TYPOLOGY OF THE RESPONSES TO THE DOUBTS CAST UPON THE IMAM'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

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The scope and quality of foreknowledge have been misused as pretexts by people disposed to cast doubts on Islamic beliefs. For instance, a very common question raised by such doubters is why those possessing foreknowledge of future risks, thanks to their knowledge of the unseen, have not reacted appropriately to avoid or avert the risks and damages posed to them or other concerned individuals. The present study, having treated the responses made by believers regarding the knowledge of the unseen possessed by the Infallible concludes that some responses in some way or another are indicative of acknowledging the doubts and reducing the scope and quality of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen, while some other responses are based on particular and disputed grounds, and still some others lack in specific criteria and sufficient evidence. The accurate response attends to the particulars of the event falling within the scope of the knowledge of the unseen. To expect alterability (through human will) in relation to the inevitable would stand against the assumption of inevitability and would serve as an instance of contradiction in terms. However, in certain instances, the context of the event may make it possible for the Imam, thanks to his knowledge of the unseen and in line with providing the *umma* (community of believers) with guidance, to react appropriately to the event as an obligation required by his Imamate.

KEYWORDS: Imam's knowledge of the unseen; *badā'* (alterability in divine will); alterable fate; inalterable destiny.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of Shia thinkers hold that the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) possess knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*). *Ghayb* denotes 'anything concealed from the eyes' (Ibn Manẓūr 1414/1993, vol. 1, p. 654), a sense attested in the Qur'an, e.g., truths hidden from the

senses (2:3; 18:26; 19:78; 52:26), affairs of the past (3:44; 6:50; 7:59; 11:49), and those of the future (11:59).

The verses regarding particularity (*ikhtiṣāṣ*) or non-particularity of divine knowledge of the unseen fall into two categories: some verses denote particularity (6:59; 7:188; 27:65; 11:31; 35:38), while some others imply otherwise (2:31; 3:49, 179; 27:16; 72:26-27). In compromising the two categories, they have been regarded as the essential and non-essential knowledge of the unseen respectively. ʿAllama Ṭabāṭabāʾī (2008, vol. 2, p. 244; idem, 1996, vol. 20, p. 53) says, "The exclusiveness (*istithnā*) in the blessed verses 72:26-27 indicates that exclusiveness of divine knowledge of the unseen implies that the unseen is exclusively, independently, and essentially known by God, but the Prophets may be divinely granted the knowledge which may be passed on by them to the chosen."

There is evidence to substantiate the argument that 'knowledge of the unseen' was commonly employed in the Prophet's (SAW) times in the sense of exclusively divine, essential knowledge of the unseen, e.g., it is said in the *Nahj al-Balāgha* (Sermon 128) that Imam ʿAlī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful, while predicting about the Tatars was asked, "Have you been granted knowledge of the unseen?" replied, "Knowledge of the unseen is exclusively known by God and this prediction is the knowledge divinely bestowed upon the Prophet who taught me and prayed that my breast may contain it and my heart may accommodate it.

Shia scholars thus hold that the knowledge of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt is wider in scope than that of ordinary people, even though the former's scope and quality is subject to disputes. The vast scope of their knowledge lies far beyond that of ordinary individuals, even though the scope and quality of the former is subject to debates. An instance of the vast knowledge is that of their foreknowledge, as supported by different hadiths (e.g., Ṣaffār 1404/1983, vol. 1, pp. 199-202; Kulaynī, 1407/1986, vol. 1, pp. 260-262). Imam ʿAlī (AS), the Commander of the Faithful, is quoted as saying, "By God! I am able to inform each of you of from where and to where you are coming and what your fate will be; however, I fear that you go to the extremes about me (*Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 175).

Belief in the infallible Imam's foreknowledge has raised questions and doubts, the most significant of which will be treated, responded, and evaluated below.

