

# Multivocality in Shia Seminary

*Abbas Mehregan*

Ph. D., University of Tehran, Iran

*abbasmehregan@gmail.com*

## Abstract

The main claim of the present article is that a Shia theological seminary, contrary to the common depiction presented, is a multivocal institution. The tradition of multivocality does not appertain only to ‘ulamā’. Young clergy and seminaries also have very different ideas concerning religious thought. Evidence of this can be found in the present article in the form of examples of the dramatic discrepancy between ‘ulamā’ in essential theological beliefs, political theology, juridical methodology, issuing fatwas, and historical events relating to Shia identity. Moreover, the multivocality of young seminary students was empirically tested in Howzah ‘Imiyah of Qom in Iran. The findings of this survey demonstrate the existence of four distinct schools of religious thought in the Shia seminary. At the end of the article, the educational, political and technological factors which have led to the formation of different intellectual trends within the contemporary Shia clergy institution are discussed.

## Keywords

shia – seminary – ‘ulamā’ – clergy – multivocality – Howzah ‘Imiyah – Qom

## Introduction

It is widely believed that the patterns of religious thought in Shiite Islamic tradition is homogeneous, rigid, and of course traditional which leaves no place for reform and innovation. Some scholars characterize Shia as the most conservative Islamic denomination (Campbell, 2010: 12) and some writers such as Brunner (2001: 182) even states, that “one may surmise ... Shia is equivalent to fanaticism and diatribe”. Indeed religious leaders and the Shia clerical establishment, as the bearers and heirs of Shia Islamic tradition, have been not

exempted from criticism. Not only Muslim reformers such as Ali Shariati and Abdolkarim Soroush criticize Shia clergy, but also some learned men of Islam like Mortaza Motahhari refer to the weak points of Shia clergy. Shariati (1972) in a historical analysis in *Alavid Shiism and Safavid Shiism* blamed clergy because of their obscurantism, bigotry, rigidity, and unawareness about modern world and argued that they present a distorted face of Shia. Soroush (1993: 1–45) attributes to them a very low level of Islamic knowledge (except for jurisprudence) and unquestioning acceptance of religious principles. And Motahhari (1979: 304) as an inner critic called his Shia fellow ‘ulamā’ “populist” who are deeply influenced by lay people, because they are financially dependent on the religious tax that the pious pay.

Although these and further critiques are observantly formulated and speak of the common understanding of this institution, they should not lead to neglecting the historical realities of the Shia clerical establishment. In other words, a scrutiny of the history of Shia religious thought and establishment reveals that this is not entirely a history of fanaticism and obscurantism but a history of creative multivocality. The trace of this multivocal tradition is to be found in many notable and diverse schools and voices which have emerged not only in Shiite theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy but also in the attitudes towards decisive social, political, and historical debates and events. To present a panorama of the diversity of ideas and multivocality among Shia ‘ulamā’ I refer to some historical and current instances which contradict the commonly held viewpoints.

### Tradition of Multivocality among ‘Ulamā’

To begin with Shia theology let us consider one of the basic terms of religion namely the definition of Islamic faith which Shia theologians do not agree on. Many of Twelver Shia, among them Khājah Naṣir al-Diyyn Ṭūsī (1201–74) (cited in Majlisī, [n.d.]: 534) for example, deemed faith merely as the reception and acknowledgment in heart. On the other hand, for other theologians certain religious acts should inevitably be added to the acceptance in heart. However Shia ‘ulamā’ have been divided as to the question of what these acts should be. The first group focusses on verbal acknowledgment. But for the second group faith is not easily achievable. ‘Allāma Majlisī ([n.d.]: 534–539), one of the great figures of Shia, tried to describe these differences in orientation: one branch says that Islamic faith is the acceptance in heart plus doing all obligatory religious practices (Vajibāt, pl. of vajib). The second branch adds observing all prohibitions (muḥaramāt, pl. of ḥarām) to these. For the third, undertaking the

obligatory practices, observing all prohibitions, and following recommended religious practices (mustahabbāt, pl. of mustahab) are the practical conditions of faith. And finally, the fourth group requires all these plus renouncing execrable acts (makrūhāt, pl. of makrūh) for real belief. Parallel to this, the matter of atheism (kufr) is also controversial. While the majority of Shia theorists suppose that an atheist (kāfir) does not believe in the oneness of God (tuḥīd), the prophecy of Muhammad (nabuvvat), the Resurrection (maʿād), and what is called ‘necessities of religion’ (ẓarūrīyyāt al-dīyyn), a minority say that insulting the Qurʾan, Sacred House (kaʿbah), and hadith lead to atheism too.<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that the essential ‘necessities of religion’ are also defined very differently.

When one talks about plurality in Shia it is very difficult to ignore imāmat (religious leadership after the Prophet), which has had decisive social and political consequences in the history of Islam and the contemporary Muslim world. Imāmat is the most determinant theological topic on which the controversy between Muslims is based and which has led not only to the emergence of Sunni and Shia denominations but also to the division of Shia itself resulting, as Noubakhtī (1936) enumerated, in 66 different sects by the end of the third century of Hijra (end of 9th century A.D.).

It is worth noting that there has been no single opinion about other sects and denominations between Shia ‘ulamā’. While some of them such as Sheikh Yūsuf Baḥrānī (1984a:360; and 1984b: 323–324), one of the key figures in the Shia jurisprudence, issued a fatwa (juridical opinion) of atheism against Sunnis, others like Ayatollah Sistani (2007) consider Sunnis as part of their soul and spirit. Also Ayatollah Hossain Ali Montazeri’s (2008) fatwa, in which he specifies that Bahāyīs should enjoy civil rights in the Shia society of Iran, is to be considered as a different approach to this Islamic sect. It should also be noted that, contrary to some fuqahā<sup>2</sup> (plural of faqīh: a religious jurist) who estimate Sufi dervishes as believers of a ‘false sect’, Montazeri (2007) argues that they are from Shia and nobody is permitted to molest them.

Aside from the disagreement on the Imams, another problematic issue has been the last Imam or Mahdi who according to holy Islamic texts will appear at uncertain times and fill the world with justice. Noubakhtī (1936) also named 14 persons who were claimed to be Mahdi during 3 early centuries of Islamic

1 See, for example, Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir. *Eʿteqādāt Allāmiḥ Majlisī*. Isfahan: Qāemīyyah, 38–39. [n.d.]. <http://ghaemiyeh.com/downloads/3119-FA-eteghdade%20majlesi.pdf> [Accessed 17 January 2014].

2 See, for instance, Ayatollah Lankarāni, Muhammad Fazal. “Ferqah Sufiyyah va Mazāheb Mansub-e be ān az Ferqahhā-ye Bātel Ast.” *Akḥbār-e Shiayān*, no. 11 (1385/2006): [n.p.].

history. There were and are always some people who claim to be the last Imam. The Iranian government recently arrested 20 of these claimants within just one month.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the possibility of visiting Mahdi after the Greater Occultation (began 941 CE/329 AH) is an unsolved problem. While some Shia clergy (for example, Abtahi, 2005) have written books to prove its feasibility and frequency, some others (for instance, Ṭabarsī, 1982: 478) quote several hadiths which maintain that anybody who claims to visit Mahdi is a liar. Also the place and quality of Mahdi's life as well as his deputies has been interpreted differently over the past 1100 years.

In addition, disputes about the competence of the imāmat and abilities of Imam have continued in other ways. Zaydiyyah, for example, believes that although Ali was actually superior to be the first caliph, the preference of others for this position is religiously and logically allowable (Saberī, 2008: 86). They also argue that infallibility (iṣmat) is not a necessary condition of imāmat, they accept the imāmat of two persons at the same time (in two lands), and they do not believe in taqiyyh (religious dissimulation) and therefore contend that an imam should revolt against evil (Saberī, 2008: 87). While Zaydiyyah, by questioning the idea of infallibility, presents a more human face of imams, some other Shia groups such as Mufavvīzah believe that the soul of God was reincarnated in the body of an imam and the soul of the last imam reincarnates in the next imam.<sup>4</sup> They also think that the imam is the successor of God in the matter of creation, providing daily bread for everyone, and the accounting of what they do in this world (Modarressi, 1996: 31–32). On the other hand, the majority of Twelver Shia 'ulamā' are between these two extremes. They argue that infallibility is essential for imams. Additionally, they have the potential of prophesy; though some of the renowned voices such as sheikh Mufid (1950: 77) and Ṭabarsī (1994: 317) refute this. Mufid (1950: 76–77), like many others, also refuses to accept that imams have the ability to master all skills and speak all languages.

In the history of the development of Shia theology there were many other topics in which the plurality of voices can be emphasized. Among them I can refer to the inadvertence of the Prophet. Though ('Allāma) Hillī (1995: 197) asserts that there is a consensus between Shia 'ulamā' that the Prophet did not

3 Kohan, Mehrzad. 1392/2013. "Entezār Barāye Zohur-e Mahdi va Imam Zamānhā-ye Qollābi." *BBC Persian*, April 01 (12 Farvardin). [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/04/130401\\_142\\_vid\\_imam\\_zaman.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/04/130401_142_vid_imam_zaman.shtml) [Accessed 10 May 2016].

4 Among Shia sects that believed in this idea we can name Janāhiyyah, Bayāniyyah, and Kisāniyyah. See Saberī, Hossain. *Tārikh-e Feraq-e Islami*. Vol. 2. Tehran: SAMT, 1387/2008. pp. 50 and 271.

inadvertently forget anything in his prayer, (because this opens the way for unreliability in the process of reception and transfer of Islamic revelation by the Prophet), Ibn Bābivayh (1984: 360), known as sheikh Ṣadūq, and his teacher Ibn Valid (cited in Ibn Bābivayh, 1984: 360) break the consensus and admit his inadvertence.

