

Mubahisa-i-Alamgiri

The Debate on Mahdaviat between Hazrat Miyan Shaykh Ibrahim^{RH}
and Qadi Abu Sa'id ordered by the Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir at Ahmadnagar

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

FOREWORD

In view of ever growing demand for religious literature in languages other than Urdu, Arabic & Persian, Markazi Anjuman-e-Mahdavia has taken up the task of getting such books translated into English, Hindi etc. In addition to a wide range of books in Urdu, the Anjuman had also published books in English & Hindi such as, "Fragrance of Khalifatullah", "Al-Aqa'id" and "Risala-i-Du'a". The Anjuman had also established a Mahdavia Islamic Research Centre to encourage research work.

As you are aware of the fact that Mahdavia literature comprises a considerable part of polemical literature as the believers in and the followers of Promised Mahdi (PBUH) particularly the scholars of Mahdavia community were exposed to debates, arguments and counter arguments and they were vulnerable to persecution in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such inquisitions and debates were recorded in Persian and Arabic by some of the scholars and subsequently published with Urdu translation, such as, *Majalis-e-Khamsah* by Miyan Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati, is a record of debates held in the Court of Emperor Akbar.

Mubahisa-i-Alamgiri is also one such record of debate held in 1095 H/1684 CE at Ahmednagar between Miyan Shakyh Ibrahim and Qazi Abu Sa'id as ordered by the Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir, to examine and investigate the Mahdavia doctrines and beliefs. This debate was compiled by Miyan Abul Qasim in Persian language which was first published in 1902. Later on, at the request of the Anjuman, Janab Syed Iftekhhar Ejaz, had translated it in Urdu, which was published twice in 1980 and 1994

Recently, a research scholar of Duke University USA Mr. Scott Alan Kugle, who is conversant with Persian language, has rendered '*Muhahisa-i-A lamgiri*' into

English. At the outset, he had produced a comparative and analytical study of both the debates viz. *Majalis-e-Khamsah* and *Muhahisa-i-Alamgiri* and the explanatory notes are given by the translator at the end of the Text. He has dedicated this translation to Janab Sayyid Tashhirullah Hussaini, himself a research scholar, as well as Mahdawi poet, who taught him Persian.

I am thankful to Mr. Scott Kugle for taking pains to transform the Persian book into English. I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank my colleagues particularly Mr. Shaik Chand Sajid, who helped me to bring out this book in a record time. In the existing scenario of divergency, I hope this translation would be useful to the seekers of truth.

I pray Almighty Allah to bestow His blessings upon all of us and keep us as a true believer till the last breath. Amen.

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Sardar Shah Mohammad Khan
President,
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Introduction

"The Aurangzeb Debate" is the second major text to record the disputations which raged between Mahdawi and Sunni scholars during the Mughal period. These debate texts are very important sources that reveal how Mahdawi scholars of a particular age understood their faith, and how they expressed it in the potentially threatening context of inquisitions instigated by the scholars of the Mughal court. It could be argued that the tradition of disputations and debates started with Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri himself. It is recorded that he encountered his first systematic opposition after he announced his mission as the Mahdi at the town of Barhli Gujarat in the year 905H/1499 AD. Sayyid Muhammad wrote a letter to the Sultan in his own defence and to further explain his mission and delayed his departure from Barhli in order to receive a reply, while waiting, he received a contingent of scholars from Ahmadabad and Patan who came to pry him with questions. This may be said to be the first Mahdawi debate and it is recorded in the classic Mahdawi records of *Sirat Imam Mahdi Maw'ud* and *Shawahid al-Wilayat*. A second major debate took place when Sayyid Muhammad arrived in Farah (Afghanistan). The chief scholar of the court of Herat (which ruled Farah at that time) deputed some scholars for the purpose of questioning the Sayyid, with the implicit threat that failure to pass the inquisition would result in imprisonment and perhaps punishment. The contents of this debate were recorded in *Sirat*, as well as in the non-Mahdawi source, *Nijat al-Rashid* by Abd al-Qadir al-Badauni.

However, the formation of debate literature as a distinct genre came only after the death of Sayyid Muhammad himself and the growth of the Mahdawi community under his first generation of followers. The first of these texts, and by far the most substantial of them, is *Majalis-i-Khamsah*, "Five Debates in the Court of the Emperor Akbar" by Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati. This text set the precedent for all subsequent records in the genre of Mahdawi debates. Shaykh Mustafa displayed his brilliance as an orator and his keenness as a politician, as he answered the questions of the Sunni scholars and turned the Emperor himself against them. The arguments and examples put forth by Mustafa Gujarati in the records of these debates were repeated again and again by later scholars in later disputes. He argued that the followers of the Mahdi are like Sufis but qualitatively different from them and superior to them. He also argued that the followers of the Mahdi were the true moral leaders of the *Ahl-i-Sunnat o Jama'at* community. Each argument he presented was designed to prove that the Mahdawi community was not liable to punishment under the terms of the *shari'at*, and further that other Sufis and scholars who had not joined the Mahdawi community were hypocritical, corrupt or misled by their pride. In his argument, the true followers of any Prophet are always a minority, and their unwavering insistence on the truth always leads them to be persecuted and oppressed by others.

The debate of Shaykh Ibrahim that is recorded in this text, *Mubahisa-yi-Alamgiri*, is both concise and tranquil when compared with the debate that was recorded about one century earlier. Shaykh Mustafa's debates were in many sessions spread over the course of his eighteen month imprisonment at Akbar's

court. In contrast, Shaykh Ibrahim's debate lasted only one day. While Shaykh Mustafa was physically threatened with summary punishment on the spot, Shaykh Ibrahim was treated respectfully and came to the debate on his own power. While Shaykh Mustafa had to deal with over one-hundred antagonistic scholars and courtiers as well as the vacillating Emperor Akbar himself: Shaykh Ibrahim had only to face the judge, Qazi Abu Sa'id, who had been deputed by Aurangzeb to question the Mahdawi scholars and ascertain what their beliefs might be. But let this contrast not place Shaykh Ibrahim in a bad light! He well knew that in being called to a debate, his community's future in Ahmadnagar was in jeopardy and that if he did not impress the judge with his interpretation of Qur'an and Hadith sources, his community might become vulnerable to execution, imprisonment or exile. The background of each of these Mahdawi debates is the potential use of state violence against them, no matter how calm and tranquil the debater may appear.

Furthermore, this contrast between the long series of debates which raged in Akbar's court and the single debate ordered by Aurangzeb should not be understood as a judgment on the capabilities of the two protagonists, Mustafa Gujarati and Shaykh Ibrahim. Rather, the contrast shows the marked change in the social position and aspirations of the Mahdawi community in the hundred years which had lapsed between these two debates.

