

Chapter 11: The Minds of the People Prepare for the Advent of the Mahdi

The session began exactly on time. Dr. Jalali opened the meeting with his question.

Dr. Jalali: The reality of human life today reveals a diversity of opinions, beliefs, and religions. It also reveals the factors which breed differences among human beings in everything you can imagine. With the existence of a plurality of every sort, how can we imagine that the entire humanity will come under one government and one power when the earth is directed by the government of the Mahdi?

Mr. Hoshyar: If the general conditions of the world and the degree of human knowledge, perceptions, and intelligence remain at the same level as before, then it is certainly farfetched to think about a unified world government under the Mahdi. On the other hand, just as the degree of human reason and civilization, and the level of human knowledge in the past centuries were not at the present level -- having through changes and transformations that are very much a part of human history gradually reached this higher point, it is plausible to maintain that the present level will not remain stagnant. Rather, it can be said with much confidence that with the passage of time humanity will reach even higher stages, allowing a better understanding the social good and the general interests of society. To comprehend this fully we must understand the past age and compare it with the present to formulate our vision of the potential future.

It has been established with abundant evidence that selfishness and self-interests are natural instincts in human beings. These natural traits are responsible for much of the energy that has propelled human advancement towards perfection and the acquisition of happiness and other self-serving ends. Every individual tries his utmost to further his own interests, and to overcome any obstacles that might hamper this personal gain. In this movement towards one's own interests there is very little attention paid to the interests of others in society. However, when an individual realizes that his advantage is better served by preserving the interests of others, then he accepts that idea and willingly gives up some of his own advantage for others.

It was probably this recognition of a personal interest in the preservation of the common good that prompted the institution of marriage to develop. Every man and woman realized that they needed each other and that sense of need and dependency strengthened their marital relationship. The need to balance one's own selfishness with the advantages that are accrued through relationships has been a key element in the development of a healthy family and other mutually beneficial social relations. In reality each member of a family does not have any other purpose than the realization of their own happiness. However, since the attainment of personal happiness was dependent on the happiness of others in the family, the attainment of collective happiness through a sense of cooperation and interaction quickly became the cornerstone of an ideal human relationship.

For a long time human beings lived as an extended family in tents. Following incidents of hostility, conflict and skirmishes that disturbed their sense of security, the families came together to form a society in order to consolidate their resources to defend themselves against other families and groups. This development led to the reformation of kinship groups into tribes and nations. Members or evolution coalescence of these new groups, through mutual agreement gave up some of their individual and familial rights in order to function as a tribe with a sense of the common good and were willing to put up a defense to protect their common interests against any external threat. This advancement in collective thought and recognition of a critical need to coexist, both within the tribe and in relation to other tribes, moved the society to create villages and cities to further and to defend its common good.

The progression from village life to city and national life was gradual and prompted by a pragmatic decision to further the common good that was very much defined by the need for security and peaceful relations with those societies that were more numerous and powerful. The birth of a nation was the logical outcome of the human need to provide the maximum benefit of corporate existence within a defined territory. It was in many ways an extension of familial structure in which citizenry provided the new basis for social and political cooperation. More importantly, it transcended racial and other forms of distinctions that converged under a national culture.

Ultimately, their development served to remove causes of conflict and hostility and to demonstrate the benefit of unity in furthering the purposes of a good society. With the cumulative experience of hundreds of centuries of living together, an absolute egocentric individualism and human pettiness were to a considerable extent brought under some ethical scrutiny. In spite of all the benefits that accrued through a mutually recognized social contract, the need to work even harder to improve living conditions had to be guaranteed through the creation of a social and economic infrastructure.

The role played by technology in improving the quality of life was underscored by the state's endeavors to ensure that these scientific advancements were regulated through proper institutions and human rational control. Today, we are witness to the technicalization of societies around the world which has led to phenomenal breakthroughs in global relations through the technology of telecommunications.