Furthermore, the concept of *badā*, or the possibility of God changing his decision (which raises questions about fate as well as God's knowledge) is also the object of controversy. Muhammad Ibn Muhammad (known as Khājah Naṣīr al-Diyyin) Tūsī (1985: 421–422) is one of the voices which rejects the possibility of *badā*.

To achieve a comprehensive overview of the diversity of ideas in Shia scholarly works entails addressing the Qur'an as the main source of the Islamic worldview. Almost all Shia 'ulamā' throughout history concur that the Qur'an is directly the word of God. The advancement of social and natural sciences in the modern world has given rise to quite a lot of questions which challenge the validity of some contents of the Qur'an. Although this traditional paradigm is still strongly pervasive, there is a new approach which is based on the hypothesis that the Qur'an is the word of Muhammad and his individual and social experiences affected it. This approach is represented among clerical Shia scholars by Muhammad Shabestari (2004).<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that the writings of some Shaykhiyyh's heads such as Muhammad Karim Kirmanī (1884) in *Irshād al-'Avām* may support this notion. He writes that the Qur'an did not exist before Muhammad (even with God). The Qur'an is the expression of Muhammad's conditions. The Qur'an is also in other respects the subject of dissension between Shia 'ulamā'. The mainstream in contemporary Shiite thought is that the available Qur'an is the authentic version which has been preserved for centuries from any kind of distortion. It was also said (al-'Asqalānī: 1971: 223) that Saiyyd Murtaẓā, one of the greatest scholars of his time (965–1044 AD/ 355–436 AH) excommunicated those who suggested that the Qur'an is distorted. However, a group of 'ulamā' (for example 'Aiyyāshī, 1999; Mufid, 1950; Qomi, 1984; and Shubbar, 1987) claimed that the Qur'an is distorted. Referring to several hadiths as well as historical arguments, they alleged that some verses of the Qur'an have been omitted. Hossain Nuri (1919), a celebrated Shia Ayatollah, goes even further and wrote a 341-pages book in order to prove the deficiency of Qur'an. He named his book: *The final word on proving the distortion of the*

---

5 From non-clerical reformers Soroush is who advocates this idea. For more, see Soroush, Abdolkarim. "The Word of Mohammad." Interview by Michel Hoebink, *The official Website of Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush*. December 2007. <http://www.dr.soroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-The%20Word%20of%20Mohammad.html> [Accessed 19 January 2014].

*book of the Lord of lords*. 75 years later one of his Shia fellow ‘ulamā’ (Āmoli, 1994) criticized his idea in: *The final word on non-distortion of the book of the Lord of lords*.

In addition to instances mentioned above, multivocality in Shia religious thought can be explicitly exemplified in jurisprudence which, because of its social and practical nature, drives ‘ulamā’ to more innovation than any other religious knowledge. It is safe to say that there is no chapter among the 48 chapters<sup>6</sup> of Shia jurisprudence in which Shia ‘ulamā’ absolutely agree on all details. Sometimes differences are not considerable, however, sometimes the distance between fatwas is as large as the distance between unlawful (ḥarām) and obligatory (vajib).<sup>7</sup> Below I review some samples to clarify the flexibility of Shia fiqh.

The initial controversy among Shia begins with the methodology of fiqh (uṣūl al-fiqh) and namely with the resources of jurisprudence. Akhbārīs are an anti-rational group of ‘ulamā’ who reject the role of wisdom in the process of ijtihād (juridical inference) and rigidly insist on the appearance of hadith (khabar). Accordingly, their fatwas seem rigid and in some cases very strange. On the other hand, the Uṣūlī School recognizes wisdom alongside that of the Qur’an, hadith, and ijma (consensus of ‘ulamā’) as four resources of Jurisprudential ijtihād. It should be noted that the Uṣūlī ‘ulamā’ have significant differences amongst themselves in the details of the method of inference of what is lawful and unlawful from the given resources. A brief look at some jurisprudential products reveals how diverse the Shia fiqh is.

Almost every collection of juridical edicts (resālah ‘amaliyyh) of contemporary Shia fuqahā begins with the issue of imitation which emphasizes the necessity of laities in sharia imitating from a learned Ayatollah (mujtahid). This was stressed by founders of jurisprudence too. However, this does not mean that all ‘ulamā’ imitate this idea. Ibn Zohrah (cited in Montazeri, 1988: 181–182) and Sheikh Kurdi Ibn ‘Akbarī (cited in Sobhani, 1996: 9) argue that nobody

6 According to the famous classification of Hillī in Sharāy’ al-Islam Shia jurisprudence consists of 48 chapters. See Hillī, Abū al-Qāsim Ja’far Ibn Hasan. *Sharāy’ al-Islam fi Masāil al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*. Vol. 3. Qom: Moasseseh-ye Esmā’īliyyan, 1408/1988.

7 For example among others Ibn Idrīs in Al-Sarāir and Sallār (cited in Ibn Idrīs, Al-Sarāir, p. 304) say that Friday Prayer without an innocent Imam is unlawful, while some others like ‘Āmilī (known as Shahid al-Thāni) claim that there is a consensus between ‘ulamā’ that Friday Prayer even if there is no innocent Imam is obligatory. See Ibn Idrīs, Muhammad Ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Sarāir al-Ḥawī Litahrīr al-Fatāwī*. Vol. 1. Qum: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islamī, 1989. p. 304; And ‘Āmilī, Zayn al-Diyyin Ibn Ali Ibn Aḥmad. *Rasāil al-Shahid al-Thāni*. Vol. 1. Qom: Daftar-e Tabliqāt-e Howzah ‘Imiyyah, [n.d.]. p. 174.

must imitate in sharia because *ijtihād* is obligatory for everybody. Also for Montazeri, 1988: 180) reaching reality is the task of Muslims and not imitation.<sup>8</sup>

Apostasy (*irtidād*) is another instance in which *fuqahā* dispute with each other. They decree that conversion from Islam or denying one of the 'necessities of religion' (*ẓarūrīyyāt al-dīyn*), lead, among other punishments, to the death penalty.<sup>9</sup> However, *ijtihād* as a gate of innovation has opened a new perspective in this matter. Ayatollah Montazeri (2002: 582), for example, issued a fatwa that if conversion from Islam is based on investigation and research to find the truth, is not punishable. Also Ayatollah Gharavi (1998: 615) believes that the death penalty against those who convert from Islam but do not want to fight Allah is not allowed. Ahmad Ghabel (2006) argues that changing your opinion or expressing doubt in one's own belief in Islam are from involuntary issues which cannot be the subject of a religious decree and because of this every punishment against apostasy is religiously invalid.

The plurality of Shia 'ulamā's fatwas may be observed in *jihad* too. While a considerable group of 'ulamā' such as Sheikh Mufid (1989: 81), Abū al-Ṣalāḥ Ḥalabī (1983: 246), Sallār Deylami (1984: 261) and others defend the obligation or permission of *jihad* in the era of Greater Occultation to invite (or better to say to force) non-Muslims to Islam, another branch comes to a fully inverse understanding of Islamic resources. Sheikh Ṭūsī (1979: 290) writes *jihad* is allowed only if an infallible Imam or a person to whom he has given authority is present. 'Abdulazīz Ḥalabī (1986: 296), known as Ibn Barrāj, confirms this and adds that otherwise *jihad* is a sin. Other *fuqahā* who belong to this trend are Ibn Hamzah Ṭūsī (1987: 199), Ibn Idrīs (1989: 3), and finally Muhammad Hasan Najafī<sup>10</sup> (1983: 11) who claimed the consensus of *fuqahā* on unlawfulness of *jihad* in the absence of an infallible Imam.

8 Also Molla Sadrā Shirazi (ca. 1571–1636) one of the most important figures of Shia repeatedly reprovved imitation and promoted *ijtihād*. See, for example, Shirazi, Sadr al-Diyyin Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm. *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*. Tehran: Anjoman-e Hekmat va Falsafeh-ye Iran, 1354/1975. p. 379; And Shirazi, Sadr al-Diyyin Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm. *Resāleh-ye 3 Asl: Enzemām-e Muntakhab-e Masnavi va Robā'īyyāt-e uow*. Revised by Hossein Nasr, Tehran: Dāneshkadeh-ye 'Olūm-e Ma'qul va Manqul, 1340/1961. pp. 6/42.

9 There are some differences in this regard between women and men as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims before conversion. For more on this issue see Ayazi, Muhammad Ali. "Risālah fi Ḥukm al-Irtidād fi al-Kitāb va al-Sunna." 2012. <http://www.ayazi.net/index.php/2012-07-08-07-13-32/2012-10-28-17-09-54/45-2012-12-27-07-59-12> [Accessed 10 May 2016].

