition of verses in the Qur'án which are interpreted as referring to 'Alí and the Imáms. A large number of Traditions are quoted. They are mostly given by Imáms Bákir and Ja'far. The exegesis of Qur'anic verses is very fanciful and the Isnád, or chain of authorities for the Traditions, is not given. In those days the manufacture of Traditions to prove a point of doctrine, or to strengthen a political party, was so common that they are of no historical value.²

¹ For detailed information about the Imámat see Sell, *The Faith of Islám* (4th ed.) p. 132 et seq.

² See *Ibid*, Appendix A, on the authenticity of the Traditions.

APPENDIX B

ADMITTING the fact that Shí'ah historians are very credulous persons, who neither possess, or, at least, do not display any sound critical judgement,¹ we may refer to them, not for arriving at a correct historical account of facts, but as showing what they teach the community to believe as true statements. When they are thus accepted, the passionate devotion of the Shí'ahs to 'Alí and his successors is explained.

I now give a number of interpretations of, and comments on verses of the Qur'án which illustrate the above statements. It will be seen that in many instances the exegesis is faulty. Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 20. 'Verily your protector is God and the apostles are those who believe.' Imám Ja'far says that the phrase 'those who believe' means 'Alí and the Imáms.

Súratu'l Má'ida (v) 71. 'O! Apostle, proclaim all that hath been sent down to thee from thy Lord.'

Imám Bábir says; 'There are the obligatory commands (fariḍa), one to institute the Ḥajj, the other to establish the Imámat.' He also adds that this verse came after the verse 'This day have I perfected your religion for you.' It is said that when the Prophet made the Ḥajj, Gabriel instructed him to make 'Alí his successor, and to give him the banner of guidance.'

Súratu'l-Qaṣaṣ (xxviii) 68. 'God createth what he will and hath a free choice.' This refers to the appointment of the Imáms.

Súratu'r-Rúm (xxx) 56. 'They to whom knowledge and faith have been given.' They are 'Alí and his successors, men of knowledge and piety.

Súratu's-Sajda (xxxii). 'And we appointed Imáms from among them who should guide after our command.' These are 'Alí and his successors.

¹ They are not the only men who, by help of their imagination take short cuts to what they desire, or make fairy tales the basis of that desire. See Dollinger, *Prophecies and the Prophetic Spirit*. p. vii.

Súratu'l-Anbiyá' (xxi) 73. 'We made them models who should guide others by our command.' Imám Ja'far Sádiq said: 'There are two kinds of Imáms, those who obey the will of God in preference to that of men, and those who put their own will in the place of God's will and lead men to destruction. The former are the Athna 'Ashariyya, i.e., 'Alí and his successors.

Súratu Yá Sín (xxxii) 11. 'Clear book of our decrees'—Imámin Mubainin—It is said that 'Alí said that he was the Imámin Mubainin for he could distinguish truth from falsehood.

Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 118. 'When the Lord made trial of Abraham by commands which he fulfilled.' Imám Ja'far Sádiq said: 'The commands are the same as those given to Adam, which he did not fulfil and on repenting prayed for pardon for the sake of 'Alí, Fátima, Hasan and Husain.

Súratu Al-i-Imrán (iii) 69. Muḥammad is reported to have said, when this verse came, that when abolishing pagan rites, he retained the Imámat.

Súratu'n-Nisá' (iv) 62. 'Obey God and the Apostle and those among you invested with authority.' This refers to 'Alí and Husain, an objector said:

The name of 'Alí is not mentioned. Imám Ja'far replied that God in ordering the namaz did not specify the number of rak'ats, nor with regard to the Ḥájj did he say that seven tawáfs should be made, The 'men of the house' were fitted for authority and would never leave the door of guidance and enter that of error. Obedience to the Imáms is linked with obedience to God and the Prophet, because they and the Prophet are sinless and pure.

Súratu Tá Há (xx) 132. 'Enjoin prayer on their family.' Imám Ar-Riḍa says that after this verse came Muḥammad used to go five times a day to the house of 'Alí and Fátima and say, 'Pray and God will send mercy upon you.' The Imám adds, 'Such honour was never before given to the family of any prophet.'

Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 119. 'God will say: This day shall truth advantage the truthful.' Imám Bákir says that, on the Judgement Day, all prophets with their followers will be summoned to the presence of God in a great plain.