Things that had appeared to previous generations as scientific fiction have become a reality. Of all the

things, national and cultural boundaries that seemed to have been defined in terms of an “iron curtain” separating the nations into eastern and western blocs have been overshadowed by electronic super-highways of ideas. The revolution of communication has changed the ideological configuration of the world. No nation can afford to live in isolation. In the midst of all this advancement, however, there remains the troubling question of how to make an individual responsive to the ethical and spiritual values which function as the backbone of a healthy society. Could the democratization of the nations guarantee the preservation of this unquestionably fundamental inner need of humanity?

The world community has experimented with different philosophies and ideologies to strengthen the common vision that would guarantee harmony and justice among peoples of different races and creeds. Nationalism, communism, socialism, capitalism, and so on have alternatively divided the nations, united them partially under one or another -ism, brought them to the brink of destructive nuclear warfare, and forced them to work with each other under international organizations like the United Nations. The human search for harmony and peace with justice remain the most precious prize for the global community. At the same time, the lingering memory of two World Wars with their disastrous outcomes have provided a grim reminder of how far humanity seems to be from that lofty ideal of peace on earth.

International organizations are marred by the power politics of stronger nations against the weaker ones. Different forms of imperialism and colonization are rampant even in the post-colonial era. In spite of all the experiences with wars and conflicts, the world's nations are engaged in accumulating weapons of mass destruction that could wipe out the entire human race in a matter of seconds. The very foundation of human global community, namely interconnectedness, is at stake.

If human history in the recent past can be taken as indicative of the future direction of the global human enterprise, it is not difficult to surmise that humanity is at a crossroads marked with basically two choices: to pursue a pure materialism its moral and social accompaniments; or, to respond to the moral-spiritual challenge of accepting God as the sole guide.

In other words, with materialistic consumerism at its height, and individualism and secularism functioning as the two wings that make this kind of blind dedication to it possible, God and God's ethical and spiritual directives have been practically trivialized and systematically removed from the public life of a nation. At the same time, there is this natural urge in human beings to seek out their Creator, to worship the Merciful, Compassionate God. Until and unless that is satisfied human beings can not find peace and harmony. No material or secular ideology can substitute for this simple, natural faith that provides the inner peace and a sense of cosmic harmony and total integrity to humankind.

The Abrahamic religions have, in particular, emphasized this natural religion of humanity founded upon an innate disposition to worship One God and implement the Will of God on earth by creating an ethical and spiritually-oriented society. These revealed religions also promise that God will empower those who respond to their innate nature by making them role models and leaders for humanity. Moreover, all false beliefs and gods are prone to provoke conflict and must be eliminated for God's order to be realized. It is

only when humanity acknowledges this God-centered universe that it will be able to further the ideal global community. Such a community will naturally respond to the call of Islam and the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) whose invitation to the Peoples of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians, to abandon differences and concentrate on One Lord, the Almighty God, is enshrined in the Qur'an in Sura Al 'Imran, verse 64 as follows:

People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take other as Lords, apart from God. (Al 'Imran [3],64)

The Qur'an presents this revolutionary program of creating an ethical order that will reflect the divine will on earth through God's righteous servants who have submitted themselves to God's will, the Muslims. The Prophet has also informed us that the uniquely qualified person to lead humanity to become united under One God by abandoning all forms of idolatry and concentrating on the divine purposes for humanity will be the promised Mahdi, a descendant of his. Imam Baqir has related: When our Qa'im arises he will place his hands on the heads of God's servants, bringing together disparate minds and thoughts to form a unified opinion and will lead them to pursue a singular goal, making them excel in their moral life¹.

In another tradition Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib has conveyed the essence of al-Qa'im's role in the future of humanity. He says:

When our Qa'im rises hostility and resentment will be eliminated from the hearts of the people, and general security will be established all over the world².

Finally, Imam Baqir says: When our Qa'im takes the command in his hands, all the public wealth, mines and treasures on the earth will be at his disposal [for fair distribution among people]³.

