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SCRIPTURE, CLERGY AND LAYMEN IN ISLAM: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES OF THE THREE DEFINITIONS

by

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Effective ecumenical understanding between world religions and the success of the debates which will lead to it, no doubt, rest on a correct and exact understanding of the fundamentals of the religions in question, both at the definitional and the practical levels. There is little to be gained by viewing one religion in terms of the theology, socio-cultural outlook, law and generally dictums of another religion. Such an outlook would only reduce one body of faith into a variation of the other, placing the entire burden of compromise on the latter religion. The eschewed process of accomodation will invariably result in biased views, rejections and conflicts, for dissolving one religion into the constructs of the other is not ecumenicalism, but rather cultural hegemony.

Four centuries of Christic interpretation of Islam in the West, interpreting, hailing and condemning the precepts of the Islamic faith based on Christian outlooks and beliefs has done little for relations between the two bodies of faith. The askance outlook on Islam among Westerners has produced varied effects ranging from justifying the appallation Muhammadanism for Islam to the wholescale sanctioning of unhindered and indiscriminating condemnation of Islam according to criteria understood and espoused through a Christian weltanschauung, a practice which continues to this day. Needless to say that such tendencies have incurred incalculable damage to relations between the two religions whose followers constitute more than half of the population on this earth. The inability of the masses to empathize with cultural systems other than their own is without doubt correlated with the

various religions' shortcomings in bridging the apparent gaps among them. The penumbrae in understanding, in the centuries and decades past, have precipitated numerous political conflicts, economic crises and socio-religious strifes. As a consequence, statesmen, holy men and scholars have examined possible paths to resolving the political conflicts, be they global, regional or parochial and have time and again pointed to cultural understanding and religious toleration, ecumenicalism and where possible acceptance of the other as the only path out of the quandry which threatens peace and harmonious coexistence across the world. Therefore the path from the fissiparous reality of religious life today to the ideal of unity lies not through lip-service to mutual tolerance, but veritable understanding of the fundamentals of the faith of the other and the structure through which that faith shapes the worldview of the believers. Such a feat may only be accomplished if the religions engaged in ecumenical debates, monotheistic religions in our study, examine the precepts, institutions and organziationsl structures of one another in a serious fashion with view to understanding each as they are viewed and comprehended by the followers of the faith. While many models, programs and theories have been introduced in this regard, it is best to begin with a more humble and parochial agenda: the comprehension of definitions. The ideal of religious dialogue and coexistence begins with the seemingly mundane task of exact understanding of definitions.

This panel contends with three definitional constructs which are extant in all monotheistic religions and which reflect

the sources of religious truth as well as its embodiments in society. Much has been written and more can be said about similarities and differences between these concepts in the three monotheistic religions. However, before embarking upon the task of contrasting these concepts in Islam, Christianity and Judaism it is imperative to first define these concepts within the context of each religion, shedding the myths and clarifying any misconceptions which may exist in each case.

Speaking about the religion which I am best suited to render opinion about, Islam, the terms Scripture, Clergy and Laymen cannot be understood in a similar manner as they are in Christianity and Judaism. In a way the very nomenclature used for defining these concepts are alien to Islam and serve to distort non-Muslims' understanding of Islam and things Islamic, and even confuse Muslims about their own faith and culture.

Scripture, Clergy and Laymen are a trilogy upon which religious faith and the culture emanating from it are rested. In Islam Scripture is not merely an espousal of the dictums of the religion, a history of its unfolding or a conglomoration of its teachings. The Qur'an is the word of God. It is the quintessential spirit of Islam, the embodiment of the ultimate Reality and the crystalization of the Truth. All other vestiges of the Islamic civilization such as philosophy, law , the arts, literature and social institutions flowed from the teachings of the Qur'an and became vehicles for expressing its truth in new mediums and settings. The Qur'an therefore served the same function in the Islamic world that Christ did in the Christian one.