In the first instance, resistance to the Mahdawi movement was fierce. Although the movement's arch-opponent, Shaykh Ali Muttaqi had died (in 975 Hijri /1568 CE), one of his primary students was alive and actively opposing the Mahdawi community's growth in Gujarat. He is Miyān Muhammad ibn Tahir of Patan (also known as Nahranwala) who was a hadith specialist. He continued his teacher's opposition to the Mahdawi community by contending that they disrespected the Prophet by disregarding or misinterpreting the Prophet's sayings about the coming of the Mahdi. So vociferously did he make this claim that he demanded a personal interview with the Emperor Akbar when he invaded Gujarat, and tried to steer the invading Emperor toward a full state persecution of the Mahdawi community. Miyān Muhammad ibn Tahir must have come into acute conflict with Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati himself, for both were resident at Patan; in addition the hadith scholar was from the Bohra community, and is known to have focused his efforts on trying to keep the Bohra community from joining the Mahdawi circles, while Shaykh Mustafa's own father had come from the Bohra community and joined the Mahdawi community¹. In addition to resistance by a network of hadith scholars and Sufis in Gujarat, the Mahdawi community faced persecution by the chief scholar of the court in Delhi, Abdullah Sultanpuri, who was just as active in the Mughal court as he had been in the Suri court. He seemed to engage in inquisitions and persecutions in order to reinforce his own power at court, and attacked not only Mahdawi leaders but Sufi shaykhs as well. All these factors meant that the Emperor Akbar was

¹ In *Majalis-i Khamsa*, the court scholars were noted to have said, "The trouble that you Mahdawis have caused is confined to the town of Patan in Gujarat." This is a reference to the work of Muhammad ibn Tahir and his pressuring the Mughal governor, Mirza Aziz Khokha, to suppress Mahdawis by breaking up their da'irahs. In a military attack on one such da'irah, in 890. Hijri / 573 CE, Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati was imprisoned and his father was killed.

personally involved in the debates, and that accentuated their importance. The Mahdawi community at that time was in grave danger of punishment or exile. In response, the Mahdawi scholar's counter attack on the leaders of the Sunni community was absolute and unwavering. Before the Emperor, Shaykh Mustafa boldly claimed that anyone, even an Emperor, who denied that Sayyid Muhammad was the promised Mahdi was thereby an infidel². He ridiculed the court scholars and questioned not only their morality, but even their masculinity³.

The situation surrounding the debate of Shaykh Ibrahim was hardly as heated and did not call for such absolute claims and belligerent rhetoric. The Emperor Aurangzeb called for the inquisition when he was staying in the region of Ahmadnagar. This province had, by that time, a long history of Mahdawi activity and a strong local community. In regions like Ahmadnagar, Mahdawis found a haven and had turned from trying to convert the whole of the Muslim community to their own doctrine and redirected their energies into building a stable local community. Thus they did not openly accuse those who rejected the claims of Sayyid Muhammad to be infidels, and they lived more or less at peace with their Sunni and Shi'ah neighbors. This distinct local history accounts for the civility of the debate recorded in *Mubahisah-yi-Alamgiri*. Although the judge asked pointed questions, he readily accepted Shaykh Ibrahim's answers without interrupting or contradicting him. The judge never accused the Mahdawi leader of calling other Muslims infidels, while the Shaykh never launched such a claim in his presence. The topic only came up once in the form of a rhetorical question, when Shaykh Ibrahim asked that, if Sayyid Muhammad were as trustworthy a person as the Prophet Mohammad, then wouldn't a person who reject Sayyid Muhammad's claims be just as bad as an infidel who rejected the claims of the Prophet himself? This single instance of *takfir* was not directed at any person in particular, nor at a specific class of people, as it had been in the case of the debates at Akbar's court.

The central issue in the debates ordered by Aurangzeb is not who was true Muslim, thereby proving that the opponent in the debate must be a complete hypocrite. Rather, Shaykh Ibrahim argued that the Mahdawis were simply one distinct group within the wide spectrum of the *Ahl-i-Sunnat o Jama'at* community; therefore they should not be subject to any persecution or punishment. In the end, the judge reportedly explained his findings to the Emperor in this way:

² However, he was very careful to note that he made this claim not on his own authority, but in accordance with the tradition ascribed to the Prophet, that he said "Whoever refuses to accept he Mahdi as his leader is surely an infidel." *Majalis-i Khamsa*, session five. This rhetoric of *takfir*, of declaring another Muslim to be an infidel, was really what drove the conflict between Mahdawi and Sunni scholars. Akbar noted that "It is possible that your claim that the Mahdi has come and gone might be correct. Hence, you are not liable to be executed simply for delivering this doctrine. You would have never landed in trouble and conflict if you had simply been steadfast in this belief without proselytizing and inviting others to accept it as true.... You hypocrites." *Majalis-i Khamsa*, session one.

³ See Darryl MacLean, "Real Men and False Men in the court of Akbar." To be published in the proceedings of the Conference, *South Asian Muslims and the Greater Muslim World*, Duke University, 1995, sponsored the Rockefeller foundation. Publication forthcoming.

The Mahdawis bear witness to oneness of Allah who sent the Prophet on a mission. They cherish the memory of all four of the Prophet's close companions, and believe that all four legal methods are validly based on the truth. They are certainly members of our Sunni community. They say that tile 'Mahdi of the end of time (Mehdi Akhir-u-zaman) is their leader who has come and gone.... .They are not liable to any Qur'anic punishment, nor to summary execution, nor to imprisonment or exile. I have found no cause for punishing them in any way

This shows that by the time of this second debate, tensions had abated between the two formerly rival groups. The Sunnis on the one hand, though suspicious of Mahdawi doctrines, did not openly accuse them of infidelity, ignorance and rebellion as they had before. The Mahdawis on the other hand had learned to check their claims to absolute moral leadership of the whole Muslim *ummah*, in the interest of building up viable and vibrant regional communities in which to practice their religious convictions.

After noting the content of the debates and the social background which called them into being, one must look carefully at the genre of debate literature itself. These texts are not simply the records of a debate that happened; rather, recording them is a strategy for the community to protect itself in further debates in the future. Arguments and illustrations from early debate texts are reused in later debates and are refined for new audiences. By writing and reading these debate texts, scholars in the Mahdawi community prepared themselves to defend their community against subsequent accusations or potential persecution. In *Mubahisah-yi-Alamgiri*, the judge complained to Shaykh Ibrahim that the Shaykh always had the upper hand in debating, for he had studied the controversial points and had already memorized useful quotes, traditions and examples. Shaykh Ibrahim replied that debating was his job, and that he naturally studied in advance all the possible accusations and their appropriate rebuttals, as well as combing earlier scholarly works for points to support his argument. These debate texts are not only evidence of this scholarly preparation for community defense, but are also a primary tool to achieve such preparation. The fact that Mahdawis have been constantly challenged to debate and dispute, usually under the implicit or explicit threat of persecution, explains why this genre of debate literature features so prominently in the body of extant Mahdawi literature.

It is said that history is always written by the winner. Debate texts as a genre are even more complicated than historical texts. Debate texts are always written by those who portray themselves as the winner, whereas in any actual debate it may be very hard to decide who had actually won. It should not be surprising, then, that in both of these debate records, the Mahdawi scholar appear to score a clear victory. In the case of Shaykh Mustafa, he shames the court scholars into an awkward silence, while in the case of Shaykh Ibrahim, he wins from the inquisition judge the admission that Mahd'awis are stalwart members of the *Ahl-i Sunat o Jama'at* community.

Debate texts as a genre are also always written in the form of a dialogue,

with each side giving its question, answer and counter-question in the form of an argument. In a debate, answers have to not only be right, but they have to be quick and sharp as well. This gives the debate text an immediacy and drama which a scholarly tract lacks. To highlight this feature, *Mubahisah-yi Alamgiri* has been translated with all the grammatical framework of a dialogue, including quotation marks which the original Persian does not feature. However, this style of writing the debate in the form of a dialogue should not mislead the reader into assuming that the debate text records the dialogue as it actually happened, word for word. Rather, the dialogue was most likely reconstructed by the writer from memory, after the actual event had already passed. In the case of *Majalis-i Khamsah*, Mustafa Gujarati was a prisoner in chains during the course of the debates, and was most likely physically unable to write the content of his debates during or immediately after the event. He most likely composed the debate records after his release from the court, while preparing to travel back to Gujarat. Yet at least in the case of *Majalis-i Khamsah*, the writer of the debate text was also the primary debater, and this accounts for the vividness of his account and the dramatic tone of his record.