10 Because of his famous book: 'Jawāhir al-Kalām' he is called as 'Sāheeb Jawāher', owner of Jawāher'.

It is safe to say that one is not likely to find more controversial political and social consequences across the *fiqh* than the issue of the authority of the jurisconsult (*wilāyat al-faqīh*). Almost all prominent former Shia *fuqahā* from Ardabili (1984: 25–28), known as Muqaddas, to Sheikh Ansārī (1990: 154), Hillī (1988: 283–285), known as Muhaqiq Hillī, (Akhond) Khorāsāni (1986: 93), Ayatollah Khoei ([n.d.]: 360) restricted the social role of a *faqīh* to that of a judge and doing some good works which nobody is responsible for (*umūr ḥisbiyyah*) such as tending to orphans, burial of those who have no relatives etcetera. They did not discuss the form of government in Islam at all. However, referring to ‘the open gate of *ijtihād*’, a small group of ‘*ulamā*’ introduced a wider interpretation of the authority of a *faqīh* which also includes his political authority. This view belongs to a minority of subsequent *fuqahā* like Mullah Ahmad Naraqī (1997), Ayatollah Khomeini (1987), Ayatollah Mesbah (2004) and others. Even some great Ayatollahs of this group grant an extraordinary authority to Islamic government. According to them, the dominant powers of a righteous Muslim governor can be expanded to such an extent that they permit him even to confiscate the dress of individuals (Khosroshahi, 2001: 305). It is noteworthy that there is no consensus amongst those who believe in political leadership of a religious jurisconsult (*walī faqīh*). Although for most of them *walī faqīh* is appointed from the Hidden Imam, for more democratic clergy such as Salehi Najafabadi (1985) he must be elected by the people. Another democratic reading of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (Tehrani: 1980) argues that governance of the jurist should be a consultative one. According to this doctrine, not a person but a group of the eminent jurists are entitled to become members of a council to supervise a Muslim society.

The claim that there are different voices in the Shia seminaries is confirmed by essential differences between juridical opinions concerning many other religious rules. In addition to those mentioned before, reference may be made to the following: different juridical opinions concerning lawfulness or unlawfulness of bank profit and many modern bank contracts and operations, the ritual impurity of People of the Scripture and any animal immolated by them, limits of Islamic hijab, acceptance of testimonies given by women in the court, enforcing decisions made by a husband, father, and grandfather concerning the marriage of girls and other issues in their lives, the permissibility of appointing women for political and social positions, the acceptability of surgical operation and pretending to be virgin for non-virgin girls, masturbation by women, abortion, the permissibility of playing musical instruments and listening to their sounds, conditions for temporary marriage, the age of religious maturity when girls are obliged to follow religious rules. Also, we can make reference to different opinions about the Articles of the Islamic Punishment Code, establishing



what makes a fast void, seeing the crescent and proving that the lunar month has begun or finished to prove that Ramadan month has begun or finished, the permissibility of dancing, the unlawfulness of shaving, rules concerning many foods, rules concerning the permissibility of visual arts etc.

The areas in which mujtahids maintain different opinions are not restricted to those considered here. In addition to the sharia rules, theological issues, major creeds, and political and social issues, different positions are also adopted by marāji to cover issues concerning the history of Islam which are intertwined with Shia identity. In this regard, events which occurred after the demise of the Prophet of Islam concerning his daughter, Fatimah, who is said to have been beaten and insulted may be mentioned. This has been doubted by some scholars such as Ayatollah Muhammad Hossain Fadlullah (2012), the late marja of the Lebanese Shias.

### Multivocality among the Clergy and Seminary Students

Differences of opinion in the Shia seminaries are not restricted to the ideas and juridical attitudes of the Grand Ayatollahs. The findings of the present empirical study illustrate that the religious thinking model of seminary students and clerics, who are at a lower academic level than the Grand Ayatollahs, is a multivocal model and that young clerics are of different and diverse views, as is the case with 'ulamā'. The evidence for this claim is reviewed in detail below.

### Method and Materials

The data in this study comes from a survey which was carried out in May and June 2001 in the theological seminary (Howzah 'Imiyyah) of Qom in Iran. Male clergy and seminary students, known as tullāb (plural of talabih), in the higher educational levels of Sath, equivalent to the MA, and Khārej, equivalent to doctoral student or PhD holder,<sup>11</sup> in the age group of 22–40 years old were interviewed in the study, using the probability proportionate to size sampling (PPS). The first stage of the two-stage sampling process was based on a random sample of specific centres – madāris (plural of madrasa), religious institutions, mosques, and holy shrines – for teaching the high level courses. Centres were selected with probability proportionate to size, where the number of courses of each centre as well as the number of clergymen and seminary students who

11 "Sharh-e Tasvib-e Madārek-e Howzahvi." 1377/1998. *Payam-e Howuzah*, 17:13–38.

participated in these courses provided the measure of size. There was a total sample of six centres selected for participation in the study. The second stage was based on a systematic random sample of 350 students of religious schools from 141 courses at the selected educational centres. Data was collected through interviews, using a structured interview questionnaire. To check the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was pilot tested twice on 30 clerics. It should be noted that the normal course of study in a theological seminary is very extensive and that students of Islamic studies are in the first few years engaged in learning introductory religious sciences such as Arabic grammar and syntax, literature, rhetoric, logic etc. The sample was composed of more educated seminarians because the questions were relatively sophisticated and seminary students in higher levels of religious education are more familiar with Islamic sciences as well as the structure of the seminary. In order to measure the religious thought of clergy in Iran a nine-item scale was developed which represented the various social, political, moral, juridical, and theological aspects of Islam from different modern, radical, and conservative viewpoints. Response options were provided on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

One of the most significant current discussions about religion in Iran is the quality of religiosity. The first statement of the questionnaire: 'religious experience, a sense of spirituality, and mystical perception are more important for salvation than the correct practice of sharia', denotes the divergence of two different approaches toward the purpose of religion. Traditional schools of Islam emphasize the application of sharia law strictly according to the fatāvā of great Ayatollahs and regard this as the exclusive path to salvation in life and after-life. For many religious intellectuals, however, the very core of religion is to be found in the spiritual rapture and religious experience of holy men. For them, Islamic sharia is only a path and anyone who has reached destination does not need the path any more or at least it largely loses its importance.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore Islamic terrorism. Today it is widely accepted that the most common characteristic of the fundamental interpretation of Islam is rigidity and intolerance towards nonbelievers and even towards those Muslims who, because of their different understanding of Islam or perceived religious laxity, it labels as deviant from the straight path. To comprehend to what extent the Shiite clergy of Iran advocates this idea, they were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with this statement: 'we have responsibility to guide people to the straight way -Islam- and, if necessary, we are permitted to use violence'.

Since the modern time is known as the era of reason, rationality is at the heart of our understanding of contemporary Islam. The limitation of reason

in relation to religion has always been a controversial debate in the history of Islamic thought and education. Some theological schools, such as Ash'ariyyah, rejected the authenticity of wisdom versus *nass* – Qur'an and Hadith – and claimed that *nass* is the exclusive source of sharia, while Mütazilah, a rival theological school, believed that wisdom has superiority over the holy texts. Though Shiites are theoretically closer to Mütazilah than Ash'ariyyah and recognize an independent role for wisdom in religious legislation, in practice the Shiite 'ulamā' typically interpret most of the texts which contradict rational knowledge in a manner which, in one way or another, avoids the paradox. Clergymen were asked whether they agree with this non-stated dogma that 'the only role of wisdom is understanding and exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith'.

Islam, particularly Shiite Islam, is known as the religion of rituals. Plenty of ritualistic traditions originate in the theological worldview of Shiism, though a not inconsiderable number of them have been altered during the course of history. Today, the trend towards the individualization of religion is marginalizing specifically collective religious rituals at the very least among intellectuals and educated young people. They prefer to accept the current discourse of "minimal religion" (Soroush, 1999: 43–57).

'Āshūrā, as the most outstanding Shiite rite, is not only a simple religious tradition. Though Ali Ibn Abi Talib (b.c. 600, d. January 661) is the first Shiite imam and controversy over his caliphate at the death of the prophet (June 8, 632) is the main origin of this Islamic sect, 'Āshūrā, the day of mourning for the martyrdom of Hossain Ibn Ali in the year 61 AH (October 10, 680) is considered as the major symbol of Shiism. 'Not participating in the mourning rituals of 'Āshūrā is a sign of the weakness of faith' is a statement in the questionnaire which measures the formalistic and ritualistic attitude of the clergy which sees a close link between religious faith, an essentially individual and inner concern, and the collective memorial celebration of a historical tragic event which happened 48 years after prophet's death and the end of revelation.

'Believers of all religions, if they obey their own religious commandments, will go to paradise'. This measures the embracing pluralism of religions versus Islamic supremacy, while 'Islam can have different readings and interpretations' examines pluralism within Islam.

Political thought and its diversity, especially considering the contemporary Islamic resurgence movement is central to the entire Islamic discourse. The attitude of clerics towards the relationship between religion and politics in an Islamic country which is ruled by a divine authority is very revealing. The contemporary Islamic regime in Iran is theoretically based on the idea of fusion between religion and politics. In practice, not only are the key positions in the hands of clergymen. They are also everywhere from factories and the military

to schools and universities. Now they were asked whether 'not participating in elections brings about divine punishment in afterlife'.

Recent developments in the field of Islamic studies have led to a revisionist opinion of, among other things, *ijtihad*. The Shiite clergy has always argued that *ijtihad* is the key method by which Shiite Islam overcomes the inconsistency of many facets and manifestations of the modern age such as new scientific and technological phenomena as well as modern philosophical schools with Islam. One question that needs to be asked, however, is where the boundaries of *ijtihad* really are? Is it still, as it has traditionally been, limited to religious obligations and prohibitions – *sharia* – or can it involve the basic principles of Islam too? Some Muslim reformists are strongly convinced that the 'survival of Islam in the contemporary world is in need of the critique of fundamental religious doctrines and *ijtihad* in these principles'. Only *ijtihad* in the traditional construct of Islamic theology leads to real change in the relation between Islam and contemporary world.