The fact that the Qur'an is the immutable word of God and therefore

the very revelation of the ultimate Reality in the temporal sphere makes it the fountainhead of all thought, harbinger of all institutions and the aspiration for all activities Islamic. The Qur'an is neither law, nor philosophy nor political dictums per se, but rather a set of moral guidelines from which the cultural, social and spiritual essence of Islamic civilization emanated producing doctrines and institutions in the realm of law, politics, arts and philosophy. Succinctly put, the Qur'an is that glimpse of Divine Truth from which a civilization and all its contents came forth.

Having established the place of Qur'an in Islam, its role as holy scripture can be compared and contrasted with other monotheistic religions with great facility. Qur'an is the very revelation of the ultimate Truth just as Christ was His embodiment on earth. Prophet Muhammad, an unlettered merchant in Arabia is that empty vessel unto which the revelation was poured much as Mary, the Virgin was the unadulterated vessel for bearing God's embodiment in a different religious universe. Similarly, Gabriel who appeared to Muhammad fulfills tha same function as the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The comparison between Islam and Judaism is even more facile as Muhammad and Moses both acted in similar capacities as Semitic prophets, conveying religious revelation in the form of scripture to societies which they, in effect, governed.

The more interesting and complex question is, however, the one pertaining to the linkage between scripture and society in monotheistic religions. The manner in which religions have produced and harbored societies and civilizations is the direct product of the manner in which revelation has shaped the cultural system of the faithful and subsequently their

political, legal, economic and generally socio-intellectual institutions.

The examination of this critical linkage in the case of monotheistic religions reveals subtle variations between these bodies of faith which, nevertheless, had tremendous bearings on the subsequent institutional development in these religions.

It has been asserted time and again that if Judaism is the religion of law and Christianity the religion of love, Islam is the religion of knowledge. This is not to suggest that any of the monotheistic religions are limited to the underlying character ascribed to them and are devoid of the characters which are preponderant in other monotheistic religions. Rather, the point is that a particular aspect of revelation tends to predominate in the linkage between scripture and its social manifestations hence determining the final shape of the cultural and social institutions of that religion.

In the remainder of this paper I will examine the manner in which the theme of knowledge determined the emergence and definition of the two concepts of clergy and layman.

As stated earlier, the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad not as a sysytem of law but as a Moral Code. The Qur'an more than anything else acted to mold the weltanschauung and worldview of the Muslim faithful. Moreover, the power of the Holy Book does not lie in that it elaborates a historical fact but that it is a meta-historical truth for all times, espousing immutable and perennial values. The Qur'an therefore possesses meaning for all peoples in all epochs of history. Moreover, it contains multiple levels of meaning which convey the path to the ultimate Reality from the realm of the mundane to that of the spirit.

Reading and understanding of the Qur'an is therefore not a matter of mastery of language alone, but also of the sciences which can unveil its many truths and hidden meanings. While all Muslims have access to the Holy Book and may read and execute its dictums, traditionally only a learned few were vested with the authority to interpret beyond the immediate meanings of the sacred text. Therefore, while Islam clearly asserts the fact that it does not distinguish between laymen and clergy, that all men are equal before the eyes of Islam both sociologically and religionwise, in effect, the religion in a de facto manner recognizes a hierarchy of believers delineated and elaborated in terms of knowledge.

In Islam there exists no ordination of priests. In fact, Islam recognizes no priestly hierarchy, class or caste as found in the family of Iranian religions, Christianity, or Hinduism. Any Muslim man may perform the fundamental rites of Islam, and moreover, all religious rites in Islam are obligatory for all Muslims. The five pillars of Islam can be implemented without the intercession of a clergy class. Every Muslim can perform the daily prayers--salat, hold fast during the month of Ramadan, pay alms and religious taxes such as zakat, perform the pilgrimage to Mecca--Hajj, or even perform such rites as marry, divorce, convert or generally speaking enter into or disolve contracts. While all of these rites will have to abide by the tenets of Islamic law, they are not the monopoly of a religiously-ordained class or group. Furthermore, no set of rituals are ascribed to one class or group segregating them from the rest of the faithful as is the case with the Brahmins in Hinduism.