The Final Victory of the Downtrodden (mustad'afin)

Dr. Jalali: In every part of the world there are oppressors and tyrants who rule over the helpless downtrodden people. These oppressors hold everything under their control and have used their power to terrorize ordinary people. With this in mind, how shall the Mahdi take the command into his hands and succeed in overthrowing these tyrants?

Mr. Hoshyar: Actually the triumph of the Mahdi is the triumph of the downtrodden people of the world over their oppressors. After all, they are in the majority and all power in reality stems from them; whereas the oppressors, however powerful they may be, are in the minority and do not possess the real power. This is the sense in which the universal victory of the twelfth Imam is conceivable. Let me elaborate at this juncture so that what I am asserting becomes clear.

On the basis of some passages of the Qur'an and several hadith-reports it is correct to suggest that in

the final analysis the oppressed people of the world, as a united bloc in a single revolution against the oppressors, to be led by the promised Mahdi (peace be upon him), will be victorious. They will permanently defeat the forces of tyranny and injustice and will assume the administration of the world. God, the Exalted, says:

Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land. (Qasas [28], 5)

The passage explicitly gives the glad tidings that the final control over the power and administration of the world will be in the hands of those 'that were abased.' Hence, the victory of the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, is the same as the victory of the downtrodden peoples of the earth. To further clarify the matter let me emphasize the following points:

- (1) What is the meaning of being 'abased' or 'downtrodden' (istid'af) and who are the 'abased' (mustad'afin).
- (2) What are the characteristics of the 'tyrants' or 'oppressors' (mustakbirin)?
- (3) Why is it that the tyrants have got an upper hand over the downtrodden?
- (4) How is it possible for the downtrodden to overpower the tyrants?
- (5) Who is the leader of this world movement?

In the Qur'an the term 'downtrodden' is juxtaposed with 'oppressor.' For this reason, it is necessary to examine these two terms together. According to the Qur'an, 'oppressors' have certain characteristics. In a passage where Pharaoh, an oppressor, is mentioned the Qur'an says:

Now Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and divided its inhabitants into sects, abasing one party of them, slaughtering their sons, and sparing their women; for he was of the workers of corruption. (Qasas, 4)

Three characteristics of the oppressor are identified in the above passage. First, exalting oneself; second, dividing people into sects; third, working corruption.

In another verse the Qur'an says:

Pharaoh was high in the land, and he was one of the prodigals. (Yunus [10], 83)

In this verse prodigality or wastefulness is regarded as a characteristic of an oppressor.

In another passage the Qur'an says:

So he (i.e., Pharaoh) made his people unsteady, and they obeyed him; surely they were an

ungodly people. (Zukhruf [43], 54)

Here the verse points to making people 'unsteady', that is, humiliating them and then making them obey him, as another characteristic of a tyrant.

In another passage the Qur'an says:

And Korah, and Pharaoh, and Haman; Moses came to them with clear signs, but they waxed proud in the earth, yet they outstripped Us not. ('Ankabut [19], 39)

In this verse, refusing to accept the truth is regarded as a trait of oppression. In yet another verse the Qur'an says:

Said the Council of those of his people who waxed proud (alladhina–stakbarü) to those that were abased (alladhina–stud'ifü), to those of them who believed, 'Do you know that Salih is an Envoy from his Lord?' They said, 'In the Message he has sent been with we are believers.' Said the ones who waxed proud, 'As for us, we are unbelievers in the thing in which you believe.' (A'raf [7]: 76)

In another place the Qur'an identifies the tyrants as those who spread disbelief and the setting up of compeers to God (shirk):

Those that were abased will say to those that waxed proud, 'Had it not been for you, we would have been believers.' . . . And those that were abased will say to those that waxed proud, 'Nay, by devising night and day, when you were ordering us to disbelieve in God, and to set up compeers to Him.'

Several traits of the oppressors become evident from the above citations from the Qur'an:

1. Waxing proud, that is, regarding oneself as superior;
2. Creating differences and conflicts among the people in order to divide them;
3. Immoderation and extravagance;
4. Humiliation and persecution of the people;
5. Spreading corruption;
6. Refusal to accept the truth; and,
7. Propagation of disbelief and setting up compeers to God.