Over the past centuries, there has been a dramatic debate on the conflict between religion and science. The deep sense of mistrust towards modern academia with its scientific research orientation and academic intellectuals, which has prevailed among the adherents of the classical/religious educational system, is above all a long-lasting consequence of this struggle. Since launching its 'cultural revolution' in 1980, the Islamic republic of Iran has made every effort to fill the profound gap between theological seminaries and universities. However, the success of these attempts which are based on the substitution of principles of scientific knowledge with the competing religious paradigm, remains dubious.

In this survey young clerics were asked whether or not they agreed with the characteristic outlook of the Ayatollahs that 'modern universities are scientifically very weak by comparison with religious seminaries'. In other words, this statement measures how successful the learned clerics have been in transmitting their idea of modern science to the next generation of clergy.

## Findings

The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of the clergy's religious thought are presented in Table 1. As can be seen from the table, approximately half (54.6 per cent) of surveyed clerics reported that they disagree or strongly disagree with an interpretation of religion which focuses on the importance of religious experience and mystical perception. They consider the observing of Islamic jurisprudence as the best path to salvation. 52.5 per cent of those who

TABLE 1 Frequency distribution of clergymen's religious thought

Statements of Religious thought	1. strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. No idea	4. Agree	5. strongly agree	No answer
Religious experience, a sense of spirituality, and mystical perception are more important for salvation than the correct practice of sharia	12.5 (42)*	42.1 (142)	17.2 (58)	20.8 (70)	7.4 (25)	-
We have responsibility to guide people to the straight way -Islam- and, if necessary, we are permitted to use violence	11.6 (39)	40.9 (138)	13.9 (47)	28.2 (95)	5.3 (18)	-
The only role of wisdom is understanding and exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith	8.3 (28)	52.3 (176)	26.1 (88)	12.2 (41)	1.2 (4)	-
Not participating in the mourning rituals of <i>'Ashūrā</i> is a sign of the weakness of faith	1.2 (4)	15.7 (53)	10.7 (36)	51.6 (174)	20.8 (70)	-
Islam can have different readings and interpretations	30.6 (103)	34.3 (116)	17.2 (58)	13.4 (45)	4.2 (14)	0.3 (1)
Not participating in elections brings about divine punishment in afterlife	7.4 (25)	24.6 (83)	29.7 (100)	32.6 (110)	5.3 (18)	0.3 (1)
Survival of Islam in the contemporary world is in need of the critique of fundamental religious doctrines and <i>jithād</i> in these principles	7.7 (26)	13.9 (47)	11.6 (39)	51 (172)	15.4 (52)	0.3 (1)
Believers of all religions, if they obey their own religious commandments, will go to paradise	15.4 (52)	42.1 (142)	23.4 (79)	13.9 (47)	4.5 (15)	0.6 (2)
Modern universities are scientifically very weak by comparison with religious seminaries	12.8 (43)	53.1 (179)	16.6 (56)	14.2 (48)	3 (10)	0.3 (1)

\*Note: Values between parentheses indicate number of respondents.

were interviewed rejected the application of violence to guide people to 'real' Islam; however, the existence of a minority of 33.5 per cent who do not tolerate religious diversity and strongly agree or agree with the use of violent behaviour is notable. In another sign of religious intolerance, over half (57.5 per cent) of those who responded commented that the exclusive route to salvation is Islam. Furthermore, 64.9 per cent believed that Islam has only one right interpretation and the idea of the possibility of various readings of Islam is false. Almost two-thirds (60.6 per cent) of participants expressed the belief that the role of reason in Islam is not limited to the explanation of the Qur'an and Sunna. Only a small number of respondents (16.9 per cent) did not connect collective religious rites with faith. This means that ritualism is mainstream in the Shiite clerical establishment so that in the opinion of the majority (72.4 per cent) not participating in the mourning rituals of 'Āshūrā is a sign of the weakness of faith. Just two-thirds (66 per cent) of respondents acknowledged the scientific authenticity of academia alongside the religious seminaries. To put it differently, the young seminary students interviewed are perhaps more open-minded to modern science than their masters.

Last but not least is the issue of the relationship between religion and politics. In this regard, the clerics in the survey were divided into three relatively equal parts: while 37.9 per cent felt that not participating in elections – as a symbol of political activity- brings about divine punishment in afterlife, 32 per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed with this belief, while 29.7 per cent indicated that they have no opinion on this topic. It is notable that clergymen were more uncertain about this relationship between religion and politics than about any other subject.

Table 2 presents the mean score and the ratio of agreement to disagreement to each statement of the religious thought scale. A comparison of the means illustrates some of the main characteristics of religious thought among participants. On average respondents disagreed with the pluralist reading of Islam and with presuppositions which have contributed to the emergence of new interpretations in different areas of Islamic knowledge such as theology, fiqh, and religious morality. They were against the use of violence in order to direct people to Islamic sharia. Also more than anything else, they tied Islamic faith to traditional Shiite rituals. The importance of ritualism for clerics becomes more obvious if we consider that the mean score for ritualism – the first item in table 2 – is thirteen times bigger than the mean score for pluralism within Islam – the last item in the table.

In order to discover correlations between factors and to identify the main dimensions of religious thought, a factor analysis was carried out. Accordingly, the religious propositions fell into the following four categories: modern

TABLE 2 *The mean score and the ratio of agreement to disagreement to each statement of the religious thought scale*

Statements of religious thought	Ratio of agreement to disagreement	Mean
Not participating in the mourning rituals of 'Āshūrā is a sign of the weakness of faith	2.6	3.75
Survival of Islam in the contemporary world is in need of the critique of fundamental religious doctrines and <i>ijtihād</i> in these principles	2.0	3.53
Not participating in elections brings about divine punishment in afterlife	0.6	3.04
We have responsibility to guide people to the straight way -Islam- and, if necessary, we are permitted to use violence	0.5	2.75
Religious experience, a sense of spirituality, and mystical perception are more important for salvation than the correct practice of sharia	0.4	2.69
Believers of all religions, if they obey their own religious commandments, will go to paradise	0.2	2.50
The only role of wisdom is understanding and exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith	0.2	2.46
Modern universities are scientifically very weak by comparison with religious seminaries	0.2	2.41
Islam can have different readings and interpretations	0.2	2.26

interpretation, fundamental interpretation, political/ritualistic interpretation, and traditional interpretation. As can be seen from table 3, modern interpretation insists on the importance of religious experience, the acceptability of religious pluralism, tolerance towards the different readings of Islam, and the necessity of *ijtihād* in Islamic principles. Fundamental interpretation encompasses the confirmation of religious violence and a disparaging attitude towards modern education. Political/ritualistic interpretation comprises, on the one hand, the belief in the essential combination of religion and politics, and on the other hand in the intimate juxtaposition of faith and ritualism. And finally, the traditional interpretation accentuates the justificatory and explanatory – and not innovative – role of reason in religion. What is interesting here is that, when comparing grand means of groups, the political/ritualistic

TABLE 3 *Factor analysis of religious thought in seminary*

Modern interpretation	Fundamental interpretation	Political/ritualistic interpretation	Traditional interpretation
Religious experience, a sense of spirituality, and mystical perception are more important for salvation than the correct practice of sharia	We have responsibility to guide people to the straight way -Islam- and, if necessary, we are permitted to use violence	Not participating in the mourning rituals of <i>'Āshūrā</i> is a sign of the weakness of faith	The only role of wisdom is understanding and exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith
Islam can have different readings and interpretations	Modern universities are scientifically very weak by comparison with religious seminaries	Not participating in elections brings about divine punishment in afterlife	
Survival of Islam in the contemporary world is in need of the critique of fundamental religious doctrines and <i>ijtihād</i> in these principles			
Believers of all religions, if they obey their own religious commandments, will go to paradise			

set of ideas is the most widespread interpretation of Islam for respondents. Surprisingly, modern interpretation is the second preferred perception of Islam. Fundamental and ultimately traditional interpretations are respectively third and fourth in these rankings.

Subsequently, the correlation between these four categories of religious thought and some other variables was tested, as shown in tables 4–10. Clergymen who entered the theological seminary later tended more towards the fundamental interpretation of Islam than did clergymen who entered earlier (see Table 4). Moreover, clergymen and seminarians who enjoyed a higher degree



TABLE 4 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and the year of enrolment in seminary*

	<b>Modern Interpretation</b>	<b>Fundamental interpretation</b>	<b>Political/ritualistic interpretation</b>	<b>Traditional interpretation</b>
		Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	
Mean of the year of enrolment in seminary	–	0.120	0.017	–

TABLE 5 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and the seminarian's level of modern education*

	<b>Modern Interpretation</b>	<b>Fundamental Interpretation</b>	<b>Political/ritualistic Interpretation</b>	<b>Traditional Interpretation</b>
			Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Mean of modern education	–	–	-0.098	0.042

of modern education sympathized less with political/ritualistic interpretations of Islam, which was the choice of the majority of their peers (see Table 5).

While most religious studies students, who were more agreeable to the fundamental and political/ritualistic interpretations of Islam, ranked the clergy as the best profession, clerics with more modern tendencies found other jobs more interesting (see Table 6). Modernists ranked the clergy's status in Iranian society as relatively low, while the devotees of fundamental Islam ranked it relatively high (see Table 7).