DOUBTS CAST ON THE IMAM'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

Some of those doubts are general in that they include all forms of hidden knowledge, an instance of which is the exclusive divine knowledge of the unseen regarding the unequivocal knowledge of the Qur'an. The doubt about and the response to it were mentioned above. Some doubts, concern some forms of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen, e.g., his foreknowledge. Two doubts stand out in this respect.

1. Why did the infallible Imam not, in certain instances, act upon his foreknowledge and thus caused martyrdom or great loss for himself and or for his followers? Different instances have been put forward for this doubt, e.g., Imam ʿAlī's (AS) presence at the mosque of Kufa and his being struck by sword on the night of the 19th of Ramaḍān

40/26 January 661, Imam al-Ḥusayn's (AS) advancing on Karbalā', Imam al-Riḍā's (AS) acceptance of the 'Abbasid Caliph's (al-Ma'mūn's) invitation and consumption of poisoned grapes.

2. How may the Imam's presence in perilous situations, given his foreknowledge and his security, be considered as a noble quality for him? The instances include Imam 'Alī's (AS) sacrifices in the Prophet's (SAW) lifetime, e.g., those on 'the Night of Sleeping' (*Laylat al-Mabīt*),[1] the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq, and Ḥunayn, the events following the demise of the Prophet (SAW), and the battles fought against Qāsiṭīn, Māriqīn, and Nākithīn.[2] It is to be noted that putting forward the doubt regarding the events in the Prophet's (SAW) lifetime is based on the assumption that Imam 'Alī (AS) had knowledge of the unseen at that time.

The present study, considering space limitations, focuses on the former, even though the majority of the responses to the first doubt is applicable to the second one as well.

RESPONSES TO THE DOUBT

Different responses have been provided to the first doubt, some of which are compatible, but some others are incompatible, due to being founded on particular grounds regarding the scope and quality of the infallible Imam's knowledge of the unseen.

First Response

Some Shia scholars, e.g., Sayyid al-Murtaḍā ('Alam al-Hudā 1405/1984, vol. 3, pp. 130-131; al-Ṭūsī (2002, vol. 1, p. 252), hold that the Imam needs to know all religious laws and what is relevant to people's needs, but believing in his all-encompassing knowledge of the past, present, and future would be unfounded. They argue that the infallible Imam's foreknowledge, including his own fate, is limited and the time of the event is not precisely known to them; for instance, Imam al-Ḥusayn (AS) was aware that he would be martyred, but he possessed no detailed knowledge of his martyrdom. Shaykh al-Mufīd provides two responses to the first doubt, the first of the twain is consistent with Sayyid al-Murtaḍā's response (al-Mufīd 1413/1992, pp. 69-70).[4]

Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, followed by Ibn Shahrāshūb, maintains that there exists no reasonable argument regarding the Imam's absolute knowledge of the unseen, since assuming it would not stand to reason and would necessitate sharing knowledge with the Necessary Being, i.e., God ('Alam al-Hudā 1405/1984, vol. 3, p. 131; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1990, vol. 1, p. 211). Adopting the same argument, some contemporary authors have denied Imam al-Ḥusayn's (AS) detailed knowledge of the consequences of his rising (Ṣāliḥī Najafābādī, 1984, pp. 455-456; idem, 1995, pp. 405-421; idem, 2000, pp. 149-150, 183-190). This view thus acknowledges, in some way or another, the doubt and denies the compatibility of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen with his presence in perilous situations, since it would be incompatible with verse 2:195, "Do not cast yourselves with your own hands into destruction."