Muhammad will be asked if he has carried out the orders of God. He will summon as witnesses the Pen (qalm) and the Tablet (lah) who in the form of men will state that all was written down. Then Gabriel will bear witness that he duly delivered the messages to Muhammad. The latter in response to an enquiry will say that he appointed 'Alí as his successor to carry on the work. 'Alí will then relate how he and his two sons were murdered, but that there were successive Imáms to continue to make known the will of God. The account is told in a realistic style.¹

Súratu't-Tauba (ix) 33. 'He it is who hath sent His Apostle with the guidance and a religion of the truth, that he may make it victorious over every other religion.'

Imám Músá Kázim says: 'This will be done by means of the religion of 'Alí and it will not come to pass until Al-Mahdi comes.'

Súratu Yúnas (x) 94. 'And if thou art in doubt about that which we have sent down to them, enquire of those who have read the scriptures before thee.'

Shí'ahs hold that the Prophet could not have doubts, and so Imám Ja'far says that, when Muhammad made his famous night journey (Mi'raj), God made known to him the excellence of 'Alí. Muhammad then met a great assembly of the prophets, and engaged in prayer (namaz) with them. The message just received passed from his memory: then this verse came directing him to consult the assembled prophets, who forthwith confirmed the statement. Imám Bákir brings Gabriel into the scene and tells substantially the same story.²

Súratu'l-A'raf (vii) 35. 'Our messengers.'

'Alí and Husain say it refers to 'Alí and his successors. When the Quraish challenged his claim, 'Alí quoted this verse.³

¹ The above are extracts from a Shí'ah translation of the Qur'an with notes, called *Qur'an-i-Majid and Tarjuma-i-Maqbûl*, Maqbûl Press, Delhi.

² This is a good example of faulty exegesis. The verse simply reminds the Prophet that he should get his doubt settled by consulting the Ahl-i-Kitáb (Jews and Christians). See the *Tafsirs* of Baiḍawī and of Husain.

³ The commentators Husain and Mu'alim say it refers to the angel of death.

Súratu Bani Isrá'il (xvii) 28. 'To him who is next of kin render his due: also to the poor and wayfarer.' Imám Músá Kázim reproached the Khalífa Mahdí with sequestering the garden of Fidak, and quoted this verse to show that by divine command it was given to Fa'tima and her descendants¹.

Súratu Bani Isrá'il (xvii) 81. 'Watch unto the night, this shall be an excess of service; it may be that thy Lord will give thee a glorious station (Maqaman Maḥmúdan).

It is said that the 'glorious station' is near the throne of God, on one side of which the Imáms and their followers stand, and on the other their enemies, the Khalífas with their followers. All good Shí'ahs will be pardoned, at the intercession of Muhammad, because they were loyal to 'Alí. So the 'glorious station' will be theirs.

Súratu'n-Núr (xxiv) 35. 'God is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp encased in glass, the glass as it were, a glittering star. It is light upon light.'

Imám Ja'far says that the 'niche,' the 'lamp' and the 'glass' mean Fátima, Hasan and Husain. Fátima, the pure, is as a bright star among women. Another account is that the niche is Muhammad, the lamp, the light of prophesy, the 'lamp encased in glass,' the wisdom of the Prophet, which came into the mind of 'Alí, a glittering star, 'Light upon light' refers to the succession of the Imáms.

Súratu'l-Qaṣaṣ (xxviii) 4. 'We were minded to show favours to those who were brought low in the land and to make men spiritual chiefs (Imams) and to make them heirs.'

Imám Ja'far says: The Prophet looking towards 'Alí and Husain said: 'You will be brought low, but will attain to the Khiláfat after me,' and then quoted this verse. In a tradition it is said that the Prophet told Salmán-i-Fársí that God sent no Prophet without appointing to him twelve chiefs or leaders, and then went on to describe how he was made from the light (núr) of God, which then passed on to 'Alí,

¹ Baiḍawī explains 'due' as friendship and assistance in time of need; other Commentators give the general meaning of charity to the poor and needy.

Fāṭima and the eleven Imáms, and that their function in God's kingdom of light was to praise and glorify God.

Súratu'l-Qaṣaṣ (xxviii) 68. 'Your Lord createth what He will and hath a free choice, but they (the people) have no power to choose.'

In the mosque at Merv a crowd of persons discoursed about the Imámat and many different opinions were given. Then Imám Riḍa ascended the pulpit and delivered a sermon on the subject, showing that it was the free gift of God to Muḥammad, 'Alí and his heirs, and was not the gift of the people.

Súratu'l-Aḥzáb (xxxiii) 33. 'God only desireth to put away filthiness from you as his household and with cleaning to cleanse you.'

Imám Bákir says that this refers to 'Alí, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusain, and that those who say it has reference to the wives of the Prophet are liars and sinners.