As expected, traditionalists, fundamentalists, and politics/ritual-orientated clerics were more influenced by the great Ayatollahs and marāji' taqlid in their thought and behaviour than modernists (see Table 8). Seminary students, who wear the special clerical dress and regularly go around the country or the world to proselytize Islam and preach, according to the professional

TABLE 6 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and seminarian's attitudes towards the clergy as the best profession*

	Modern Interpretation		Fundamental Interpretation		Political/ritualistic Interpretation		Traditional Interpretation	
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Clergy as the best profession	0.224	0.000	-0.127	0.010	-0.182	0.000		

TABLE 7 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and seminarian's attitudes towards the clergy's status in the society*

	Modern Interpretation		Fundamental Interpretation		Political/ritualistic Interpretation		Traditional Interpretation	
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Mean the attitudes towards clergy's status in the society	-0.014	0.005	0.223	0.000	-		-	

tradition of seminary in the months of Ramadan and Muharram, have a more political/ritualistic outlook (see Tables 9 and 10). Since the majority of believers at grass roots in developing countries still draw their religious knowledge from face to face contact with the clergy, it is not difficult to imagine that the political/ritualistic reading of Shiite Islam has a greater chance to thrive.

## Discussion

Relying on the theoretical and experimental evidence which has been presented, it may be claimed that the Shia seminary has historically enjoyed

TABLE 8 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and the influence of the great Ayatollahs*

	<b>Modern Interpretation</b>	<b>Fundamental Interpretation</b>	<b>Political/ritualistic Interpretation</b>	<b>Traditional Interpretation</b>
		Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient
			Sig.	Correlation Coefficient
Influence of the great Ayatollahs	-	0.223	0.000	0.214
			0.000	0.094
				0.048

TABLE 9 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and wearing the special clerical dress*

	<b>Modern Interpretation</b>	<b>Fundamental Interpretation</b>	<b>Political/ritualistic Interpretation</b>	<b>Traditional Interpretation</b>
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
			Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Mean of the status of wearing the special clerical dress	0.138	0.006	-	-0.122
			0.013	0.998
				0.035

TABLE 10 *Correlation coefficient between different kinds of religious thought and going to preach*

	<b>Modern Interpretation</b>	<b>Fundamental Interpretation</b>	<b>Political/ritualistic Interpretation</b>	<b>Traditional Interpretation</b>
			Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Mean of going to preach	-	-	-0.108	0.024
				-

a multivocal tradition which continues to this day. More than anything else, this tradition has its roots in *ijtihād* as a way of understanding God's decrees. This is a method which fosters differences of opinion among the 'ulamā'. It should be said, of course, that such a difference of opinion is not unfavorable for Shias at all. The Prophet of Islam has been quoted as saying "the disagreement among my ummah is a mercy".<sup>12</sup> Although the soundness and meaning of this hadith have been disputed, many Muslim clerics are of the opinion that it endorses not only the permissibility of disagreement concerning religious rules but also its favorability. *Ijtihād*, which in its existing form is specific to Shias, is the real impetus of multivocality. *Ijtihād* is etymologically derived from the term 'jahd' (effort) or 'juhd' (exertion)<sup>13</sup> and means to do one's best to infer Sharia rules according to the Shia legal resources.<sup>14</sup> Because the mechanism of *ijtihād* relies on a new study of both old themes and issues arising currently, it inhibits imitation from other 'ulamā' and inspires introducing new ideas. Interestingly, what encourages this is the fact that the 'ulamā' are of the opinion that the act of *ijtihād*, whatever its results may be, will be rewarded by God. This idea relies on a hadith quoted<sup>15</sup> from the Prophet of Islam, which states that those 'ulamā' whose fatwas exactly match what God wants, will be rewarded twice and those whose fatwas do not will be rewarded once. The historical product of *ijtihād* in the Shia seminary over the past centuries is a diverse collection of various and even contradictory opinions and fatwas spanning a wide range of intellectual and practical realms, all of which are religiously equally valid. It goes without saying that juridical fatwas are only obligatory for followers (*muqallidin*) of each *mujtahid*. *Ijtihād*, which is considered as a way in which the religious rules may be brought into agreement with the changing *Zeitgeist*, prevents those who have studied in the seminaries from insisting on literal meanings of the Qur'anic verses and hadiths and encourages them to employ reason, albeit within the framework and limits of religion.

In the traditional method of teaching jurisprudence, which is known as demonstrative jurisprudence, reason is considered as one of the four sources of

12 Al-Siyūtī, Jalāl al-Diyyn Abd al-Rahmān. *Al-Jām' al-Ṣaḡīr wa Zawā'idih wa al-Jām' al-Kabīr*. Vol. 1. Revised by A.A. Saqar and A. Abd al-Jawad, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, [n.d.]. p. 124.

13 Isfahani, Abū al-Qāsim al-Hossain bin Mufaẓẓal bin Muhammad (known as Ragheb-e Isfahani). *Al-Mufradāt fī Qur'ān al-Qur'an*. Revised by S.A. al-Dawūdi, Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1412/1991. p. 208.

14 Motahhari, Mortaza. *Dah Goftār*, Tehran: Sadra, 1358/1979. pp. 110–111.

15 Āmilī, Ali Ibn Muhammad Nabāti. *Al-Sirāt al-Mustaḡīm ilā Mustaḥaqq al-Taḡdīm*. Edited by M. Ramadan, Vol. 3. Najaf: Al-Maktaba al-Haydariyya, 1384/1964. p. 236.

jurisprudence. In this method, clerics learn that reason is able to set standards of Sharia and, if there is no judicial decision for an issue, reason may be employed to find a law for that issue. In the Principles of Jurisprudence, this rule is called 'the rule of concomitance' (*mulazimah*)<sup>16</sup> which means that the ruling of the Sharia follows the ruling of reason. They learn also that religious rules have consequences which should be understood and explained by reason. If reason finds that the consequences of a religious rule cannot be justified, and cannot be executed in a specific context, then the rule will become null and void. Many differences in the juridical opinions of 'ulamā' originate from such differences in which these issues are understood and arguments are provided for them. Hence when reason comes to infer religious rules, the path is paved for plurality in ideas. As a result the Shiite mujtahidīn have been depicted as intellectual innovators, compared to Sunni 'ulamā'. (Hatina, 2009: 251).

From a sociological point of view, other factors which explain the plurality of ideas in particular among the contemporary Shia clerics may be mentioned as well. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, clerics rose to the top of the political hierarchy in the administration of society. They claimed that the mission of religion is to administer society and had plans for this-worldly affairs. Formulating these plans, which the clerics had not thought about previously, became a great challenge faced by seminaries. Before this decisive transition, traditionalism was the mainstream approach of the Shiite clerical organization. Clergymen consistently resisted any form of conceptual and social change. As innovations were gradually accepted in society, the clergy submitted to them without any real power and will to change. Even though a small minority of the clergy have been politically active especially since the autumn of 1963 (Sahabi, 2010: 251), over a decade before the Islamic revolution, politics essentially belonged to Caesar during this period and the affairs of government were seen as the destroyer of faith (Esposito and Voll, 2001: 9). The Islamic revolution was a turning-point that drew the clergy out of the mosque and madrasa and confronted them with the modern world. The fusion of Shiite Islam and political power brought responsibility to the clerical establishment as the ideological resource of a religious government, which challenged the contemporary paradigm of secularism in the world. To fulfill this new obligation, clerics turned to human sciences. There, they found that science is not limited to religious knowledge. Practical necessities in administering society and familiarity with modern human sciences opened a window for new ideas to

---

16 See Muzaffar, Mohammad Rezā. *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Vol. 1. Qom: Asqari, 1386/2007. pp. 376–385.

come in. Meanwhile, critiques of the traditional reading of Islam and religious governance formulated by intellectuals and in particular Abdolkarim Soroush since 1988 encouraged clerics to consider these issues and to provide replies for such critiques. They studied these critiques carefully and tried to find replies for them. Many of them were of the opinion that such critiques were justified, which led them to question the traditional clerics' school of thought.

During this period, those who were studying in the seminary gradually became acquainted with modern technology. Although they always resisted change, in many cases religious institutions had to submit to some epistemic foundations as well as technological manifestations of changes. A brief look at contemporary Shia cleric institutions, in particular in Iran, shows clearly that modernity has now imposed its prevalent culture not only in the small cells of seminaries but also on the level of higher management. Qom is no longer a city in which Ayatollah Khomeini, as he himself writes (Khomeini, 1989), was considered as an impure disbeliever before he came to power, and the jar from which his son had drunken water was rinsed only since he was teaching philosophy. Today, the contemporary seminary of Qom shows a new face which is strikingly to what it was just twenty years ago. Technological developments have brought students of seminaries and clerics into contact with the foreign world, made them familiar with the intellectual diversity existing in the contemporary globe and granted them a wider intellectual horizon. Until a few years ago, clerics only learnt jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence and, to some extent, other old Shia sciences. Now, they are able to study, even in Qom and in modern universities affiliated to the seminary, disciplines such as Political and Social Sciences, Media and Communication, Philosophy, Comparative Religions, Comparative studies of the Islamic denominations, Islamic Mysticism and Sufism, Religious Art, Christian Theology, Gender Studies, Management, Economics, and Law, up to Doctoral level. These universities have been established by Grand Ayatollahs and eminent clerics and confirmed by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that

---

17 Some of these universities are: Mofid University, established by Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Abdolkarim Mosavi Ardabili, Available from: <http://www.mofidu.ac.ir/HomePage.aspx?TabID=1&Site=DouranPortal&Lang=fa-IR>; Baqer al-Olum University, established by The Islamic Propagation Office of Howzah 'Imiyah Qom, Available from: <http://www.dte.ir/Portal/Home/Default.aspx>; Uşul al-Diyyn College, established by Ayatollah Sayyed Mortaza Asgari, Available from: <http://osool.ac.ir/daneshkadeh/>; The University of Religions and Denominations, established by Sayyed Abolhasan Navvab, Available from: <http://www.urdu.ac.ir/>; Research Institute of Howzah and University, affiliated with

university studies, whether in universities affiliated to the seminary or in other universities, have been warmly welcomed by seminary students, even though there are no official statistics about the number of seminary students who have studied or are studying in universities.