Whenever the interpretation or implementation of a religious dictum

posed a serious challenge to Muslims, as was evident in the early history of Islam, it was more often the consensus (ijma^{c}) of the community of the faithful that determined the outcome and not the writ of a clergy class.

Yet, the reality of Islamic history differs from the ideal specified above. Aside from strict puritan movements such as the Qaramitah or the Wahhabis, or certain modern interpretations of Islam such as that of Qaddafi of Libya Islamic societies have witnessed a "class" of religious scholars, whose role in society and power in religious matters has resembled that of the clergy class in Christianity, Judaism or Eastern religions. In cases such as that of Twelver Shi^{c}ism, this class has been so institutionalized as to warrent the use of the term "hierocracy" as coined by Weber in reference to clerical establishments.

The apparent disparity between Islam's assertion that it recognizes no clergy and the reality of institutions resembling or replicating what is known as clerical establishments in other religions, and more interestingly, the simultaneous existence of populist religion centered in each believer with acknowledgement of religious charisma of a "clerical establishment" beckon the attention of the scholar and the faithful. The Islamic faith is quite clear in its posture vis a vis the community of believers, and has sanctioned against some of the practices which differentiate a hierocracy from the society at large such as variation in religious rituals of different classes as is seen in Hinduism, or the consecration of religious rites by a priest as is the case with the Communion in Christianity, the emergence of hierocratic institutions in later Islamic history can only

be the outgrowth of the historical development of Islam, and the particular nature of the linkage between scripture and society in the religion of Muhammad.

As was mentioned earlier, the critical linkage between the Qur'an and the society, culture and civilization which it shaped was based on knowledge. It was hermeneutic, linguistic, philosophical and legal knowledge which translated the moral essence as well as the spritual truth of the Qur'an into legal, political, social and cultural institutions each of which reflected the spirit of the Islamic message and the collectivity of which produced a civilization whose temporal grandeur was matched by its spiritual achievements. While the individual Muslim requires no intermediary in recourse to the Holy Text, and no injunctions, save for the knowledge of Arabic, barred Muslims from possessing, reading and reciting the text; nor from learning from it and implementing its tenets. The particular manner in which the Qur'an influenced philosophy, art, politics and especially law and theology hinged on the ability of Muslims to comprehend the quintessential message of the Qur'an. As mentioned earlier, such an understanding depended on the mastery of learning which would facilitate greater familiarity with the Qur'an and hence the manner in which it was to be manifested in society. Such learning which has at times been catagorized under the rubric: "Qur'anic Sciences" began with piety and a firm and comprehensive knowledge of the rudimentary teachings of Islam. But it extended further. It encompassed a mastery of the Arabic language, knowledge of pre-Islamic history, and ability to discern and utilize

hermeneutics (ta^{c}wil) without excessively reading into the text or interpreting it to the extent of innovation (bid^{c}at). Over the centuries various schools of Islamic law as well as later denominational divisions within Islam have espoused varied understandings of the hermeneutic exercise. While the Hanbali School and its later adherents have invariably sidestepped and virtually abrogated ta^{c}wil or hermeneutics, Isma^{c}ili Shi^{c}is have used it extensively.

Whether the Qur'an is open to interpretation or not, or what extent of hermeneutics is permissible or desirable lies beyond the purview of this study. The imporatant question is rather, the fact that Islamic community acknowledged the imporatance of the Qur'an, not as merely a sacred text, but as the preponderant spirit of all things Islamic, and moreover, confirmed the necessity of some amount of learning (the extent or nature of which varied with denominations and legal schools) for understanding the spirit of the Qur'an beyond the immediate meaning of the text, there and then, openned the door for the emergence of a "hierocracy". For if the community of believers recognized the need for a particular service, in this case the reading and interpreting of the Qur'an, and yet was cognizant of the fact that not all members of the community, given the economies of time and function,were able to master these learnings, ipso facto the community acknowledged the need for a service and hence a group of skilled and educated "personnel" to fulfill its functions, in much the same mannner as a society requires and hence encourages legal or medical training.