Evaluation of the First Response

Numerous hadiths regarding the Imams' detailed knowledge of their times and their foreknowledge of the outcomes of their deeds are attested in the sections devoted to the Imams' knowledge in Shia Hadith compendia (Ṣaffār, 1404/1983, p. 144; Kulaynī, 1407/1986, vol. 1, p. 648; Majlisī, 1403/1982, vol. 26, pp. 109-117). A large number of hadiths regarding the foreknowledge of the Infallible as well as their knowledge of occult sciences and the unseen (*jafr wa jāmiʿa wa muṣḥaf Fāṭima*; Ṣaffār, 1404/1983, pp. 170-181; Kulaynī, 1407/1986, vol. 1, pp. 185-188; Majlisī, 1403/1982, vol. 26, p. 18f., *Ḥaqīqah al-J̌afr ʿinda al-Shīʿa*). Many hadiths and traditions are to be found in Hadith and historical sources regarding the foreknowledge of the Prophet (SAW), former Prophets (AS), Imam ʿAlī (AS), and Imam al-Ḥasan (AS) regarding Imam al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom (al-Ṭabarānī, 1404/1983, vol. 3, pp. 105-111; Maḥmūdī, 1415/1991, vol. 1, pp. 198-228; idem, 1420/1996, vol. 5, pp. 161-180; Khwārazmī, 1423/1999, vol. 1, p. 235; Majlisī, 1403/1982, vol. 44, pp. 223-267; Amīnī, 1412/1988, pp. 49-150; ʿAsgarī, 1408/1987, vol. 3, pp. 26, 44). Similarly, a multitude of narrations and traditions sharing the same themes, but in a different wording, are attested in historical, theological, and Hadith sources demonstrating that Imam al-Ḥusayn (AS) had been fully aware of his martyrdom and had mentioned it in different stages of his rising in different ways using different words (Maʿhad Taḥqīqāt Bāqir al-ʿUlūm, 1995, p. 290f.).

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (2003, vol. 4, p. 190), having attributed the response to Sayyid al-Murtaḍā and possibly attending to the same narrations and traditions, criticizes it.[5] In his response to the doubt, Shaykh al-Mufīd is not content with the Imam's lack of detailed foreknowledge, but, given the Imam's foreknowledge, considers, based on arguments, that not avoiding perilous situations is compatible with 'casting oneself into destruction' (see above, the reference to verse 2:195; al-Mufīd, 1413/1992, pp. 70-71).[6]

Second Response, Potentiality of the Imam's Knowledge and Lack of Will to Know

Adherents of this response believe in potentiality of the Imam's knowledge, i.e., when he wills to know something, God grants him the knowledge (Kulaynī, 1407/1986, vol. 1, p. 640, Chapter on 'When the Imams will to know, they know,' *Inna al-A'imma Idhā Shā'ū an Yaʿlamū ʿUllimū*), and it goes without saying that the Imam's will is subject to divine will (Verily, our hearts are the receptacles of divine will, *Inna qulūbunā awʿiya mashiyya Allāh*) and when God does not will, the Imam does not will to know either. Accordingly, the Imams' detailed knowledge is subject to their will and such knowledge is not against divine will. In other words, the Imams' actual and volitional knowledge is subject to divine will which emerges in their hearts. As a result, they may not volitionally attend to some of the details in certain modes and circumstances (Makārim Shīrāzī, 2008, p. 284).

The argument is substantiated by some hadiths bearing the same theme, some of which have been collected by Ṣaffār (1404/1983, vol. 1, p. 315) in 'Chapter on When the Imam Wills to Know, He Will Know,' *Bābun fī al-Imām bi-Annahu In Shā'ū An Yaʿlamū al-ʿIlma ʿUllimū*, and Kulaynī (1404/1986, vol. 1, p. 258) in 'The Chapter on When the Imams, May Divine Blessings Be on Them, Will to Know, They Will Know' (*Inna al-A'imma ʿalayhi al-Salām*

Idhā Shā'ū An Ya'lamū 'Ullimū). Based on "When the Imam Wills to Know, He Will Know" and "When the Imams Will to Know, They Will Know," the Imam knows inner truths only when God wills, otherwise, the Imam may not know, and as a result, he will not know.

Evaluation of the Second Response

Quite similar to the first view and similar to the second one, this response, in some way or another, acknowledges the doubt. The criticism to the first response is also applicable to this response, in that it is incompatible with the hadiths and historical reports regarding the Imams' (AS) detailed knowledge of the time, place, and manner of their martyrdoms.