In the 1960's, following a recommendation by other clerics and to avoid believers' resentment, the Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi avoided spending religious taxes for English courses;<sup>18</sup> now the Higher Council of Seminary has enacted a law which will facilitate the learning of English and modern Arabic for clerics.<sup>19</sup> More interestingly, the Training Deputy of the Seminary and some training centers which are affiliated to the seminary have undertaken to hold classes to teach Russian, French, Chinese, and Spanish to students of the seminary.<sup>20</sup> This development is further encouraged by the striking increase in the governmental budget devoted to the seminary, which has increased to about 350,000,000 dollars in 2013<sup>21</sup> along with financial support from and instructions

---

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, Available from: <http://www.rihu.ac.ir/Portal/Home/Default.aspx?CategoryID=3bf25861-ba30-4dca-9166-43eeb4db44a0>.

- 18 Iraqi, Mojtaba. "Mosāhebeh ba Hojjat al-Islam va al-Moslimin Sheikh Mojtaba Iraqi." *Howzah* 43 and 44, March and April 1991 (Farvardin va Ordibehesht 1370). <http://www.hawzah.net/fa/magazine/magart/4518/4546/32773> [Accessed 27 January 2016].
- 19 Bushehri, Hossaini, Sayyed Hashem. *Tasalot be 2 Zabān barāye Howzahvian Elzāmi Mishavad/Motālebāt-e Rahbari be Tasvib-e Shorāye Āli Resideh Ast*. September 10, 2013 (19 Shahrivar 1392). <http://www.hawzah.net/fa/news/newsview/95882> [Accessed 27 January 2014].
- 20 "Tullāb Qom Rusi Yād Migirand." 1390/2012. *BBC Persian*. March 05. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/rolling\\_news/2012/03/120305\\_rln\\_139\\_qum\\_russian.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/rolling_news/2012/03/120305_rln_139_qum_russian.shtml) [Accessed 10 May 2016]; "Nāmnevisi Dorrh-ye Jadid-e Tarbiyyat Moballigh Espāniyāi Zabān Āghāz Shod." 1391/2012. *RasaNewsAgency*. December 26. <http://www.rasanews.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=151157> [Accessed 27 January 2014]; *The Islamic Propagation Office of Howzah 'Imiyah Qom*. [n.d.]. "Doreh-ye Āmuzesh-e Zabānhā-ye 'Arabi, Engilisi, Chini, Farānseh, va Espāniyāi Vizheh-ye Barādarān." <http://www.bou.ac.ir/portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=NEWS&ID=%2291af134b-4bf6-474e-af28-cc8f33c750a9&WebPartID=75f7e1e2-f38f-4d9e-ac8a-cb724fb9odfe&CategoryID=65a964b1-c5cd-4557-8875-35e79bd77cab> [Accessed 10 May 2016].
- 21 "Budjehā-ye Howzahhā-ye 'Imiyah 2 va Nim Barābar Afzāyesh Yāft." 1392/2013. *Iranian Student's News Agency*. October 01 (09 Mehr). <http://isna.ir/fa/news/92070905867/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%AF%D9%88-%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B2%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4> [Accessed 10 May 2016].

issued by the religious leader of the country to design new programs for seminaries<sup>22</sup> as well as the independent economic activities of some seminary organizations, for which we do not have accurate information. This high budget facilitated the foundation of many research centers which are affiliated to the seminary. According to some reports<sup>23</sup> (Makarim, 2011) there are between 150 to 400 centers of this kind. This has produced a suitable opportunity for clerics to get familiar with research methods in the modern human sciences and, and to investigate Islamic topics from a new perspective, undertaking studies in other fields such as history, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, management, Abrahamic religions, and even cosmology and astronomy<sup>24</sup> which is unprecedented in the history of the seminary. Such centers have been founded in cities other than Qom and even in foreign countries.<sup>25</sup> The publication of about 120 professional journals by those working in seminaries is the result of activities undertaken by these research centers.<sup>26</sup> In addition, there are 16 'learned societies' focusing on various academic fields in Qom. As the Research Deputy of the Seminary asserts,<sup>27</sup> these societies are making use of the achievements of modern human sciences to try to produce 'Islamic sciences'. As the reports provided by the Higher Council of seminaries indicate, academics working in the

- 22 Bushehri, Hossaini, Sayyed Hashem. 1391/2012. "Mohehtarīn Iqdāmāt-e Ayatollah Hossaini Bushehri dar Dorih-ye Jadid-e Modiriyyat-e Howzah." December 16 (26 Azar). <http://www.hawzahqom.ir/news/%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%B2+%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9+%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C+%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AA+%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%87+%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%87+%D9%82%D9%85/307911/+%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%86+%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA+%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87+%D8%AD%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C+%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%DB%8C+%D8%AF%D8%B1+%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%87+%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF+%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AA+%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%87±> [Accessed 27 January 2014].
- 23 Bushehri, Hossaini, Sayyed Hashem. 1392/2013. "Bahreh Giri az Fannāvarihā-ye Novin Sor'at-e Tābliq rā Afzāyesh Midahad." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 364: 3.
- 24 For example: Astronomical Research Center (A.R.C.), affiliated with grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husayni Sistani, Available from: <http://farsi.nojumi.org/>.
- 25 For instance: Center of Civilization for the Development of Islamic Thought, Available from: <http://www.hadaraweb.com/news.php>.
- 26 'Imad, Ali. 1391/2013. "T'lif-e Kotob-e Kārbordi." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 359: 6.
- 27 Mohajirmia, Mohsen. 1392/2013. "Ozviyyat-e 2900 Nafar dar Anjomanhā-ye 'Ilmi-ye Howzah." *Ofogh Hawzah*, (and *Khabargozari-e Howzah*), Special Issue (Masir-e Tahhaval), p. 12.



seminaries are now more active in making contacts with other countries. Evidence of this trend can be found in the Management of the Seminary's policy of welcoming dialogue between religions,<sup>28</sup> holding international conferences, sending students of the seminary to other countries to study and get familiar with western academic centers and research institutes, or to propagate Shiism by propaganda centers,<sup>29</sup> participating in cultural and international fairs,<sup>30</sup> establishing representative centers in more than 60 countries,<sup>31</sup> providing study opportunities for foreigners and even non-Muslims,<sup>32</sup> as well as increasing admission of foreign students, so that there are currently 30,000 students from 120 countries studying in Howzah 'Imiyah of Qom<sup>33</sup> and more are being admitted to seminaries in cities other than Qom.<sup>34</sup>

The contemporary institution of clergy in Iran is equipped to a high standard of modern technology. Now, even the clerics themselves laugh at the fact that when the loudspeaker was first introduced some clerics called it 'Satan's horn' in opposition to western technology (Motahhari, 1998: 335). Now, students of seminaries are no longer considered reprobate if they listening to radio or read newspapers. By establishing a Council for Information Technology and using up-to-date technologies, the Higher Council of the Seminary has created a modern institutional bureaucracy. This development has facilitated the establishment of a modern management structure covering all educational, service, financial, welfare, sport, residential, and nutritional affairs for the students of the seminary,<sup>35</sup> which was unimaginable 10 years ago. Before the

- 
- 28 Moqtadaei, Mortaza. 1391/2012. "Az Goftogu ba Peyrovān-e Adyān Esteqbāl Mikunim." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 338:6.
- 29 Zamani, Muhammad Hasan. 1392/2013. "Fa'āliyyathā va Barnāmiyhā-ye Markaz-e Modiriyyat-e Howzahhā-ye 'Imiyah dar Arse-ye Beyn al-Melal." *Ofogh Hawzah (and Khabargozari Hawzah)*, Special Issue (Masir-e Tahhaval), p. 3.
- 30 Ahmadlu, Aliriza. 1391/2012. "Tasis va Takmil-e 50 Bank-e Khodgardān-e Narm Afzārā-ye Olūm-e Islami dar Khārej-e Keshvar." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 350:9; And Sobhani, Muhammad Taqi. 1391/2012. "Joz'-e 5 Nāsher-e Bozorg-e Jahān-e Arab Hastim." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 350: 9.
- 31 Ilahi, Hakim. 1392/2013. "Ejlās-e Sarāsari-ye Modirān Jāmi'ah al-Mustafā." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 371: 1.
- 32 Ilmi, Muhammad Ja'far. 1391/2012. "Tulid-e Bish az 18 Hezār Asar-e Pazhuheshi dar Jāmi'ah al-Mustafā." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 353: 7.
- 33 Ilahi, Hakim. 1392/2013. "Ejlās-e Sarāsari-ye Modirān-e Jāmi'ah al-Mustafā." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 371: 1.
- 34 Entezari, Ali. 1392/2013. "Paziresh-e 120 Talabeh Ghiyr-e Irani dar Howzah 'Imiyah-ye Azarbayjan-e Sharqi." *Ofogh Hawzah*, 369:8.
- 35 For more on this, see Farrokhfal, Ahmad. 1392/2013. "Nazari bar 'Amalkard-e Howzah-ye Modiriyyat." *Ofogh Hawzah (and Khabargozari-ye Howzah)*, Special Issue (Masir-e Tahhaval), p. 14.