Hence the need to interpret the Qur'an, and the necessity for a few to devote their lives to mastering the sciences which would facilitate the greater understanding of the Qur'an and its impact on society laid the foundation for the emergence of a "hierocracy" in Islam known as the *ᶜulama'*. The word *ᶜulama'* itself is derived from the word *ᶜilm* which means knowledge. While the hierocratic institution in Islam can be broken down to *fuqaha'* (juriconsults), *falasafa* (philosophers) or *hukama'* (sages), the social and religious grouping as a whole is known as the *ᶜulama'*--men of letters, for it is learning and not ordination, interpretation of texts and its subsequent impact on social institutions and not the performance or consecration of rituals which are the *condito sine qua non* for the emergence and continued existence of a hierocracy in Islam. Succinctly put, scripture in Islam is the word of God; all believers may read and interpret, yet veritable knowledge of interpretation rest with those who master its techniques. A society based on religion will beckon the services of these learned men. It may even be concluded at this juncture that clerical establishments whether sanctioned by a body of religious thought or not are intrinsically associated with the life of society based on and adherent to a body of faith. It is interesting to note here that those denominations or legal schools in Islam which have advocated the most literal interpretation and readings of the Qur'an, and who have truncated the linkages between scripture and society to the realm of blind implementation are exactly those who have not harbored a hierocratic institution in their midst.

The second factor contributing to the formation of a hierocracy in Islam had its roots in history and pertained to the religio-political institution of caliphate. Prophet Muhammad during his reign over the Muslim community (the ummah) in Mecca and Medina was simultaneously a prophata (receiver and proclaimer of religious revelation and advocate of radical break with the past), the religious leader and the political ruler of the community. Upon Prophet Muhammad's death the door and function of prophecy (nubuwwah--reception and declaration of revelation) was closed. The Muslim community, however, sought to replicate the religious and political functions of the prophetic rule as closely and exactly as was possible in an institution whose overseer and head they referred to as khalifah rasul-allah--successor to the Messenger of God. Among the majority of Muslims the process of institutionalization of the succession and investiture of the new leader occured through the consensus of the community over the most suitable heir for the Prophet, one whose religious credentials would be impeccable and one whose political prowess would maintain the unity of the community. The emphasis, however, was on the first criterion, piety and mastery over religious doctrines. The consensus of the community led to the election and reign of four caliphs seriatim, Abu Bakr, ᶜUmar, ᶜUthman and ᶜAli, all of whom were among the close companions of the Prophet, were pious Muslims, were well-versed in Islamic doctrines, were recognized by the few and the sundry as possessors of the authority to interpret religious doctrines, and to be of the necessary calibre and legitimacy to rule over the young

but expanding Islamic community. The reign of the four is known to history as the Rashidun (Rightly-Guided) Caliphs are, while limited to a few decades, nevertheless, entrenched the Caliphate and its primacy in the religious and political realms.

During the reign of the third caliph, ᶜUthman, the advent of internecine strife cast doubt on the efficacy of the election process as the means for guaranteeing the election of the most suitable man to the caliphate. Moreover, the entire episode dealt a heavy blow to the structure of the institution of caliphate. In effect, the reign of ᶜUthman witnessed the politicization of the caliphate as the term is understood in modern parlance, and therefore the institution was set upon a course of temporalization and hence desacralization.

Nepotism in the distribution of the offices of the expanding Islamic empire and suspicions of corruption in ᶜUthman's adminestration led to general unrest among the Muslim masses. Consequently, rebellions and disobedience towards the caliphate abounded, beginning in Egypt and quickly spreading across Muslim lands, culminating in a putsch against the caliphate in Medina, which resulted in the assassination of ᶜUthman. The murder of the successor to the Prophet, the occupant of the highest office in the community, a position of sacral and supranatural charisma, all within less than a generation from the death of the Prophet shook the political foundations of the nascent religion and its governing institutions. The disillusionment with ᶜUthman's rule and the cathrsis which his death had brought upon the community interacted to weaken the legitimacy of the election

process insofar as it chose the religious head of the community. For, such a man was to be beyond criticism in his own piety as well as in his handling of the affairs of the community. Moreover, his personal stature and that of the office which he occupied were to vest him with charisma, and give him power over the hearts and minds of the believers.