Another criticism is how may we prove that the Imam (AS) did not will to know in those instances? There is no historical evidence to support the argument, but it is based on the presupposition that it is considered as a given fact, i.e., incompatibility of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen and his presence in perilous situations.

Third Response, Alterability of the Imam's Knowledge of the Unseen

Contrary to the last two responses, the third response does not deny the infallible Imam's detailed and actual foreknowledge, but its adherents have adopted a different approach to respond to the doubt. In the third response, the Imam's foreknowledge is considered as alterable. Its adherents hold that the instances employed by the doubters fall into the category of potential alterability; accordingly, the Imam was not fully cognizant of the outcomes of his actions (Ṭayyib, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 244-245; Ḥaydarī, 1429/2008, p. 333).

Evaluation of the Third Response

The merit of this response, compared with the other two, is that it is compatible with the commonly accepted Shia belief in the wide scope and actuality of the Imam's knowledge. Nonetheless, it is founded on the alterability of the Imams' (AS) knowledge which is not commonly accepted by all Shia scholars and that the hadiths and narrations in this regard are various. The principle of alterability (*badā'*), a commonly accepted Shia belief, implies revealing something concealed from other servants of God and that the revelation is novel to them. The subject of dispute lies in the possibility of alterability in the foreknowledge divinely bestowed upon the Prophets and Imams (AS).

Narration (*naql*) serves as the standard and reason (*'aql*) is not capable of independent judgment. Hadiths and narrations in this respect are various, in that some of them are indicative of alterability, whereas some others indicate lack of alterability in the Prophets and Imams' (AS) foreknowledge (Majlisī, 1404/1985, vol. 2, p. 135); hence the disputes in this regard. 'Allama Majlisī tries to put forward five arguments to reconcile those two categories of hadiths and narrations (ibid).

It is reliably narrated from ʻAllama Ṭabāṭabāʼī that the Prophet's (SAW) and the Imams' (AS) foreknowledge is not subject to alterability (Rukhshād, 2003, p. 207). Nonetheless, some scholars have acknowledged, in brief (and without specifying their standards in adopting the view), the alterability in the foreknowledge of the Infallible (Ṭayyib, 1990, vol. 1, p. 245), while some others have tried to put forward certain standards. Some of the latter hold that inalterability exclusively applies to instances wherein the foreknowledge is divinely bestowed on angels, the Prophets, and his chosen friends. However, alterability may be applicable to instances of alterable fate which is divinely ordained and subject to divine will (Khuʼī, 1430/2022, p. 393).

Some other scholars hold that inalterability is applicable to instances when possessors of the knowledge have been assigned to inform others of their knowledge and the former also maintain that the narrations regarding alterability in the knowledge of the unseen are either very few in number, or they are weak in their transmission chains, or their significance or meaning (*dalāla*) is incomplete (Ṣāfī Gulpāyigānī, 1988, pp. 238-240). There are also scholars who argue that inalterability is subject to instances wherein foreknowledge is divinely bestowed on the Prophets, angels, and trustees (*awṣiyāʾ*), otherwise, foreknowledge is subject to alterability, and the instances wherein the Prophets' (AS) predictions did not happen fall into the latter category (Majlisī, 1403/1984, vol. 4, pp. 111-113).

The other criticism of the response in question is that the alterability is unsubstantiated by evidence; nonetheless, inevitability of the incidents referred to by the doubters, i.e., Imam ʻAlī's (AS) manner of martyrdom at the mosque of Kufa and Imam al-Ḥusayn's (AS) martyrdom at Karbalāʼ, and the two Imams' (AS) foreknowledge of the incidents, is obvious. Accordingly, the third response is not applicable to these two incidents and the doubt is not removed. It seems that the presupposition held by the adherents of the third response is to remove the doubt as to the incompatibility by arguing that is only applicable to belief in the Imam's lack of definitive foreknowledge.