The case of composition of *Mubahisah-yi Alamgiri* is even more complicated. The writer of the text, Abu al-Qasim, is not one of the primary debaters. Furthermore, the writer may not have been directly present during the debates as a witness to what was actually said. Abu al-Qasim notes that he accompanied Shaykh Ibrahim along with other Mahdawi leaders to the official court building in the town of Ahmadnagar; however, he then says that only Shaykh Ibrahim and Shaykh A'zam entered into the judge's private chamber where the debate ensued. It may be possible that the other Mahdawi leaders (including the writer) could have overheard the debate inside, but most likely they learned of the content of the debate after the actual event as Shaykh Ibrahim recreated the dialogue verbally for his companions who had not been present⁴. This should not cause the reader to dismiss this debate text as inauthentic, for all debate texts depict only one side of the argument in an idealized manner. Rather the reader should simply bear in mind that the distance between the writer and the events that he "records" accounts for lack of vivid conflict in the record itself. Shaykh Ibrahim is portrayed as giving long lectures in place of an answer for each question. Whereas in reality he was most likely interrupted and challenged more frequently. These elements of dialogue have been erased from the form of the debate which was finally recorded and passed down within the Mahdawi community.

The translator has tried to render the text of this debate in clear, modern English from the Persian text of the original that had been published by the Markazi Anjuman-e-Mahdavia in Chanchalguda, Hyderabad in 1994. The Persian text had been published face to face with an Urdu translation; however, this English translation makes no reference to the Urdu and derives directly from the Persian

⁴ This hypothesis is substantiated by the fact that the writer, Abu al-Qasim reports the discussion of the judge with the Emperor Aurangzeb as a verbal dialogue, whereas he could not have possibly overheard this dialogue that happened in the Emperor's court after the Mahdawi leaders had been released to return to their lodging.

original. If there is discrepancy between the previously published Urdu translation and this English translation, that is due simply the natural diversity between the perception of different translators and different target languages. For fluency and easy readability, full effort was made to translate even technical religious and juridical terms into English; where necessary for clarification, the original terms in Persian or Arabic have been left in the text in brackets. Where the translation of such terms might have doctrinal ramifications, these have been discussed in footnotes. As for the text of the earlier debate, *Majalis-i Khamsah*, it has received the prior attention of scholars. The Idarah-yi-Shamsiyyah has published an English translation in 1997, rendered by Syed Ziaullah as "Five Sessions of the Emperor Akbar's Court." In addition, Dr. Darryl MacLean (of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada) has prepared a scholarly translation based on a detailed comparison of different lithograph and manuscript version of this same text. It is hoped that he will publish this full translation as part of his monograph on the life work of Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati, which is currently in progress.

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of both worlds, the only goal for those who keep constantly aware of Allah for their whole lives. Praise and blessing be upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and upon his family and companions, each and every one.

You discriminating reader, who can judge between right and wrong! Know that the events recorded here took place in the reign of the Emperor Aurangzeb, when he came from Delhi to stay in the region of Ahmadnagar. The religious scholars of this region, along with the judges, the deliverer of the Friday sermons, and other religious leaders who have harbored enmity against the religion of the Mahdi (may peace be upon him) took counsel with the Emperor. They informed him that the community of the followers of the Mahdi (AHS) were very numerous in this region⁵. They told him that these Mahdawis claim that the Promised Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time⁶ has come and gone, and that their doctrine is different from our Sunni doctrine.

⁵ Ahmadnagar is a city in the Dekkan with a long history of Mahdawi activities. When Sayyid Muhammad left Gujarat for the Dekkan, he travelled to Daulatabad and Burhanpur, and then came to Ahmadnagar. Mahdawi sources place this event in the year 899 or 900 Hijri (1493-1495 CE), during the reign of Ahmad Nizam Shah I. His son, Burhan Nizam Shah, remained sympathetic to Mahdawi beliefs until 928 Hijri / 1521 CE, and offered refuge to a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad, Miyan Shah Ni'mat, who had accompanied the Sayyid to Farah. After the Sayyid's death, he returned to Gujarat and travelled to the Dekkan, founding da'irahs in Patan, Jalor, Ahmadabad, and eventually at Ahmadnagar. This ruler also invited Shah Dilawar and Shah Nizam to settle in his realm. But by 928 Hijri (1521 CE), Burhan Nizam Shah came under the influence of a Shi'a scholar, Shah Tahir, and declared Shi'ism to be the state religion. However, Mahdawis remained active in social and court life, and a Mahdawi nobleman, Jamal Khan, eventually staged a coup after 992 Hijri (1584 CE) when the ruler fled to the Mughal court of Akbar. This nobleman installed Burhan Nizam Shah's younger son, Isma'il Nizam Shah, as ruler and effectively made faith in the Mahdiat of Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri to be the state religion in Ahmadnagar, replacing all Shi'i nobles with Mahdawis. He ruled only two years, and was killed in battle with neighbouring dynasties in 999 Hijri / 1591 CE. Then the state reverted to Shi'ism again, prompting a strong persecution of Mahdawi nobles. See Qamaruddin, *The Mahdawi Movement in India*, pages 177-180 and SAA Rizvi, *Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth Century*, page 84.

⁶ Precise translation of this title is difficult since any translation will have doctrinal ramifications. In Arabic the phrase, Mahdi akhir al-zaman reads literally as "the rightly guided leader of the end of time." However, once the phrase is rendered in a Persian grammatical context as Mahdi-yi Akhir-I zaman, there is more flexibility in its interpretation. The title could retain its literal meaning as the Mahdi "of the end of time." or it could also mean the Mahdi "of the last period of time." This is the meaning understood by the Mahdawi community, who look upon Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri as the Mahdi of the last period in history, meaning the period following the last Prophet, Muhammad.

The emperor Aurangzeb ordered the Judge, Qadi Abu Sa'id, to summon some of the leaders of the Mahdawi community and apprehend from them what their actual doctrinal beliefs might be. The Judge therefore summoned the descendants of Shah Sharif who lived at the tomb complex [raudah] of their ancestor⁷. He asked them, "Are you followers of the Mahdi?" And they answered that they were indeed. The Judge then asked, "Do you have in your religious community any scholars or learned leaders with whom I could have a discussion?" They answered him, We ourselves do not have the required knowledge and learning of our own tradition that we might dispute with one such as you, but you should consider another descendents of our leader, his name is Miyan Shaykh Ibrahim , and he lives at Chichaund. The Judge then requested that they send for this learned man. After meeting Shaykh Ibrahim and informing him of the Judge's intentions they brought the Shaykh and some of his companions to Ahmadnagar. So from Chichaund came Shaykh Ibrahim , Ilyas Miran , Shaykh A'zam (the son of Shaykh Ibrahim) and Abu al-Qasim (the writer of this narrative), along with others from their community who had renounced worldly ambitions. They arrived at the tomb-complex of Shah Sharif in Ahmadnagar, and gave notice to the Judge of their arrival.

The Judge summoned them into his presence, and they all sat down in the official court building. In accordance with the summons, Shaykh Ibrahim and his son, Shaykh A'zam , entered into the Judge's private chambers and greeted him by saying '**as-Salamu' alaykum.'** The Judge answered, '**Wa'alaykum as-Salam.'** He then asked them **about their doctrinal beliefs**. They pronounced the ritual words of witness [shahadah] that there is no divinity but Allah, and that Muhammad (PBUH) is the Prophet of Allah (PBUH). They then explained that their belief is based on the singularity and uniqueness of Allah, who sent the messenger (PBUH), Muhammad (praise and peace be upon him). Shaykh Ibrahim said, We cherish the memory of all four of the Prophet's (PBUH) closest companions [meaning the four rightly-guided Khulafa'] and acknowledge that all four schools of law are based on the divine truth and are worthy of being followed. We are of the people of the Prophet's (PBUH) example and community [Ahl-i Sunnat o Jama'at] and we say that the Promised Mahdi (AHS) has already come and gone.