Oppressors are a group of people who without any grounds introduce themselves as superior to others. They tell the people that they are statesmen and intelligent experts able to manage their affairs better than they can do for themselves, thereby implying that the people neither possess the maturity nor the ability to realize their own good. Hence, in order to become prosperous and happy, they should obey

these so-called 'experts.'

One of the most important strategies that they employ in controlling the people is to divide and rule. Moreover, to perpetuate their power they actively engage in spreading corruption through disbelief and in encouraging sinful deviation and wickedness among the masses. Through manipulation and exploitation of the people's wealth they are able to gain complete domination of their political and social life.

In the name of the defense of the land and people they engage in the accumulation of destructive armaments which they ultimately use against their own subjects. All in all, these individuals are engaged in wholesale exploitation of their people in order to amass wealth and use it for their personal benefit with absolutely no accountability. In reality, these individuals, in the Qur'anic phraseology, are 'those who wax proud' through trickery and through misappropriation of the power that stems from the people.

The downtrodden people, in contrast to these oppressors, are not truly the weak and disabled ones. They are those who have suffered at the hands of the oppressors who have denied them their human dignity and have exploited them thoroughly to serve their own material and wicked goals. In this process of exploitation these downtrodden people have forgotten their own real worth and have fallen into mental slavery to those who have colonized them. After all, everything in the form of national wealth, good land, water, and so on belongs to the people.

Natural resources, power of labor, knowledge, industry, and discovery of new sources of generating wealth -- all these belong to the people. The power that comes from a laborer, an industrialist, a soldier, an army, an administrator of justice and other organs of government is produced by the people. As such, it is the people who are the source of power and not the oppressors. If people stop cooperating with the tyrants, where will their power come from? Nevertheless, it is through false promises and fraudulent advertising of their goals that the oppressors are able to alienate the people from their pure and original selves and bring them under their unjust charge. They use the people against the people. In other words, oppressors throughout history have been a minority who have endeavored to keep the people ignorant of their true selves and eternally downtrodden so that they can perpetually dominate them.

Here we come to understand the missions of the Prophets who were sent to humanity to pull the people out of their ignorance and enable them to realize their true worth. The Prophets became the leaders of the downtrodden in order to guide them to free themselves from the yoke of slavery to the tyrants whose falsehood and arrogance they exposed openly, challenging these tyrants to abandon their wickedness and exploitation of the peoples. In a sense, the mission of the Prophets has been to empower ordinary human beings to realize the divinely ordained goal of creating a just and equitable society on the earth.

The Qur'an documents for us the history of this struggle of the Prophets against the tyrants of their time. Thus, Abraham arises against Nimrod, Moses stands firm against the domination of Pharaoh, Jesus perseveres against those who exercised authority invested in them unjustly, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) rises up against the Abu Jahls, Abu Sufyans,

emperors and other rulers of his age to engage in jihad to liberate people from the shackles of oppression and the tyranny of the powerful in the society.

An extremely important feature which distinguishes the mission of the Prophets from that of the tyrants is the Prophet's cardinal attempt at awakening the people to their true nature, the state in which God created humanity. This distinction of the Prophetic mission is captured in the following verse of the Qur'an:

***Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a Messenger, saying: 'Serve you God, and eschew idols (taghüt).'* (Nahl [16], 36)**

So whoever disbelieves in idols (taghüt) and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking.

The Qur'an regards warfare in the path of God as permissible and as a Muslim's duty, because it is undertaken to save and protect the downtrodden. Thus, it says:

How is it with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the men, women, and children who, being abased, say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people are evildoers, and appoint to us from Thee a helper'?

***The believers fight in the way of God, and the unbelievers fight in the idol's way. Fight you therefore against the friends of Satan; surely the guile of Satan is ever feeble.* (Nisa' [4], 76)**

Let us draw some conclusions from what we have discussed so far:

(1) The oppressors who exercise power over the people are no more than a handful. They themselves do not possess the power; rather, they are using the power that stems from the downtrodden whom they enslave by weakening and exploiting them.