^{c}Uthman's successor, ^{c}Ali, also chosen by the writ of the community, while highly respected for his piety, chivalry and noble lineage proved unable to bridge the incipient gaps and the apparent fissiparous tendencies which had emerged in the community. ^{c}Ali's personal charisma never found the opportunity to once again vest the caliphate which the normative power which it had lost in the crises born of ^{c}Uthman's caliphate. More importantly, ^{c}Ali proved incapable of quelling the rising tide of discontent which was produced by the myths and realities of the reign of his predecessor, and was helpless in the face of the growing politicization and polarization of the community which the murder of a caliph had precipitated. Soon, ^{c}Ali himself became a party to these disputes and thenceforth the fate of the calipahte as it was idealized at the time of the Prophet was sealed. The increasing confrontation between those who sought revenge for the blood of ^{c}Uthman and those who wished to sidestep the issue eventually produced a civil strife, wherein Muslims fought and killed Muslims. The calamity once again culminated in the

assassination of a caliph. The murder of ^{c}Ali, however, bore even more serious consequences for the world of Islam and the institution of caliphate: it resulted in the emergence of the first schisms within Islam, namely, the Khariji and the Shi^{c}i denominational breaks from the main body of the faith, and changed the nature of the caliphate for ever.

With the death of ^{c}Ali, an appointee and relative of ^{c}Uthman, the Governor of Syria who had taken up arms against ^{c}Ali in order to avenge the blood of the third Caliph, Mu^{c}awiyyah ibn Abu Sufyan, consolidated the reigns of power and became the defacto ruler of Muslims. He was subsequently to be caliph and the founder of the ^{c}Umayyid Dynasty.

Mu^{c}awiyyah was the first ruler of the Islamic community not to have been elected to the caliphate and to have assumed the office by victory by the sword; he was the first caliph not to have relied on his religious credentials in way of legtimizing his election or rule; he was the first ruler of Muslims not to have been a companion of the Prophet; he became caliph after challenging a legitimate caliph, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet and the hero of numerous Muslim campaigns against pagans, ^{c}Ali; and finally, he belonged to the ^{c}Umayyid clan of the Quraysh who governed Mecca during its idle worshiping days, who had harbored great animosity against the Prophet and who had converted to Islam only after the fall of Mecca to Muslim armies. There was little doubt among Muslims that, even if a great statesman, Mu^{c}wiyyah could not serve as the religious

leader of the community. Needless to say that the expansion and consolidation of the Islamic Empire and the greater sophistication of the life of the Muslim community required increasing religious guidance in the numerous novel issues and problems which arose and which required the indulgence of religious leaders. The calipahte appeared less and less to be able to provide the required guidance.

Yet, the caliphate given the requirements of the unity of the Islamic Empire was to be kept in the same structure as the Rashidun period, lest robbed of its normative charisma it fail to maintain the unity of the Muslim peoples. Therefore since Mu^{c}awiyyah, in name at least, remained the religious and poliitcal head of the community, and yet the religious realm required effective supervision by spiritually legitimate leadership, the Islamic community acted to divest the function of religious guidance, in practice, from the caliphate. Therefore, while the Caliph was, nominally, the religious leader of all Muslims, the functions of rendering opinions, decrees, or regulations as well as collecting the doctrines of the religion into a corpus of theology, jurisprudence and law fell upon a nascent and as yet small community of learned men, later to be known as the ^{c}ulama' who became the religious caretekers of the community for all practical purposes. The ^{c}ulama' unlike the caliphs possessed the faith, piety and knowledge to serve as a bridge between the Holy Scripture and the community and hence offset the increasing temporalization of the caliphate.