Upon hearing this, the Judge challenged him, '**By what proof do you claim that the Mahdi of the end of time has come and gone?**'

Shaykh Ibrahim replied, 'We make this claim by the proof that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said, "It is true that Allah

⁷ Shah Sharif "Majdhub" (born 927 Hijri / 1521 CE) was the grandson of Shah Dilawar (Died 945 Hijri / 1539 CE), who was an intimate companion of Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri. Shah Sharif settled in Ahmadnagar and died there in 1025 Hijri / 1616 CE

sends to this community [ummah] at the start of each century someone who will renew its religion". And reliable commentators on this report have further clarified that the religious renewer [mujaddid] of the tenth century will be none other than the Mahdi (AHS). This commentary is mentioned in many books, including **Tambih al-Taharruz** and **Imam al-Nawwawi's commentary** on Sahih Muslim. Not only that, but the great and pious saint, Hazrat Gesu Daraz (may Allah's mercy be upon him), who is trustworthy and followed the shari'ah scrupulously, has said in the *malfuzat* text that records his words⁸. "The Prophet (PBUH) has said that Allah will send one from within his community to be a Mahdi at the start of each century, and at the tenth and last century, that one will be none other than the [promised] Mahdi (AHS)". Likewise **al-Tabari** has written in his book of history that the Mahdi (AHS) will appear in the year 905 after the Hijra. "The Mahdi (AHS) that we affirm, Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH) Jaunpuri, made his appearance in this very year, and if anyone doubts this they can look up the historical facts. So it is clearly established without any doubt that this very man, Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH) Jaunpuri, is the [promised] Mahdi (AHS). We affirm his status as the Mahdi (AHS) with all of these proofs; so tell us, with what proofs do you challenge his status?"

The Judge said, In this matter, there is a saying of the Prophet (PBUH) that the Mahdi (AHS) "will fill the earth with fairness and justice, just as it has been filled with tyranny and injustice". It is clear from this saying that, with the appearance of the promised Mahdi (AHS), all the tyranny and injustice in the world will be eradicated and that the whole world will be filled with justice and honesty. Therefore, all the people will become Muslims and not a single infidel would be left on the face of the earth. Up until this very day, such an extraordinary event has not happened! So how can you claim that the promised Mahdi (AHS) has already come and gone?'

Shaykh Ibrahim answered him, In this matter, Allah has informed the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), that all people will not be united into one religious community, but would rather stay divided into different religions and sects; injustice and tyranny between them would never be absent, and they would continue to differ amongst each other and commit injustice against each other until the very Day of Judgment (Qiyamat).

⁸ Gesu Daraz was the great Chishti Sufi master who migrated from Delhi to the Dekkan. (Born 1321 CE / 721 Hijri and died 1422 CE / 825 Hijri). He was said to be the first Chishti to write scholarly texts on mystical topics. His son, Sayyid Muhammad Hussaini, compiled his *Mal'uzat*, a text recording the saint's verbal discourses, entitled *Jawami' al-Kilam*. Gesu Daraz had at one time claimed to be the Mahdi, but later recanted and attributed his utterances to a state of spiritual intoxication. *Jawami' al-Kilam* (Urdu Translation), Delhi Adabi Dunya, 1994.

The Judge challenged him to read out the verse from the Qur'an that proves this point.

Shaykh Ibrahim recited, 'Allah has spoken in the Qur'an that "If your Lord had willed, He would make all people into one single community, yet they remain differing amongst themselves and quarreling, except those upon whom your Lord has shown mercy. For this Allah has created them and the word of your Lord was made complete, that surely I will fill up Hell with Jinn and Humans all together"⁹" (Qur'an, Surat Hud, 11:118-119). And Allah has also spoken in another verse "We have cast among them enmity and anger until the Day of Judgment"¹⁰" (Qur'an, Surat al-Ma'idah, 5:67). Commentators have written on this verse (in the Tafsir al-Madarik) that all people will remain divided and in disagreement and the commitment of their hearts will never be in accord; they will never achieve mutual understanding or cooperation. Those who have been infidels will remain in their own stubborn opinions until the Hour of Judgment overtakes them all of a sudden or until they are given their due punishment. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, "One group from my community will remain fighting with the others to uphold the truth, and will be clearly evident until the Day of Judgment."

So it is clear from these verses of the Speech of Allah and from these reports of the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) that the whole world will never become Muslim. Rather, the people of the world will remain in difference and conflict until the very Day of Judgement. From the first creation of Adam (AHS) until today, the pattern of behaviour ordained by Allah with regard to human beings is unchanging in all our circumstances: Allah has said "How little it is they believe"¹¹!" (Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah, 2:88) and "No, most of them have gone astray [fasiquna]"¹²" (Qur'an, Surat Al Imran 3:110). But despite this, Allah has declared in honour of the Prophet (PBUH) that "We

⁹ Qur'an, Surat Hud, 11: 118-119

¹⁰ Qur'an, Surat al-Ma'idah, 5:67. The full verse is addressed to those Jews who mocked the Prophet Muhammad's mission by saying, "Why doesn't your God give to you freely?" The Qur'an ordered Muhammad to answer that "Allah's two hands are wide stretched, giving what Allah wills to whom Allah wills. But certainly what Allah has revealed to you only increases them in their wayward obstinacy and infidelity." Earlier verses in this Surat are critical not only of Jews, but of Christians and other people of the book, their scholars and priests, and those who claimed to enter the Muslim community but who were actually hypocrites.

¹¹ Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah, 2: 88. This verse and the verse that follows it criticize that majority of the "People of the Book" who did not respect their prophetic messages and turned away from divine guidance. Indirectly, the criticism could apply to those people of the Prophet's own community who did not heed his message.

¹² Qur'an, Surat Al Imran, 3: 110.

have sent you only that you might be a mercy to both worlds¹³" (Qur'an Surat al-Anbiya', 21:107). Despite the strong speech of the most noble of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who is the clearest proof of all the pure ones, still the world has not accepted to become Muslim in his own time. How, then, could you imagine that all the people of the world would become Muslims in the days of the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time? Our Prophet (PBUH) has said in relation to his community that "My community will split up into seventy-three different sects and all of them are in the fire except for one". This means that all the diverse groups from among the Muslim community will enter the fires of hell, except for one that will enter directly to paradise. Since the Prophet (PBUH) himself has clearly stated that even his community will never be unified and will stay split into all these quarreling groups, how can you claim that in the time of the Mahdi (AHS), all the world will become Muslims? Be just and reasonable, for the Prophet (PBUH) has said that Allah is merciful on whoever deals justly with others!

The Judge then asked him, 'The Mahdi (AHS) and Jesus ['Issa] will appear in the world during the same time and that one would obey the other and follow his lead in prayer. But up until this very day, Jesus (AHS) has not appeared and has not acknowledged the Mahdi (AHS), so how can you people still insist that the Mahdi (AHS) has already come and gone? With what proof do you make this claim?'

Shaykh Ibrahim answered him, 'We believe this according to the sayings reported from our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). and also by the research of Mulla Taftazani; we claim what is established as true that the Mahdi (AHS) and Jesus (AHS) will not come at the same time.'