(2) The downtrodden are the majority who possess the real power. They are neither as weak nor as disabled as they appear under the impact of the brainwashing strategies of the tyrants. These rulers have implanted these negative ideas in them about their weakness.

(3) The most important element in the unfortunate situation of the downtrodden peoples is the self-cultivated sense of helplessness and weakness. Since they regard themselves weak and the tyrants strong and powerful, they unconsciously become the vehicle of domination, obeying orders and acquiescing to all sorts of humiliation and deprivation, without feeling the courage to confront their oppressors. Perhaps the most significant obstacle to their taking any action to improve their lot, is the negligence of their own power. In the long process of tyrannical rule, the colonized people usually become overwhelmed by demonstrations of the colonizer's power and are oblivious to the fact that such demonstrations are no more than a fraud.

(4) The only way for the downtrodden to salvage themselves from this miserable condition is to engage in self-realization. This requires a revolution in thought and attitude to overcome many years of brainwashing carried out by the oppressive regimes and their supporters. It takes a revolution to free them from the shackles of unjust domination. That such a power is within a people's reach needs to be discovered and employed to achieve the good of the entirety of humanity. If all sectors of society -- the scholars, professionals, workers, soldiers, and so on -- come to this self-realization they can overcome even the most powerful oppressive regime on earth.

However idealistic and impractical this proposal may sound, there is little doubt that this is what the Qur'an expects from human beings while promising its realization:

Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land. (Qasas [28], 5)

Such a universal revolution to free human beings from the shackles of tyrants and wicked powers will be launched by the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi. His companions, followers, and supporters will become the inheritors, as promised in the above passage. Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) has related the following hadith:

When our Qa'im emerges with the command, God, the Exalted, will make him place his hand over the heads of the people so that their consciences and their intellects will be perfected [to accept his lead in launching his universal revolution]⁴.

From the message contained in the Qur'an and the hadith it is evident that this revolution will be universal and for the sake of the religion of God and the implementation of the divinely ordained scale of justice. Its leader will be the twelfth Imam, the promised Mahdi (peace be upon him), and his true and worthy supporters will conduct the struggle, the legitimate and just jihad, in the way of God. The Qur'an says:

God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them that He has approved for them, and will give them that He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange, after their fear, security:

***'They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything.'* (Nur [24], 55)**

In the hadith-reports it is related that the above-cited verse refers to the twelfth Imam and his associates and followers. It will be through them that the religion of God, Islam (islam in the basic meaning of 'submission to the will of One God'), will spread in every corner of the earth, replacing all other religions. The Qur'an and the hadith from the Imams promise a day when the downtrodden people of the world will wake up from the deep slumber of heedlessness and ignorance concerning their own worth and realize the emptiness of the claims made by the arrogant, powerful tyrants about their own power.

At that time, under the leadership of the Mahdi will rally under the flag of the Unity of God, al-tawhid, and gaining power from their faith in God, they will confront the unjust rulers. With a single collective blow of powerful faith they will defeat their oppressors for ever. This will be the time when the rule of justice and equity becomes established and forces of disbelief and wickedness are permanently wiped out. There will be no more fighting among the people, since the justice of God will rule and will remove any reason for conflict and warfare. This will be the golden age of peace and harmony, under the government of God.

Why Does the Mahdi Not Appear?

Dr. Jalali: Now that injustice, oppression, disbelief and materialism have become so widespread everywhere, why does not the promised Mahdi appear so that he should put an end to the tumultuous conditions of the world?