Revolution of 1979, each of the Grand Ayatollahs had established one or more schools and made plans for the seminaries in the form of a group of isolated islands. Because of centralization, of course, the independence of the seminaries has been diminishing and they have become more dependent upon the government (Khalaji, 2010: 51). Independence from the state had always been a distinctive privilege of the Shia seminaries in contrast to the Sunni seminaries (Motahhari, 1979: 302). Now, in the digital Capital of Shiism some oral exams are organized through video-conferences,<sup>36</sup> academic advice may be obtained on the Internet,<sup>37</sup> Islamic theology and sharia are promoted in chat rooms, and religious questions are answered online.<sup>38</sup> There are many digital libraries, articles written by clerics are published online,<sup>39</sup> various kinds of religious software are produced, manuscripts and printed books written by ‘ulamā’ are turned into software,<sup>40</sup> virtual seminaries have been established,<sup>41</sup> and many seminary students including 2000 female students have started to create blogs.<sup>42</sup>

The above-mentioned set of educational, political and technological factors has led to the formation of different intellectual trends within clergy institution. The present empirical survey demonstrates the existence of at least four alternative theoretical orientations in its contemporary experience. At one extreme, we witness the modern school which represents the clerical version of the most progressive religious trends in intellectual discourse at Iranian universities. It is incredible for many Muslims to hear from learned clerics in the

- 36 Farhani, Abdolkarim. 1391/2012. “Barāvardan-e Niyāz-e Jahān Niyāz be Tose‘ah-ye Howzah Dārad.” *Ofogh Hawzah*, 337: 10.
- 37 “Rāhandāzi-ye Moshāvereh-ye Interneti ‘Olum-e ‘Aqli.” *Ofogh Hawzah*. 1391/2012. 352: 6.
- 38 Golzadeh, Sadiq. 1390/2011. “Fa‘āliyyat-e 5 Hezar Moballegħ dar Fazā-ye Majāzi.” *Ofogh Hawzah*, 309: 11.
- 39 Sajjadi, Ahmad. 1391/2012. “Dovvomin Hamāyesh-e Mo‘allefān-e Howzavi dar Fazā-ye Majāzi.” *Ofogh Hawzah*, 339: 6.
- 40 Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences (CRCIS) is the leading center for this type of activity, Available from: <http://noorsoft.org/>.
- 41 See, for example, Samāneh-ye Āmūzesh-e Majāzi-ye Howzahhā-ye ‘Imiyyah Khāharān. Available from: <http://vu.whc.ir/>; Madrasa-ye Majāzi-ye Fiqh-e Ja‘fari. Available from: <http://www.jazayeri-vu.ir/farsi/>.
- 42 Jamshidi, Mahmud Riza. 1392/2013. “Rāhandāzi-ye 2000 Weblog az Suye Khāharān-e Talabeh.” May 19 (29 Ordibehesht), <http://public.whc.ir/news/category/13/8858/%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-2000-%D9%88%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%DA%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B3%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%87> [Accessed 08 May 2016].

capital of Shiism that applying the sharia is not the main goal of religion and that Islam is not the exclusive path to salvation. Briefly speaking, the modern rereading of Islam introduces a spiritual, pluralistic, critical, dynamic, non-ritualistic, peaceable, and humble understanding of Islam. The claim that the Shiite clergy is more receptive to modern values than Sunnis (Roy, 1996: 172) is definitely true for this school of thought.

At the other extreme, there are conservative schools of thought which modernity unquestionably is their biggest challenge. They claim that Islam does not bear modern impositions. The fundamentalists' scornful attitude toward academia, which is a reflection of their hostility towards modernity and the rationality of the modern world, displays that they do not want to compromise with the *Zeitgeist*. At this extreme, there is a manifold spectrum of thinking. While the religious resources and their interpretation in a traditional framework, which reduces the role of human reason to the servant of holy texts, form the primary concern of the traditionalist clergy, political/ritualistic and fundamental schools, following the logic of the will to change, have shifted their focus towards the outside world and strive to change it according to their own desire; the former by political means and the latter through resorting to physical force and violence. Of course, their political aspirations for change are essentially anti-secular and are clearly linked to a religious interpretation of the world and history, which has own religious terminology. From the political/ritualistic viewpoint, Islamic rituals are multidimensional phenomena. *Āshūrā*, for instance, in addition to its religious significance, has, according to its reinterpretation by the ideologists of the Islamic revolution, a symbolic importance as a political event. The religious leaders of the revolution have always employed this epic event of Shiite history to demonstrate the identity of religion and politics.

It is evident that the origins of intellectual trends and that the extent to which they can overcome other attitudes strongly depend on the nature of political power. The Islamic government of Iran, through the dissemination of the political reinterpretations of religious resources, has weakened traditionalism in the clerical establishment by reducing the scope of the conservative Ayatollahs and attracting a multitude of their young ardent disciples. At the same time, because of its radical nature, the revolution served to strengthen fundamentalism. Furthermore, it may come as a surprise that, by way of reaction, the revolution has become a strong catalyst, thus participating to a significant degree in creation of a modern Islamic school within the clerical institution. In other words, the quest for new interpretations of Islamic resources among young clergymen is partly a reflection of the imperfect practical experience of political Islam in Iran.

The findings of the present study endorse the claim that “Important voices calling for a radical rethinking of the religious tradition have ... emerged within the Shi’i religious establishment of contemporary Iran” (Zaman, 2002:186). However, this trend is not just limited to a very restricted number of clergy as some scholars assert (see, for example, Khalaji, 2012: 6). While it is true that the modern course is not the mainstream in most leading Shiite seminaries of the Muslim world, it should not be forgotten that this unintentional offspring of the Islamic revolution is a new voice which appeals to a significant number of adherents in the educated religious middle class in Iran. This trend of religious thought, which is capable of accepting modern concepts such as human rights and religious pluralism, is more compatible with the modern values of educated people, youth, and women. Furthermore, this trend is supported by non-cleric religious intellectuals who are one of the major reference groups among Iranian ‘reformists’. This implies the creation and gradual expansion of a softer interpretation of Shia Islam in Iran. Moreover, the variety of religious reference groups itself, regardless of the nature of their teachings, suggests a relatively open and malleable religious life. The existence of differing Fatwas and approaches to religious affairs serves to increase the level of individual choice of imitators. In other words, Shia believers have a free choice in the multivocal market of religious ideas. In practice, they have the possibility to refer to an alternative mujtahid or school if they encounter problems with some religious decrees or beliefs. This shift, as mentioned before, has been endorsed by religious authorities.

### Bibliography

- Abtahi, Hasan. (1384/2005). *Molāqāt bā Imam-e Zamān*. Qom: Nedā-ye Mosleh.
- Al-‘Asqalānī, Ibn Hījir. (1390/1971). *Lisān al-Mīzān*. Vol. 4. [s.l.]. [s.n.].
- Āmoli, Hasan Hasanzadeh. (1373/1994). *Qur’an Hargez Tahrif Nashodeh: Tarjome-ye Faṣl al-Khitāb fī ‘Adami Tahrif Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb*. Qom: Qiyam.
- Ansārī, Murtaẓā. (1368/1990). *Kitāb al-Makāsib al-Muḥarrama*. Qom: Maktab-e ‘Allāmeḥ.
- Ardabili, Aḥmad Ibn Muhammad. (1362/1984). *Majma‘ al-Fayida wa al-Burhān fī Sharḥi Irshād al-Adhān*. Vol. 12. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islamī.
- ‘Ayyāshī, Muhammad Ibn Masoud. (1378/1999). *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*. Qom: Muassisah al-Bisah.
- Baḥrānī, Yūsuf bin Aḥmad. (1363/1984a). *Al-Ḥadā’iq al-Nāẓira fī Aḥkām al-‘Itra al-Tāhira*. Vol. 10. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islamī.

- Baḥrānī, Yūsuf bin Aḥmad. (1363/1984b). *Al-Ḥadā'iq al-Nāzira fī Aḥkām al-'Itra al-Tāhira*. Vol. 12. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Brunner, Rainer. (2001). "A Shiite cleric's criticism of Shiism: Mūsā al-Mūsāwī." in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, edited by R. Brunner and W. Ende, 178–187. Leiden: Brill.
- Campbell, Heidi A. (2010). *When Religion Meets New Media*. New York: Routledge.
- Deylami, Abu Ali Sallār Hamzah. (1363/1984). *Al-Marāsīm fī al-Fiqh al-Imami*. Qom: Manshūrāt al-Haramiyn.
- Esposito, John and Voll, John O. (2001). *Makers of Contemporary Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fadlullah, Muhammad Hossain. (2012). *Al-Saiyyid Fadlullah mu Muqni' fi Mas'la Kasr dl' al-Zahrā wa Yatas'al maza Kunt Sataf'al lou Aḥad Biya'tadi alā Zoujatik?* October 14. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEInTDIvz8I> [Accessed 26 May 2016].
- Ghabel, Ahmad. (2006). *Ertedād: Bardāshthā-ye foqahā-ye Islam va Didgāh-e Rāyij-e Feqhi*. April 15, 2006 (26 Farvardin 1385). <http://ghabeli.persianblog.ir/post/61> [Accessed 21 January 2014].
- Gharavi, Muhammad Javad Musavi. (1377/1998). *Feqh-e Estedlāli dar Masāel-e Khalāfi*. Tehran: Eqbāl.
- Ḥalabī, 'Abdul'azīz, Ibn Naḥrīr. (1365/1986). *Al-Muhadhab*. Vol. 1. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Ḥalabī, Abū al-Ṣalāḥ Taqī Ibn Najm. (1362/1983). *Al-Kāfi fī al-Fiqh*. Isfahan: Ketābkhāneh-ye Omumi-ye Imam Amir al-Mominin Ali.
- Hatina, Meir. (2009). "The Clerics' Betrayal? Islamists, 'ulamā' and the Polity." in *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times*, edited by M. Hatina, 247–264. Boston: Brill.
- Hillī, Abū al-Qāsim Ja'far Ibn Hasan. (1408/1988). *Sharāy' al-Islam fī Masāil al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*. Vol. 3. Qom: Muassisah Ismā'iliyyan.
- Hillī, Hasan Ibn Yūsuf. (1374/1995). *Mukhtalaf al-Shia fī Aḥkām al-Sharia*. Vol. 2. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Ibn Bābivayh, Abū Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Ali. (1363/1984). *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqih*. Vol. 1. Qom: Jamāt al-Mudarrisīn fī al-Howzah al-'Imiyyah.
- Ibn Idrīs, Muhammad Ibn Aḥmad. (1368/1989). *Al-Sarāir al-Ḥawī Litaḥrīr al-Fatāwī*. Vol. 2. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Kirmanī, Muhammad Karim Ibn Ibrāhim. (1263/1884). *Irshād al-'Avām*. Kerman: Sa'adat.
- Khalaji, Mehdi. (1389/2010). *Nazm-e Novin-e Rohāniyyat dar Iran*. Bochum: Aida.
- Khalaji, Mehdi. (2012). "What Ayatollahs Think about Politics." in *Iranian Shia Clergy and Democratic Transition: Insiders' Perspectives*, edited by S. Nekuee. Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asia, 6–9. Special Bulletin 1. December, 2012.