The Judge challenged him, 'Recite those sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) and the claims of the Mulla that prove your point'.

Shaykh Ibrahim obliged him, saying, 'The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, "How could my community ever come to ruin, with me coming at its beginning, Jesus (AHS) coming at its ending, and the Mahdi (AHS) from among my descendants appearing in its middle." The Prophet (PBUH) has also warned against the appearance of two leaders of the community [khalifah] at the same time, saying "If the people swear allegiance to two leaders at the same time, then kill the one who has appeared second".

The Judge questioned him, 'In which book have you found this saying of the Prophet (PBUH)?'

¹³ Qur'an, Surat al-Anbiya, 21: 107

'It is found in the text *Mishkat*' (*Miskhat al-Masabih*) answered Shaykh Ibrahim¹⁴. The Judge then began to search around in that book, looking for the quoted sayings. Shaykh Ibrahim himself extracted both of them from the book and read them aloud.

Then the Judge asked, 'And whose saying did you mention besides these reports of the Prophet (PBUH)?'

Shaykh Ibrahim recited the passage [from Mulla Taftazani]¹⁵: 'As for what people say about the Mahdi (AHS) following in obedience Jesus (AHS), or Jesus (AHS) following in obedience the Mahdi (AHS), this is a matter on which there is no reliable proof either way. So nobody should pronounce the truth to be one way and not the other''

'This passage is found in what book?' the Judge interrogated him, 'and who is the author?'

Shaykh Ibrahim replied, It is quoted from *Sharah al-Maqacid*, and the author is Shaykh Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani.'

Then the Judge changed the topic and asked, 'The Mahdi (AHS) is clearly predicted to be born in Madinah, while this man whom you claim to be the Mahdi (AHS) was born in Hindustan (Al-Hind). So by what logic can you claim that he is proved to be the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time?'

Shaykh Ibrahim answered him, 'It is clear that the word *madinah* in the language of the Arabs is used in a general sense to mean any city; to use it in a limited sense is not permissible. Just refer to the verse in the

¹⁴ Miskhat al-Masabih, "A Niche for the Lamps" is a compilation of Prophetic traditions by Wali al-Din Muhammad al-Tirmidhi. He expanded the earlier text, al-Masabih, "The Lamps" by Abu Muhammad al-Hussain Mas'ud al-Baghawi, and added information about the paths of transmission of each report of the Prophet's words or deeds.

¹⁵ Shaykh Ibrahim here refers to Saad al-Din Mas'ud al-Taftazani (born 1322 CE / 722 Hijri and died 1389 AH / 791 Hijri), a famous scholar of logic, rhetoric, grammar, theology and jurisprudence. He died in Samarqand during the rule of Timur. His many compositions were standard textbooks in South Asian madrasahs. This text, al-Maqasid, with the author's own commentary, is a book on theological and metaphysical issues. Mahdawi scholars often quote this passage from al-Taftazani to prove that there is no consensus about the Mahdi's relationship to Jesus. The Mahdawi scholar Abd al-malik Sujawandi had earlier quoted this passage of Mulla Taftazani to produce the same argument in his work, Siraj al-Absar. However, the Sunni Scholar, Ali Muttaqi, has questioned the legitimacy of such a quotation saying: Mulla Taftazani is not counted as a legitimate hadith scholar, even though we agree that he was an early and respected scholar in other fields.

Qur'an when Allah says, "A man came running from the furthest part of the madinah¹⁶." (Qur'an, Surat Ya-Sin, 36:20)

'To what madinah is that in reference?' the Judge asked, 'and what was the name of that man, and who was the Prophet active during his time?'

Shaykh Ibrahim answered, 'The *madinah* referred to is the city of Antioch [Antokiya] at the time of the Prophet Jesus. The name of that man who came running was Habib Najjar. Therefore it is clear according to this Qur'anic verse that the term madinah in Arabic has a general meaning in reference to any city [and not just to our Prophet's city of Madinah in the Hijaz].'

The Judge again objected, The city of Jaunpur is located in Hind, while the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time is clearly stated to be born of the Arabs!'

Shaykh Ibrahim answered, A saying of the Prophet (PBUH) has been relayed, indicating that the Mahdi (AHS) will be born in Hind.

The Judge challenged him, 'Recite that saying!'

Shaykh Ibrahim recited this saying reported from the Prophet (PBUH), "The Mahdi (AHS) will appear from the descendants of Hussain (RA), the son of Ali (may Allah uphold his dignity), and his birthplace will be Kabul or Hind; then the Mahdi (AHS) will travel to Makkah and stay for some time in Makkah" until the end of the report.

The Judge asked, 'What claims did [the man you claim as the Mahdi (AHS)] make there in Makkah, and who accepted them?'

'The promised Mahdi (AHS) went to the Ka'ba, to the house of Allah, 'answered Shaykh Ibrahim, 'and there he mounted the pulpit and clearly pronounced his claim to be the Mahdi (AHS). And he recited this saying of the Prophet (PBUH): "Those who follow me are the believers [mu'min]". After this pronouncement, the first man to pledge allegiance to him was Shah Nizam (RA), the king of Ja'is, saying "I have believed and placed my

¹⁶ Quran, Surat Ya-Sin, 36:20. Most of the classical commentators assert that this event called "The parable of the companions of the city" happened in Antioch, as followers of Jesus came to the city to warn its people to follow the mission of Jesus. It is commonly identified with the persecution of the early Christian apostles. Antioch was the sight of the first Christian preaching, but Christians only reached Antioch after the death of Jesus. Only Ibn Kathir's commentary denies that this city refers to Antioch.

trust in you. After that, Qazi Ala'ul-Din Bidari (RA) pledged allegiance to the Mahdi (AHS), by saying the same thing.

The Judge objected, 'The pledges of just two people do not confirm his claim to be the Mahdi (AHS)'

Shaykh Ibrahim responded, 'The followers of the Mahdi (AHS) were very numerous, and each of them took the same pledge of allegiance as these two did. Besides, in the ritual law laid down by our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), if two trustworthy witnesses confirm the claim of a man, then his claim is considered established and valid. I mentioned the pledge of these two men because they were both very highly esteemed and respected leaders. One was the king of city of Ja'is, while the other was the Chief Judge of the city of Bidar. In the view of the law, the testimony of these two witnesses confirms an established proof. By their testimony the claim of [Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH)] to be the Mahdi (AHS) has been clearly and firmly established.'

The Judge said, 'The saying of the Prophet (PBUH) that you have recited, in what book is it recorded?'

In the book of Prophetic (PBUH) traditions called '*Iqd-al-Durar*,' answered Shaykh Ibrahim¹⁷. (*Iqd-al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Mahdi*) Likewise, there is a saying by Ali (my Allah be content with him) from a letter that he wrote. It has been quoted by Shaykh Muhayy al-Din Ibn 'Arabi in his text called *al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah*¹⁸ in the form of this poem:

¹⁷ *Iqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Mahdi*, "A Necklace of Pearls Reporting Narratives about the Mahdi," (by Yusuf ibn Yahya al-Maqdisi born 1260 CE / 658 Hijri) is a collection of reports attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, each involving the subject of the Mahdi.