Mr. Hoshyar: Any insurgent or revolutionary movement for a specific goal requires certain background preparation for it to succeed. One of the important prerequisites for its success is that the people should feel the need to launch the revolution and they should be psychologically prepared to endorse and support it. Otherwise the revolution could face a defeat. The revolution of the Mahdi is not free of this general prerequisite for it to achieve its goal. It could succeed only when the conditions are favorable. The Mahdi's movement is not an ordinary reform movement within a small community. It is a comprehensive movement that will engulf the entire world. Its mission is global and will include all humankind. By the same token, it is extremely difficult to implement this mission without first preparing the grounds for it. To gauge this challenging aspect of the revolution let us recall that one of the goals of the appearance of the Mahdi is to eliminate all kinds of discrimination -- racial, creedal, cultural, linguistic, and so on -- that human societies have created in their relationships with each other.

In order to create a global community based on peace and harmony through the implementation of justice and fairness, the Mahdi will have to correct the situation from its origins so that all kinds of conflicts that have marred human society should be resolved. Such a task, even today with the creation of a world body like the United Nations, has not been easy to achieve. As long as human beings are not brought back to their spiritual origins, and as long as materialism and extreme forms of selfish behavior in the name of individualism are not corrected, it is impossible to imagine how a God-centered human society can materialize. The God-centered human society can be erected on the divinely ordained laws and the divine blue print provided by the Islamic faith.

The Mahdi's revolution aspires to provide a religious focus to the confused mental situation of humanity. It desires to destroy all the false and beguiling gods created by human minds, including: geographic boundaries, races, nations, creeds, political parties, false prophets, and so on, and to replace them with purity of thought, sincerity of action, and all those values that contribute towards the betterment of humanity.

Of course, talking and writing about such things is not difficult; but to implement them through a revolution is certainly not an easy task. Such an international movement would have to do a tremendous amount of work to prepare people in every way to respond adequately to ensure its success. The religious nature of the revolution demands that it should arise from the depths of the people's souls. In particular, since Muslims have to assume the leadership role in the revolution they need to prove their worthiness in being entrusted to undertake such a major responsibility. The Qur'an posits the condition of being worthy and righteous as a prerequisite to assuming charge of the affairs of humanity:

***For We have written in the Psalms, after the Remembrance, 'The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants.'* (Anbiya' [21], 105)**

Consequently, the promised Mahdi will not appear so long as human beings have not attained the level of perfection that is necessary to accept the government of truth. To be sure, mental maturity is not an overnight development. It is a process that feeds upon events and experiences in order to become perfect. Human beings have to continue fighting over this or that piece of land until all their energies are exhausted and the truth about the artificiality of these human-invented national boundaries becomes as clear as the daylight.

Only then will they stop thinking in those narrow terms and disputing over matters that do not deserve all that bloodshed and violence. When human beings begin to think in terms of their interconnectedness and when a brown or white or black person begins to think in terms of the common humanity that he or she shares with others, then it will be time for the final revolution to occur.

This situation of desperation has to occur in all other fields until that time when human beings are left with no other choice but to turn to an alternative provided by God. Even in a field like law, human experience has been one of perpetual revision to make the laws more fair and just. Hence, generation after generation of legal scholars are engaged in promulgating new laws and abrogating old ones so that they can reflect the changing times in the process of legislation. This process will continue until people realize that man made laws serve the vested interests of those who are in power; and that the time has come to discover the immutable divine laws which have been sent through the Prophets, God's representatives on earth.

Human beings today are still not ready to submit to God's plans for them. They believe that through science and technology they shall create means of acquiring happiness. It is for this reason that they have put aside spiritual and moral values and have attached themselves to godless materialism. They will run after this materialism until such time that they realize that these scientific and technological advancements, although capable of carrying human beings to the farthest possible points in space and conquering it for them, or of creating the deadliest nuclear weapons for the preservation of their power, are utterly helpless in solving international problems of injustice and in removing the vestiges of imperialism and colonialism to establish an ethical and just global society.