The fact that the mode of succession in the institution of caliphate was changed from election to primogeniture after the death of Mu^{c}awiyyah, leading to the rise of the ^{c}Umayyid dynasty, moreover, confirmed the greater political nature of the caliphate and the fact that its purely religious functions were irretrievably lost. The divorce of the process of selection of the occupants of the seat of the caliphate of the criterion of religious knowledge and charisma accentuated the need for a "class" of learned men to guide and oversee the interests of the religion itself and govern the purely religious affairs and spiritual concerns of the community both insofar as it pertained to linking the scripture to society and in relating the scripture and society to the state. The later developments in the institution of caliphate under the ^{c}Abbasids finalized the emergence of an Islamic hierocracy along the aforementioned lines as the tacit and de facto bifurcation of the spiritual and temporal realms became confirmed.

Therefore hierocracy in Islam emerged in response to the needs of the community and not as a precept of the religion. And it was for this reason that it has always acted as a social institution, one which gathers strength from its social existence, and not as an autonomous institution within society.

Although in cases such as with tha al-Azhar in Egypt or the mujtahids and Ayatollahs of Twelver Shi^{c}ism hierocracy may be deeply institutionalized and entrenched in both popular and "high" religion, generally speaking, the ^{c}ulama' continue to have a tenuous

role and have precarious existence in Islam. Their social function and political status may be undermined by the state as it was the case numerous times during the ᶜAbbasid caliphate, as well as in modern Turkey and Libya; the institution of the ᶜulama' resembles more the Avignon Papacy than the power of the Vatican during the Holy Roman Empire.Moreover, their voice in the affairs of the state may be muffled as was the case in Tunisia, Algeria or Pahlavi Iran; their religious prestige is open to challenge from "Young Turks" from within their own hierarchy--Islamic resurgence in Pakistan, Iran and Egypt has often had its roots, support and following in the midst of the lower ᶜulama; new trends in Islamic thought may disrupt the social and religious functions of the ᶜulama' as was the case with the rise of Wahhabism or Islamic modernism, or conversely as was the case in Iran such movements may "rationalize" the hierarchy of the ᶜulama' towards a political end, using a Weberian terminology, and catapult them into novel roles.

Similarly, the institutions of the ᶜulama'across the Islamic world have found different social functions. While they have continued to function as the second pillar of the state and compliment the functions of the governments in power, their religious, cultural and social roles were by no means reduced into specific patterns as the existence of a "clergy" and a "church" would suggest. In Shiᶜi Islam the ᶜulama' found tremendous religious,

and through the years political power. In the Maghreb, where urban settlements were scant and for most of its history Islamic culture revolved around tribes, Islam remained the domain of charismatic Sufi masters and saints (marabuts), with the ^{c}ulama' playing little or no role at all. Scholars such as Ernest Gellner and Clifford Geertz have in fact suggested a direct correlation between the rise of the ^{c}ulama' as a socio-political force and the urbanization of Islamic societies across the Muslim world.

Before concluding the discussion of the role of the ^{c}ulama' and their place in Islam, a few words need be said about their place in Twelver Shi^{c}ism, for here, not only they play a significant role in society and politics, but also in religious terms they function in a manner most akin to "hierocracy" and clergy as the terms are understood in the West. Moreover, recent political events in the Middle East have created certain misperceptions about the ^{c}ulama' in Islam in general and Shi^{c}ism in particular that require explanation.

In Shi^{c}i Islam too, the linkage between scripture and the community of believers came about through the aegis of knowledge. However, following the death of Prophet Muhammad, assassination of ^{c}Ali and martyrdom of Husayn, which crystallized the Shi^{c}i movement, the emphasis on the primacy of knowledge in relaying the truths of religion to the faithful become accentuated. The Shi^{c}is in effect argued that God, in his unending mercy would at all times provide the community of believers with infallible guides whose presence

at the helm of society would ensure the community's prosperity and spiritual salvation. The notion of an infallible guide had two connotations. First that, the process of electing caliphs as practiced by the majority of Muslims could not gurantee the rule of the infallible guide (which explained the calamities of the reign of ^{c}Uthman). Second, belief in the existence of an infallible guide suggested the existence of a person who could possess all the qualities of the Prophet, including his power of veritable hermeneutics and understanding of hidden truths, save for prophecy. In this regard the attentions foscused on ^{c}Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin and one of Islam's greatest heroes as that infallible guide. Moreover, the Shi^{c}is unlike Tibetan Buddhists who "discover" their Dalai Lama, each time, in a new personage, were of the belief that the qualities of the infallible guide would be passed from one generation to the next by primogeniture. Therefore the household of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt were pinpointed as the veritable rulers of the Muslim people and the true possessors of the qualities with which the Prophet was endowed. In this regard, the ability to interpret the scripture and unveil its hidden meanings were of the greatest importance.