¹⁸ Shaykh Ibn al-'Arabi (born 560 H / 1165 CE and died 637 H / 1240 CE Damascus) was the author who gave a full and systematic treatment of the concept of *Khatim al-Wilayat*, the Seal of Sainthood, although the term itself appeared earlier in the Sufi tradition in the writings of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi. In his text quoted here, *al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah*, "The Openings of Makkah" Ibn al-'Arabi equates the promised Mahdi with the *Khatim al-Wilayat*, for the Mahdi will come as the ultimate saint to perfect and complete the institution of sainthood (Wilayat), just as the Prophet Muhammad came to perfect and complete the institution of prophet hood (Nabuwat). Ibn al-'Arabi had made this equation in his earliest text, *al-'Anqa al-Maghrib wa Shams al-Maghrib*, "The Dazzling Phoenix and the Western Sun" in which he claims, citing a report from the Prophet, that the Mahdi will come from the Arab West (from Morocco or Andalusia) like the sun which sets in the west, signaling the end of the world. Ibn al-'Arabi along with other Andalusian Sufis popularized this tradition that the Mahdi would appear in the West, although Sufis in Persia and Hindustan do not seem to have related or discussed these traditions, even as they quote Ibn al-'Arabi's ideas and texts.

It is true that the Seal of the Saints bears witness.
 The essence of the leader of the Knowers of God is unique¹⁹.
 He is the Mahdi (AHS), rightly guided and descended from Ahmad
 (PBUH)
 His gaze is sharp as an Indian sword as he passes beyond sight
 He Is the Sun that blazes away every fog and darkness
 He is the seasonal downpour as it rains abundantly

You see, it is clear that both the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) and the sayings of Ali claim that the Mahdi (AHS) will appear in Hind. We accept this very Mahdi (AHS) as the promised one, whose coming at a specified time is clearly established beyond doubt.

Then Shaykh Ibrahim turned to the Judge and asked. 'Do you have with you that book called *Shu'ab al-Iman*²⁰.'

'Why would you be asking after that book?' the Judge questioned him back.

'In that book,' Shaykh Ibrahim told him, 'there is the report of a decision from all among the scholars of the Sunni community in which they advise to hesitate and equivocate before specifying the time in which the Mahdi (AHS) will appear. They all agree that the conditions of the appearance of the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time and the exact time of his appearance are frilly dependent on the will of Allah [who will make him appear whenever the Divine wills].

The Judge asked him, 'Which scholars have said this? Read out that passage.'

Shaykh Ibrahim recited the following passage. 'Indeed, people have vast disagreements on the topic of the Mahdi (AHS). A whole group of scholars have advised caution on this topic, and have adopted the policy of ceding to each person what he thinks and knows. They have agreed in the

¹⁹ The Arabic text of this poem is highly elliptical in its language, and a definitive translation of it is therefore very difficult. This couplet ends with the phrase that the promised Mahdi is *faqid* which literally means "missing" However, in the context of the poem, this single word must imply the phrase *faqid al-mithal*, "lacking any comparison" and thereby unique. It is typical of Arabic poetry, especially mystical poetry, to be highly condensed in its language, with a single word standing for a whole phrase, or a single image standing for a complex symbolic idea. Note that this English translation of this poem diverges completely from the Urdu translation that had been offered in the previous publication of *Mubahisa-yi Alamgiri*, which this translator did not feel was faithful to the original Arabic.

²⁰ *Shu'ab al-Iman*, "The Branches of Faith" is a text by Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Baihaqi, a famous scholar of the Prophetic traditions (died 1066 CE / 458 Hijri).

belief that the Mahdi (AHS) is one of the descendants of Fatimah (RA), the daughter of the Prophet (PBUH), whom Allah will create at whatever time he wills and whom Allah will send on a mission to secure victory for his religion.'

'Who exactly has stated this?' asked the Judge.

'This is a statement', replied Shaykh Ibrahim, 'of the scholars of the community of *Ahl-iSunnat wa.Jama'at*, that Imam Baihaqi has quoted in his text called *Shu'ab al-Iman*.'

Finally, the Judge said, 'I do not have this book in my library.'

'Then request it from the library of the Emperor,' insisted Shaykh Ibrahim, 'and we will see if this passage is quoted in that book—we will see if I am telling the truth. If I am not, then I become like those censored in the saying of the Prophet (PBUH), that "The liar does not belong to my community.'

The Judge knew within that Shaykh Ibrahim was telling the truth. He connived to change the subject, saying 'No, it is already evening [we cannot get that book]. Tell me, in the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) there is mention of a fortress by the water's edge called Constantinople [Qunstantaniyyah] which the Mahdi (AHS) will conquer after pronouncing *Allahu Akhar*. The Mahdi (AHS) you claim to follow never conquered any fortress like this.'

Shaykh Ibrahim replied, The Mahdi (AHS) we follow did not conquer any such fortress, because there is a great disagreement about this saying of the Prophet (PBUH).

'What disagreement can there be'?' asked the Judge.

Shaykh Ibrahim said, 'Some scholars hold that the conquest of this fortress by pronouncing Allahu Akbar is the work of some one from the Jewish tribes [Banu Isra'il]. whereas the Mahdi (AHS) is necessarily someone from the Arab tribes [Banu Isma'il].

In the middle of this discussion, one of the scholars present interjected that, The Mahdi (AHS) is of the descendants of Hussain (RA), so what he's saying about the Arab tribes is correct!'

The Judge contradicted him, 'I have seen it written in one book that the Mahdi (AHS) will be from the descendants of 'Abbas'²¹

Shaykh Ibrahim said, 'The scholars from the whole Sunni community have come to the consensus that the Mahdi (AHS) will be from the descendants of Hussain (RA).'

'First of all, said the Judge, let us find out the truth about the Mahdi (AHS) you claim to follow, and only after that will we finish this other discussion.'

'By means of these conflicting views and contradictory opinions,' said Shaykh Ibrahim, 'one of our greatest leaders became a follower of the Mahdi (AHS). He was Shaykh Ala'i (may Allah be merciful to him) who was the spiritual guide of Sher Shah Suri and the Emperor Salim Shah²². He did

²¹ The anonymous court scholar here refers to a large collection of reports that claim that the Mahdi will be from the 'Abbasi family (that is descended from the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, al-'Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim) rather than through the family of the Prophet himself through his daughter Fatimah and his grandsons Hassan and Hussain. Modern scholars have concluded that such reports are most likely inauthentic and were circulated in the second Islamic century to support the rebellion that brought a new dynasty into power that was of the 'Abbasi family. This rebellion had millenarian and Mahdist currents that supported its ideology.

²² It is very strange that Shaykh Ibrahim here claims that Shaykh Ala'i was the spiritual guide of emperors of the Suri dynasty. There is no written evidence to suggest this relationship. Written sources record that Shaykh Ala'i (as well as his own Mahdawi teacher, Shaykh Abdallah Niyazi) was persecuted by the scholars in the court of this dynasty. Although Islam Shah (here named Salim) was impressed by the sermons Shaykh Ala'i delivered when he was called to the court for an inquisition, and offered to make Shaykh Ala'i the ethical guardian [muhtasib] of his realm if he would only recant his belief in the Mahdi, there is no textual evidence that the Sultan ever became a disciple of Shaykh Ala'i. When Shaykh Ala'i refused to recant his beliefs, Islam Shah first banished him to Dekkan. Then when Shaykh Ala'i used this banishment to bring the governor of Hindiya Azam Humayun Sharwani and a large portion of his army into the Mahdawi circle. Islam Shah summoned him to court a second time in 1550 CE / 957 Hijri, and flogged him until Shaykh Ala'i expired. Perhaps Shaykh Ibrahim is quoting an oral tradition that Shaykh Ala'i was the spiritual guide of Islam Shah Suri before Shaykh Ala'i became convinced of the truth of the Mahdi's mission. Little is recorded of Shaykh's Ala'i life before he joined the Mahdawi community but it is known that he was a respected Sufi master from a renowned family; this reputation may have generated the oral tradition quoted here by Shaykh Ibrahim. Or there could possibly been some mistake in recording Shaykh Ibrahim's words. He may have said that Shaykh Ala'i was "a religious guide of the time of Islam Shah Suri" that was heard and recorded as if he was "the religious guide of Islam Shah Suri."