From the time humans founded rulers, governors, and commanders and accepted their authority, they have also held some expectations of them. They have always hoped that the stronger and cleverer individuals would restrain the oppressors and would work towards the prosperity of all. But this hope has rarely been fulfilled and seldom have a people seen their ideal government come to power. In every age human government has appeared in different forms and shapes; but invariably it has fallen into the same pattern that was described as inadequate, unjust, corrupt and that was replaced by the new form. It seems that these forms of government need to exhaust themselves for humans to realize that enough is enough, and that it is time for God's government founded upon the principle of *tawhid* (belief in the Unity of God) to take over the reins. Hisham b. Salim has related a tradition from Imam Sadiq, who said:

The Master of the Command will not assume the government until all kinds of people [with all forms of government in mind] have ruled. The reason is that when his government becomes instituted no one will be able to say: 'Had we reached power we too would have ruled with justice.'⁵

In another tradition Imam Baqir says:

Ours will be the final government. All families with an aptitude to rule will have reached power before us. This will be to forestall any claim after seeing our government: 'Had we reached power, we too would have acted like the progeny of Muhammad.'⁶ This is the meaning of the verse which declares: "The final result is for the godfearing⁶."

In the light of the above discussion it is evident that human nature has not sufficiently matured to become the receptacle for the government based on the belief in the Unity of God. However, there is no reason to despair because this condition will not remain forever, and ultimately God's mercy and favor will encompass humanity. In order to further the divine purposes God will endow human beings with the necessary wisdom and faith to fulfill the goal of creation.

No human can deny the aspirations shared by all generations, from time immemorial, that human beings should be happy and prosperous in their life on the earth; that there should be justice and equity in the society; that there should be a complete sense of security from any internal or external threat to human existence. This aspiration is part of God's creation impressed in the nature of human beings and, therefore, God will guide and assist them in fulfilling it.

This will happen when all human ideologies and –isms have utterly failed to further good of human society.

At such a time of despair there will be a renewed hope in the teachings of the Prophets and in the divinely ordained laws of justice and equity that these selfless and sacrificing messengers of God came to promulgate. There will surely be a recognition that human society, in order to become spiritually and morally sound and prosperous, is in need of two things: one, a clear and perfect blueprint from God that would set forth a program for reform and revival; and two, a divinely protected (*ma'sūm*) leader who can execute the divine blue print without any error of omission or commission. God, in His Divine Wisdom,

has prepared the Mahdi for such a highly sensitive time as that so that he can implement the program that Islam came to teach under the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).

Another Reason for the Delay in the Appearance of the Mahdi

Another reason mentioned in the traditions is reported in a hadith from Imam Sadiq in which the Imam said:

In the loins of disbelievers and hypocrites God has deposited a seed for believing persons. It was for this reason that Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib refrained from killing the fathers of disbelievers so that believing children could be born of them. After that whenever he met them he would endeavor to kill them. Similarly, our Qa'im will not rise until God's trust from the loins of the disbelievers has been delivered. After that he will appear and will eliminate disbelievers⁷.

The program that will be followed by the twelfth Imam is that he will offer the religion of Islam to the non-believers. Anyone who accepts that call will be saved from being killed. All those who refuse to accept Islam will be killed. On the other hand, we know that history is replete with cases of believing children born of non-believing and hypocritical parents. Was it not the case of the early Muslims who were born of non-believing parents in the pre-Islamic age?

If the Prophet had killed all the non-believers during the conquest of Mecca, the Muslims then born of their generation would never have come into existence. God's grace and benevolence necessitates that human beings should be left alone to their beliefs so that in time those believers among their children will be born. It is necessary that the earth should produce believing humans, in accordance with its potential and capability, and that God grants them life. As long as a human being procreates and brings forth a believer and worshipper of God, he or she should remain on earth. This situation will continue until people's understanding becomes receptive to God's unity and worship. At that time the Imam of the Age (peace be upon him) will appear.

A large number of disbelievers will accept faith at his hands. Those who persist in their disbelief in those circumstances will be the people from whom there will be no believing offspring.

1. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 52, p. 336

2. Ibid., p. 316

3. Ibid., p. 351

4. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 52, p. 336

5. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 52, p. 244

6. Ibid., p. 332

7. Ithbat al-hudat, Vol. 7, p. 105

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