Súratu Šád (xxxviii) 75. God said, O Iblees what hindereth thee from worshipping what my hands have made.'

Imám Ja'far, one day sitting with his pupils around him, was asked to explain this verse. He said that the words 'my hand' meant the power of God and repudiated all anthropomorphic ideas. He then advised his pupils to consult the Imáms in their difficulties for to them God had given great knowledge and much wisdom.

Súratu'z Zukhruf (xliv) 57. 'And when the son of Mary was set forth as an example.'

There is a Tradition that some person said to the Prophet 'Jesus raised the dead, canst thou?' He called for 'Alí, and, whispering something in his ear, sent him with the people to the cemetery, on arriving there 'Alí cried out 'O such an one'; The dead man rose up and stood before them. After the people had questioned him, he lay down

'The pronoun in 'cleanse you' is masculine—*Kum*—and not feminine—*Kunna*, and so the Shi'ahs say that it cannot refer to the wives of the Prophet; but the whole passage from verse thirty must refer to the wives and the pronoun in previous parts of the sentence is feminine. All commentators except Shi'ah ones say the words refer to the wives and are quite correct in their interpretation.

again in the grave.' This is narrated to show that 'Alí had the same miraculous power as Jesus had.

Súratu'l-Fath (xlviii) 2. 'God forgiveth thy earlier and later fault (dhumbika).

Imám Ja'far says: 'By oral and written proof the Prophet had been found sinless. This verse means that God made him the surety for the pardon of the earlier and later sins of the followers of 'Alí.' Imám Bákir says that the sins are those of the community; the earlier ones are those committed before the time of Muḥammad; the later ones those which occurred after his time.

Sayyid ibn Tá'ús says that at the taking of Mecca, the Prophet did not plunder or damage it, and so the people of Mecca forgave what they thought were his faults before and after that event.

Súratu'l-Fath (xlviii) 26. 'God sent down his peace on the Apostle and on the faithful, and established in them the word of piety.'

Imám Bákir says that by the order of God, the 'word of piety' (Kalámatu't-Taḡwa) was established in 'Alí. Imám Riḍa says it means the religion of 'Alí.

Súratu'n-Najm (liii) 1-4. 'By the star when it setteth your compatriot erreth not nor is led astray, neither speaketh he from mere impulse. It is no other than a revelation revealed to him.'

The Imáms Bákir and Ja'far say that this affirms that the Prophet in his affection for 'Alí neither erred nor went astray. He did not act on impulse, but under divine inspiration. In his last illness he said: 'To-morrow a star will appear in the room of one of the Companions' (Aṣḥáb). Imám Ja'far says a brilliant star did so appear in 'Alí's room. Some of the disaffected then said, 'Muḥammad has gone astray.' Then this verse was revealed to rebuke such gainsayers.

Súratu't-Taḥrím (lxvi) 4. 'If ye conspire against the Prophet, then know that God is his protector, and Gabriel and every just man among the faithful and the angels are his helpers besides.' 'Alí is reported to have said that one day the Prophet said that he had good news for him and recited this verse, stating that the words 'every just man' meant 'Alí and his successors.

Súratu'r-Rahmán (lv) 16. 'He is the Lord of the two Easts and of the two Wests.'

Imám Ja'far says that the 'two Easts' are Muḥammad and 'Alí, the 'two Wests' are Ḥasan and Ḥusain.

Súratu'l-'Alaq (xcvi) 17. 'Then let him summon his associates.'

Imám Bákir says that when God made the world, he created the first 'night of power,' the night in which he would annually make known to a Prophet his will and what was about to happen. Such a prophet would not die until his successor was appointed, so each prophet had an immediate successor whom he summoned. Muḥammad thus by this divine permission summoned 'Alí to be his successor and he passed on the office to the Imáms.¹

Súratu'l-Kauthar (cviii) 1. 'Truly we have given thee an abundance (kauthar).'

The Sunni Commentators Baiḍáwi and Ḥusain say that Kauthar means (1) abundance of all that is good and (2) is the name of a river in Paradise. A Shí'ah commentator takes the latter view and says its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, and relates marvellous stories about it which bring in 'Alí. The Prophet is also reported to have said: 'God gave me the Qur'án, prophetship, kauthar, inspiration (waḥí) and the Mí'raj: to 'Alí he gave wisdom, succession to the Prophet, Salsabíl (a fountain in Paradise) inspiration (ilhám) and the privilege of lifting the curtain before the door of Paradise.'

¹ This interpretation is very fanciful. The reference is to Abú Jahl who is ironically told to summon his associates in order to oppose Muḥammad.