Similarly Shaykh Abdallah Niyazi too was subjected to persecution on instigation of Makhdoom-ul. Mulk. Mulla Abdallah Sultanpuri and was flogged mercilessly. Islam Shah was arch-enemy of Niyazi Pathans and Mulla Abdallah was instrumental in persecution of Mahdawi scholars. During the course of punishment Shaykh Niyazi was reciting the Quranic

extensive research from the most prestigious books of respected early scholars of the Sunni community, and found that the appearance of our Mahdi (AHS) was in perfect accord with the verses of the Qur'an, reports of the Prophet's (PBUH) words, and the statements upon which all the Sunni scholars have agreed. Only then did he bear witness to the truth of the claim of our Mahdi (PBUH). We Mahdawis all fully believe that the ethics, values and action of Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH) Jaunpuri follow exactly in every detail the ethics, values and actions of Muhammad (PBUH), the seal of the Prophets (PBUH) and Messengers (PBUH). As they say in Arabic, *exactly. measure for measure, and step for step*. Those who sincerely believe in the mission the Prophets (AHS) and the sanctity of the saints are in total agreement that any person who shares in the ethical character of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is trustworthy in his claims. Such as ethical person could never spread lies and falsifications or impute to Allah something that Allah has not decreed to him. This is just like a general principle that the jurists have laid down in establishing the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself. They have written that "Everything which is established by the words of a trustworthy person is therefore completely trustworthy".

'Therefore, if any person is just and is a sincere seeker after the truth, then he must necessarily research into the noble character of this Mahdi (AHS) in order to compare him to the nobility of the Prophet (PBUH); then he can see for himself whether they are of one constitution. Just see how the author, **Imam Muhammad Nasfi**, has mentioned both of these two Muhammads (PBUH), the Prophet (PBUH) and the Mahdi (AHS), with equal mention in his commentary on the verse "Who have not already joined with them" (Qur'an, Surat al-Jumu'ah, 62:3) in his book *Kashf al-Haqa'iq*²³. He writes that "The Mahdi's (AHS) essence is like the Prophet's essence, his knowledge is like the Prophet's (PBUH) knowledge, his followers are like the Prophet's (PBUH) followers, his patience is like the Prophet's (PBUH) patience, his reliance on Allah is like the Prophet's (PBUH) reliance on Allah. In every state he is the Prophet's (PBUH) equal, inwardly and outwardly". This shows that the essence of the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time follows

verse. Our Lord! forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty; establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith" (3: 147)

Islam Shah Who was hard of hearing asked Mulla Abdallah what he is saying. Mulla replied that he is referring to you and me as infidel (Kafir). Then Islam Shah ordered more harsh punishment and ultimately Shaykh Niyazi fell unconscious as if dead. (*Darbar-e-Akhar*). Later he was taken to his दौर by his followers.

²³ Qur'an, Surat al-Jumu'ah, 62:3. The full verse runs as follows: the Prophet was sent "to instruct his people in scripture and wisdom, although they had before been clearly astray, and [to instruct] others as well, who had not yet joined with them, for Allah is the Exalted, the Wise."

the inner character and outer conduct of the Prophet (PBUH) in each detail. Look also with what praiseworthy qualities and lofty ethics Shaykh Ibn 'Arabi has described the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time in his book *al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah*, when explaining the details of the special sanctity [wilayat] of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). You must look at this passage, so that you may understand his real intent in writing it and reach the full realization of its importance, If Allah wills.'

Then Shaykh Ibrahim saw a book before the Judge and asked 'Which book is this?' The Judge answered, 'Its title is *Mishkat*.' Shaykh Ibrahim said that this book also mentions the Mahdi (AHS) in this passage. "Ali (RA) once asked: Oh Prophet of Allah (PBUH), will the Mahdi (AHS) be from our family lineage, or from another family's lineage? The Prophet (PBUH) answered him: Truly the Mahdi (AHS) will come from our lineage, for Allah will close the Muslim community as Allah had opened it." This report has been transmitted by an entire group of reliable reporters in their books, including Abu al-Qasim al-Tabrani and Abu Nai'im al-Isfahani and Abd al-Rahman ibn Hatim and others.

'I, too, have seen in this book that same quotation that you have recited,' admitted the Judge. Then he complained, 'You have memorized all these texts and reports about the Prophet (PBUH) that prove your points. But I have not have the chance to memorize the points [to refute you].'

'Well, look here,' said Shaykh Ibrahim , 'I have memorized just those points which are necessary proofs in any debate. They are indispensable for me, since persuading the whole of humanity to believe in the Mahdi (AHS) is a duty incumbent upon me. The Mahdi's (AHS) essence requires and demands such belief, since his appearance has been promised by Allah. He is called the promised one since Allah has spread the word about his advent in Allah's very own scripture through the tongue of Allah's very own Prophet (PBUH). Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH) himself has said, "I am ordered by Allah to declare that I am the Mahdi (AHS), witnessed by the spirit of the Prophet (PBUH). He followed exactly the example of our Prophet (PBUH); he reached a spiritual level above the level of *Ijtihad* (thorough familiarity with the Prophet's (PBUH) external teachings). No other person can claim a share in the loftiness of this spiritual attainment. Scholars have proclaimed that a person of such rank must be believed and followed, for he shares all the personal qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): he claims to be the Mahdi (AHS) on the order of Allah and in accord with the scripture of Allah. He is protected for error by Allah like the Prophets and Messengers. His advent is promised by Allah, he is the Seal of the Sainthood (Khatim al-Wilayat il-Muqayyadah Muhammadi SAS) that flows from the archetype of Muhammad (PBUH), he is described by the Qur'an to be equivalent to the

Qur'an in guidance and mercy²⁴, his reputation is spread by the Qur'an and its text confirms his status as leader of the community [imamat] and [khilafat], he is the indisputable evidence of Allah and the beloved of Allah as described by the Speech of Allah. His community of followers is also described in the Qur'an as those who will be obedient to him inwardly and outwardly. Such a person who is supported by so many clear and decisive proofs from the scripture, and who supports the scripture so clearly, his very person by his very nature demands to be believed and followed by all people, by all created beings. Whoever can understand will understand. Arid what is the denunciation of such a person who rejects his rightful claim if not outright infidelity against Allah and the Prophet [Kufr]? People who believe in him know that his essence and his person require such belief, therefore they pledge allegiance to his mission and confirm his status. After this, they gather together the verses of Quran, the reports of the Prophet (PBUH), the decisions of the pious scholars who belong to the Sunni community, and insist that they confirm the advent of the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time, who is none other than Sayyid Muhammad (PBUH), the promised Mahdi (AHS). They do this just as the scholars of old had gathered together the proofs of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and declared that beyond a doubt his very person required belief and faith. They reposed their faith in him through these proofs, and declared that all people must believe in the advent of the Mahdi (AHS), that this belief is a ritual obligation [farz] integral to religion itself.