- Khoei, Abū al-Qasim. [n.d.]. *Al-Tanqīh: fī Sharḥ al-ʿUrwat al-Wuthqā*. [s.l.]: Muassisah Ihyā ʾĀthār al-Imam al-Khoei.
- Khomeini, al-Musavi, Ruhallah. (1365/1987). *Shoʻun va Ekhtiyarāt-e Vali-ye Faqih*. Tehran: Vezārat-e Ershād-e Islami.
- Khomeini, al-Musavi, Ruhallah. (1989). "Taʿyin-e Esterātej-ye Nezām-e Jomhuri-ye Islami-ye Iran – Resālat-e Howzāhhā-ye ʿImiyyah – Manshur-e Rohāhniyyat." in *Sahifeh-ye Imam Khomeini*. February 22 1989 (03 Isfand 1367). <http://jamaran.ir/fa/BooksahifeBody.aspx?id=3900> [Accessed 07 May 2016].
- Khosroshahi, Hadi. (1380/2001). *Imam Ali: Sedā-ye Edālat-e Ensāni*. A translation and commentary of Ali: Şaut al-Idālat al-Insāniyya, G. Gordagh. Vol. 1. Tehran: Surah.
- Khorāsāni, Muhammad Kāzim. (1365/1986). *Hāshiyā al-Makāsib*. Tehran: Vizārat Irshād Islami.
- Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir. [n.d.]. *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*. Vol. 2. Tehran: ʿImiyyah Islamiyyah.
- Makarim, Shirazi, Naser. (2011). *Moʻzalāt-e Akhlāqi va Ejtemāʿī ra Mitavān ba Barnāme-ha-ye Sedā va Simā Hall Kard*. The official Website of Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi, June 26 2011. (05 Tir 1390), <http://makarem.ir/news/?typeinfo=4&lid=0&mid=60907&catid=0&start=1&PageIndex=0> [Accessed 08 May 2016].
- Mesbah, Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi. (1382/2004). *Negāhi Gozarā be Nazariyye-ye Velāyat-e Faqih*. Qom: Moasseseh-ye Āmuzishi va Pazhuheshi-ye Imam Khomeini.
- Modarressi, Hossein. (1375/1996). *Maktab dar Farāyand-e Takāmol: Nazari bar Tatavor-e Mabāni-ye Fekri-ye Tashayyo dar 3 Qarn-e Nakhostin*. Translated by H. Izadpanah. [s.l.]. [s.n.].
- Montazeri, Hossain Ali. (1376/1988). *Mabāni-ye Feqhi-ye Hokumat-e Islami*. Translated by M. Salavati. Vol. 3. Qom: Keyhan.
- Montazeri, Hossain Ali. (1381/2002). *Resāleh-ye Tozih al-Masāʿel ba Islāhāt va Izāfāt*. Tehran: Sarai.
- Montazeri, Hossain Ali. (2007). *Fatwa Ayatollah Montazeri dar Murid Darāwish Silsilih Gunabadi: Tassafuf va Sherkat dar Majāles-e ānān*. The official Website of Darāwish Nimatullahi Gunabadi. <https://www.majzooban.org/fa/index.php/2016-01-20-18-31-19/430-5e0e-%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%87-%DA%AF%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C> [Accessed 04 April 2017].
- Montazeri, Hossain Ali. (2008). *Bā Bahāʾiyyān Cheguneh Barkhurd Kunim?* The official Website of Mohsen Kadivar, May 14, 2016 (25 Urdibihisht 1395). <http://kadivar.com/?p=15243> [Accessed 04 April 2017].
- Mufid, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Nuʾmān. (1330/1950). *Awaʿil al-Maqālāt fī Madhāhib wa al-Mukhtārāt*. Qom: Maktabah al-Davari.

- Mufid, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Nu'mān. (1410/1989). *Al-Mughniyya*. Qom: Muassisah al-Nashr al-Islamī.
- Motahhari, Mortaza. (1377/1998). *Majmu'eh-ye Āsār Ostād-e Shahid Motahhari*. Vol. 17. Qom: Sadra.
- Najafabadi, Salehi, Nematollah. (1363/1985). *Velāyat-e Faqih: Hokumat-e Sālehān*. Tehran: Khadamāt Farhangī Rasa.
- Najafi, Muhammad Hasan Ibn Bāqir. (1403/1983). *Jawāhir al-Kalām fī Sharḥ Sharāy' al-Islam*. vol. 21. Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turath al-Arabī.
- Naraqī, Aḥmad Ibn Muhammad Mahdi. (1375/1997). *'Awāyid al-Ayām fī Bayān Qawā'id al-Aḥkām wa Muḥimmāt Masā'il al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*. Qom: Bustān-e Ketāb.
- Noubakhtī, Hasan Ibn al-Musa. (1355/1936). *Fīraq al-Shīa*. Najaf: Al-Maktaba al-Murtaẓaviyyah.
- Nuri, Hossain Ibn Muhammad Taqi. (1298/1919). *Faṣl al-Khitāb fī Isbāt Tahriḥ Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb*. Tehran: [s.n.].
- Qomi, Ali Ibn Ibrāhīm. (1363/1984). *Tafsīr al-Qomī*. Qom: Dār al-Kitāb.
- Roy, Olivier. (1996). *The Failure of Political Islam*. Translated by Carol Volk. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Saberi, Hossain. (1387/2008). *Tārikh-e Feraq-e Islami*. Vol. 2. Tehran: SAMT.
- Sahabi, 'Ezzatullah. (1389/2010). *Nim Qarn Khātereh va Tajrebeh*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Farhang-e Sabā.
- Shabestari, Muhammad Mujtahed. (1383/2004). *Ta'amolāti bar Qerā'at-e Ensāni az Dīyn*. Tehran: Tarh-e Now.
- Shariati, Ali. (1351/1972). *Tashayyo' Alavi va Tashayyo' Safavi*. Tehran: Chapakhsh.
- Shubbar, Saiyyd Abdullah. (1407/1987). *Masābiḥ al-Anwār fī Halli Mushkilāt al-Akḥbār*. Vol. 2. Beirut: Muassisah al-Nūr Lilmatbūāt.
- Sistani, al-Husayni, Ali. (2007). *Lā Khilāfāt Haqīqīyya Bayn al-Shīa wa al-Sunna*. The official Website of Ayatollah Sistani, November 28, 2007. <http://www.sistani.org/arabic/in-news/1038/> [Accessed 08 May 2016].
- Soroush, Abdolkarim. (1371/1993). *Farbeh tar az Ideology*. Tehran: Serat.
- Soroush, Abdolkarim. (1385/1999). *Bast-e Tajrebeh-ye Nabavi*. Tehran: Serat.
- Sobhani, Ja'far. (1375/1996). "Al-Tashaiyyu fī Halab Abr al-Qurūn wa Tarjuma al-mu'allif." in *Ghuniyyat al-Nuzū' ilā 'Ilmay al-Uṣūl wa al-Furū'*, Hamzah Ibn Ali Ibn Zuhra, Vol. 1. 3–31. Qom, Muassisah al-Imam al-Sadiq.
- Ṭabarsī, Abū Ali Faz Ibn Hasan. (1414/1994). *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. Vol. 5. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Ṭabarsī, Aḥmad Ibn Ali. (1361/1982). *Al-Ihtijaj*. Vol. 2. Mashhad: Al-Murtaẓā.
- Tehrani, Muhammad Sadeqi. (1359/1980). *Hokumat-e Sālehān yā Velāyat-e Faqihān*. <http://shagerdانسادهghi.persiangig.com/other/Kotob/VFo%20901027.pdf/download> [Accessed 10 May. 2016].

- Ṭūsī, Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Hamzah. (1408/1987). *Al-Wasila ilā Nayl al-Faḍīla*. Qom: Maktaba Ayatollah al-‘Udmā al-Mar‘ashi.
- Ṭūsī, Muhammad Ibn Hasan. (1400/1979). *Al-Nahāya fī Mujarrad al-Fiqh wa al-Fatawī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī.
- Ṭūsī, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad. (1405/1985). *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*. Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. (2002). *The ‘ulamā’ in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.