For most of their early history Shi^{c}is lived a sectarian life on the periphery of Islamic socio-religious life. They were often persecuted, and most of their leaders, descendents of the Prophet died at a young age. Yet the community crystallized around the tangible charisma of the "Imams". In 873/74 AD, however, the Shi^{c}i community

confronted an impasse which altered the development of Shi^{c}ism thenceforth. In that year the twelfth Imam of Shi^{c}ism passed from the scene without an heir. The Shi^{c}is are of the belief that he went into occultation, to return only at the end of time and the advent of the appocalypse and the armagedon.

With the occlusion of the twelfth Imam the Shi^{c}is confronted a similar situation as that of the Sunni Muslims at the time of Mu^{c}awiyyah's caliphate, and needless to say with similar consequences. The dynamic charisma of the living Imams became translated into the latent charisma of millenarianism and expectation on the one hand, and that of the de facto religious rulers of the community on the other. With no leader of infallible qualities amidst them, and embroilled in their new found millenarian expectation, the Shi^{c}i community became increasingly reliant on the emerging class of ^{c}ulama' to guide the "Imamless" community and to convert their volatile creed of expectation into a corpus of religious faith and practice, one which would no longer look to imminent take over of power from the Sunnis and be reconciled to its existence in the less-than-perfect world built by the Sunni Muslims. The Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' over the next century did exactly that, sublimating the religio-political claims of the Shi^{c}is and pacifying their millenarian visions and instead, compiling the teachings of the faith and condenscing its disparate structure into a religious denomination and body of faith. Men such as al-Kulayni and Ibn Babuyah did much to consolidate Shi^{c}i thought into a comprehensive corpus of religious thought and practice. Their efforts simultaneously crystallized Shi^{c}i doctrines and diverted the attention of Shi^{c}ism from worldly gain to spiritual matters. What distinguished the Shi^{c}i

from the Sunni ^{c}ulama', and in fact continues to do so were, first, that since inception Shi^{c}is placed great emphasis on existence of particular qualities in their leaders, the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' insofar as they stood in place of the Imams possessed some of the charisma of the household of the Prophet. In fact, the first Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama had acted as the deputies of the twelfth Imam during the early phase of his occultation. Therefore, the institution of the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama was not only defined and subsequently delineated in terms of religious learning, but also by also by certain amount of normative charisma which they inherited from the Imams.

Secondly, during Medieval times all schools of Sunni thought abrogated the practice of ijtihad , namely the rendering of opinion by an ^{c}alim in lieu of the occurance of a predicament born of a circumstance not dealt with in the scripture or the Hadith , based on the use of reason, analogy, precedent, and knowledge of scripture and the Hadith. Such opinions were binding on the believer in their treatment of predicaments or conundrums before them. The practice of ijtihad remained extant in Shi^{c}ism, and continues to shape the religious life of Shi^{c}is to this day. In fact Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' are referred to as mujtahids (those who practice ijtihad) or maraji^{c}-i taqlid (sources of emulation). The fact that Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' continue to practice ijtihad gives them a greater role in society and politics. Moreover, ijtihad accentuates the distinction between ^{c}ulama' and laymen, making Shi^{c}i learned men of religion more of a facsimile of the clergy of other monotheistic religions.