'The Prophet (PBUH) has said about the scholars, that "the scholars of my community are [as honored as] the prophets of the Jewish tribes, "Yet despite all these signs and confirmations of the advent of the Mahdi (AHS), scholars harbored many differences of opinion and conflicts of view about the Mahdi (AHS). Numerous reports of what the Prophet (PBUH) has said about the Mahdi (AHS) contradict each other. There is a basic guideline about controversial topics like this that leading scholars and mystics have advocated, "If two [reports] contradict each other, let them both fall into disuse, "But you, oh Judge, want to make use to this difference opinion about asserting the leadership of the Mahdi [imamat] and declaring his rightful place of [khilafat], If anybody, through selfishness and pride, gets caught up in these disputes that are impossible to win and topics that are

²⁴ Shaykh Ibrahim here claims that the words of the Qur'an place the person of the Mahdi on par with the Qur'anic scripture as a source of guidance. Yet, it must be clarified that the Qur'an does not explicitly mention the person of the Mahdi nor does that term occur in the scripture. All information about the Mahdi comes from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad as reported by his companions and their followers. However, Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri himself indicated that eighteen verses of the Qur'an referred to his coming as the Mahdi. In addition, The Mahdawi scholar Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati has composed a book which interprets many Qur'anic verses as foretelling the advent of the Mahdi, in *Jawahir al-Tasdiq*, "Jewels that Confirm Belief."

difficult to understand, then they can never possibly reach the goal [of understanding Allah and following the Prophet (PBUH)]. There is a verse of Qur'an which makes this very clear: "Then Allah guided those who truly believed to the truth in whatever they may have disagreed upon, for Allah guides those whom Allah desired to guide to a path straight and clear²⁵." In the commentary on this verse in *Tafsir-i Rahmani*, it is written that Allah guides those who believe in the truth directly "without any proof from textual sources and without any human teacher". When such guidance comes down from Allah, what is the use of this dispute between you and me? What is the use of these arguments and counter-arguments? What refutations and retaliations can there be? Wouldn't it be better if we just enact the commandments of Allah [as best we know how]?'

The Judge asked him, 'And how does Allah command us to act?'

Shaykh Ibrahim recited this verse from the Qur'an "Whoever performs a good deed gets the reward for it, and whoever acts evilly will get the punishment for it, for Allah does not act tyrannically with humankind". Then he recited another verse to compliment the first, "Every soul will be held accountable only for what it has done, no delegates can bear the responsibility in their place. Your Lord is the place to which you each return, then Allah will inform you about what you had conflicted and disputed²⁶" (Qur'an, Surat al-An'am, 6: 164). Then he recited another, "That community which has passed, they will reap the results of what they have done while you will reap the results of what you are doing. You will not be questioned about what they have done, nor can you benefit by it²⁷" (Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah, 2: 134 and 141), And he followed this with another verse, "I have been ordered to deal between you with fairness and justice. Allah is our Lord and Allah is also your Lord. We will be judged by our acts and you will be judged by yours. There is no contention and quarrel between us. Allah will gather us together again, and Allah is the inevitable end for each of us²⁸" (Qur'an, Surat al-Shurah, 42: 15).

'You see, 'said Shaykh Ibrahim , 'that Allah commands us to act justly and to do good in every moment, in every situation. It is clear that Allah will not ask you about me on Judgement day, and Allah will not ask me about you. Allah plainly gives each one reward for what they do which is good and beneficial, and punishment for what they do which is bad and harmful. You must know that on the Day of Judgement, Allah has no need to ask any question of anyone!'

²⁵ Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah, 2: 213.

²⁶ Qur'an, Surat al-An'am, 6: 164

²⁷ Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah, 2: 134 and 141

²⁸ Qur'an, Surat al-Shurah, 42: 15

The Judge protested, But it is my job to test and examine everyone.

'But Judge,' interjected Shaykh A'zam , the son of Shaykh Ibrahim , 'there are so many different religious communities and sects who fight side by side in the army of the Emperor! I mean, besides the seventy-three different sub-communities of Muslims, there are Jews, Christians and Parsis [Magian], and even pagans! Which of all these religious communities are you examining and interrogating? Those who are outside the pale of Islam say things that are clearly outside the pale, while those who are trustworthy and true believers say things that are clearly true in accord with the Qur'an. What profit do you hope to make by interrogating every one and examining the beliefs of each? One thing is for certain, that whatever a father does, he will bear the consequences, and what his son does, that son alone will bear the consequences'.

The Judge corrected him, 'Whatever good a father does, the reward for it will not accrue to his son, but whatever good a son does will also reward his father.'

'I understand what you mean', said Shaykh Ibrahim , 'but look here. Is it true that if a father does not pray, does not keep the fast, drinks alcohol and chases after other women, his son will be punished? Or if a son should do evil things, is it so that his father will be punished as well?'

'No', insisted the Judge, he will not be liable to punishment.'

Shaykh A'zam replied. 'Then just as you say he will not be punished by means of another person's evil actions, by the same logic his good actions cannot benefit another person either. Both of these suppositions go against the explicit teaching of the Divine words.'

'Recite the verse that proves your point,' ordered the Judge.

Shaykh A'zam recited this verse, "Oh you people, stay constantly aware of your Lord and feel dread for the Day on which a father will not be rewarded at all for what his son has done nor will children be rewarded for what their parents have done. Whatever Allah promises is irrevocably true, so do not let this worldly life mislead you and do not let the proud deceiver trick you regarding Allah²⁹" (Qur'an, Surat Luqman, 31:33).

The Judge finally pronounced, 'You people really do act on the commandments of Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) in accord with the

²⁹ Qur'an, Surat Luqman, 31: 33

legal norms set down by Muhammad (PBUH)! I judge that your doctrine is correct and acceptable.

'Well, Judge,' said Shaykh A'zam , 'of course we have a sound and reliable doctrine, since we believe in the oneness of Allah and the Divine mission of the Prophet (PBUH), and act out the commands of Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) in accordance with the limits of the religious law set down by Muhammad (PBUH). Just as Allah has told in the Qur'an, Obey Allah and the Messenger (PBUH), for if you turn astray again, know that Allah does not love those who are unfaithful.'

When the Judge heard this verse, he became very happy, and gave the official order that the interrogation was done; they could go back to place where they had been staying. Then the Judge himself went to the Emperor and told him all about the discussion and debate that had passed between them.

The Emperor asked him, 'Have you now become fully informed about the beliefs of these followers of the Mahdi (AHS), and have you closely examined all their doctrines?'

The Judge replied, 'They bear witness to the oneness of Allah who sent the Prophet (PBUH) on a mission. They cherish the memory of all four of the Prophet's (PBUH) close companions, and believe that all four legal methods are validly based on the truth. They are certainly members of our Sunni community. They say that the Mahdi (AHS) of the end of time (akhir az-Zaman) is their leader (Imam (AHS)) who has come and gone.'

The Emperor asked 'So did you find that they transgress the limits of the religious law in any aspect that makes them liable to punishment?'

'No', answered the Judge, they are not liable to any Qur'anic punishment, nor to summary execution, nor to imprisonment or exile. I have found no cause for punishing them in any way.

'I have known well', admitted the Emperor, 'that they follow the law (shariah) scrupulously and know the dictates of our religion and enact them, and dispute with others through the proofs of the Qur'an, the words of the Prophet (PBUH), and the teachings of the pious scholars. Their practices are not against the religious law at all, and they only act on that which is in accord with the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet (PBUH). Their doctrines are surely within the bounds of the Sunni community. That they declare the slogan that **"the Mahdi (AHS) had already come and gone"**

does not make them liable to any punishment under the religious law. So you can give the order to let them go freely.'

When the Judge returned to his courtroom, he summoned us all from the tomb-complex of Shah Sharif Majdhub to come back to speak with him. He told us about his meeting with the Emperor and what he had commanded. He said, I have gone before the Emperor and explained everything to him and secured for you the permission to live freely in this region. You are now free to go back to your own residences.' All these people took their leave from the Judge, Abu Sa'id, and left the tomb of Shah Sharif , departing for their homes in Chichaund.