However, even in the case of Twelver Shi^{c}ism the structural and doctrinal bias of Islam against hierocratic predilections place

limits on the spiritual and political power of the mujtahids and Ayatollahs. First, the primacy of the household of the Prophet in Shi^{c}i thought and their inability to realize their veritable role in history created a disdain among Shi^{c}is for temporal power whose real and true master is the Hidden Imam. This disdain, for several centuries, placed tremendous limits on the power of Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' and was the underlying idea of the Akhbari school of Shi^{c}i thought. Second, the increase in the visibilty and power of Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' was checked by the preponderance of popular Shi^{c}i practices such as the ta^{c}ziyyah (passion play), sine-zani (self-flaglation), rowzeh-Khani (litanies) and ziyarah (pilgrimage). Third, Shi^{c}is much like Sunnis were vested with the power and right to perform the fundamental rites of their religion; in fact it was not until the Qajar Period (nineteenth century) a mere century and half ago that Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' monopolized a visible and effective function in religious and political spheres, one resembling that of the clergy in the West. Finally, the contention between Iranian dynasties and the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' since the Safavid Period (1501-1722 A.D.), and the Shi^{c}is minority status outside of Persia,until recently,had placed great impediments in the way of the further growth of power of the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama'; and the process of development in recent decades had privatized religion, released many adherents from the influence of organized religion, and generally nodged society towards a secular existence. To summarize, while Shi^{c}i thought and history had made the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' more of a clerical establishment, this tendency was never metamorphized into an established church.

Interestingly, recent developments in Shi^{c}i political thought--the modernization and politicization of this body of faith, rather than to privatize faith and further diminish the role of the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' has instead further "clericalized" the ^{c}ulama' and intensified the clash between the newly-born "church" and the Shi^{c}i states. Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of Wilayat-i faqih (governance of the juriconsult) argued that Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulama' are best suited to rule Muslim/Shi^{c}i societies for they are learned in religious sciences and for they are, implicitly at least, vested with the charisma of the Hidden Imam. Moreover, Khomeini charges the ^{c}ulama' with the task of paving the path to the appearance of the Hidden Imam and hence revive the latent millenarianism of Shi^{c}i thought, politicizing the religion as a whole, and giving the ^{c}ulama' claim to its governance. Khomeini's works therefore catapult the ^{c}ulama' into the mainstream of politics. Once a direct contender in the political arena the requirements of legitimacy compels the ^{c}ulama' class to place greater and greater emphasis upon what distinguishes their corporate body and legitimizes their claims, namely, the value of their religious learning. This predilection can be carried to its logical conclusion--increasingly distinguishing the ^{c}ulama' from common believers; vesting them with perceived monopolies over spiritual salvation, one to be realized through an ^{c}ulama'-led social engineering; consolidating their corporatist identity; and integrating their acephelus structure into a "rationalized" clerical heirarchy.

Therefore, as can be seen from the foregoing discussion, save for modern trends in Islam, Islamic doctrines and history bear witness to no clerical establishments or beliefs to support and sustain

one.

Finally, our discussion should turn to laymen. It would suffice to say that there is no laity as such in Islam, for laity exists only in contrast to the clergy. Therefore a religion with no priesthood has no laity, only believers. Yet, insofar as Islamic history produced classes of religious functionaries whose structure and socio-religious activities hinted of "clericalization" and hierocratic organization, laity also developed to the same extent as a residual socio-religious factor, namely, those who were not the *ᶜulama'*. As has already been elucidated, all Muslims had and continue to have direct recourse to the scripture as well as all other sources of religious thought, and may perform the sundry of religious rites. Entire domains of Islamic spirituality pertaining to philosophy and mysticism have developed through the efforts of "laymen". In modern times moreover, Islamic resurgence in many instances as in Egypt, the Arab Near East or North Africa has risen amidst urban professionals and the lay middle classes. The direct link between scripture and believer, although tempered by the criterion of knowledge and the historical institution of the *ᶜulama'* continues to exist, and at times emerges in full force to mold new trends of thought and socio-religious organization. What need be reasserted is that all believers are Muslim, as are the mountains, rivers and valleys; a Muslim only stops being a Muslim when he stops direct participation in his religion, when he becomes an observer--a layman in Western parlance *grossō modo*.