Fourth Response, Lack of Obligation to Act upon the Exigencies of the Knowledge of the Unseen

The adherents of the response do not deny the Imam's detailed foreknowledge, nor do they resort to belief in potentiality or alterability of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen, but they hold that given that the Imam's foreknowledge is detailed, actual, and definitive, the doubt may be removed, in that the Imam is not obliged to act upon his knowledge of the unseen, but he is supposed to act upon common knowledge. In other words, they were aware of the manners of their martyrdoms, but they were not obliged to act upon their foreknowledge and acted upon common knowledge, notwithstanding certain exigencies demanded otherwise.

In response to the reason lying behind their acting upon common knowledge, they argue that acting upon the knowledge of the unseen would be incompatible with the divine wisdom of their designation as Prophets and Imams, and given that they served as role models, the world would not be a place for testing mankind, and people would thus shrink from their

individual obligations and societal reforms on the pretext of the Imams' knowledge of the unseen and acting upon their divinely bestowed knowledge.

They further argue that acting upon the extraordinary knowledge will result in disrupting the order in the world of existence, since the order of natural causes and the common knowledge of mankind are required by divine will. Some evidence is also put forward, e.g., the Prophet (SAW) and the Imams (AS) never made use of their knowledge of the unseen to cure their maladies or those of their relations and acquaintances. They knew hypocrites and were fully aware of their disbelief, but they never treated them like unbelievers and they were regarded by them as Muslims in terms of association, marriage, and other affairs. Similarly, in arbitration and finding solutions to people's problems, they acted upon Islamic laws and did not use their divinely granted knowledge, nor did they rely on their knowledge of the unsee in cases where there existed no evidence to convict a murderer (Majlisī, 1404/1983, vol. 3, pp. 124-125).

Accordingly, although Imam ʿAlī (AS) was aware of his martyrdom and knew the assassin, but he was not obliged to act upon his foreknowledge and avoid praying in the mosque, since h e was supposed to act upon common knowledge. Ibn Muljam, the assassin, had concealed his intention and only the culprits were aware of it. It was based on his common knowledge and pursuant to the letters sent to him by the Shia residents of Kufa, exigent circumstances leading to his flight from Medina, and assuming the favorable conditions awaiting him in Iraq that he decided to depart Medina for Kufa, even though he knew, thanks to his knowledge of Imamate, that his journey would end in the tragedy of Karbalā'. Similarly, Imam ʿAlī, based on his common knowledge, considered the night of 19 Ramaḍān 40/26 January 661 to be like other nights and thus left home for the mosque. Considering the latter sense, 'casting oneself into destruction and taking one' own life', is not applicable in such instances, since the latter sense is applied to causing one's own destruction through ordinary means and common knowledge.

Evaluation of the Fourth Response

Different interpretations have been adopted by adherents of the response, in that in such instances, the Imam is supposed to act upon the exoteric knowledge, rather than upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen, while according to some other interpretations, the Imam is not obliged to act upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen, even though he is able to act upon his knowledge of the unseen (Pīshwā'ī, 2010, vol. 1, pp. 309-320).

Accordingly, criticism of the fourth response is that it is ambiguous, in that if the response is only aiming at negating the necessity and proving the free will of the Imam to act upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen. A question arises here: Is there any standard for the Imam's acting or not acting upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen? If there is a standard here, what is it? Besides, the argument regarding not being obliged to act upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen will be negated, since the argument addresses the obligation of not acting in absolute terms, rather than free will to act or not act. If the fourth response aims to negate the permission to act upon the exigencies of acting

upon the knowledge of the unseen, it will be incompatible with the historical reports (see below) indicating that the infallible Imams, in a number of instances, made use of their knowledge of the unseen to save themselves and their followers.

Fifth Response, Lack of Obligation towards the Objects of the Knowledge of the Unseen

The response may be inferred from some of the statements made by Majlisī (1404/1985, vol. 3, p. 124) wherein he says that the preordained and inalterable destiny is inevitable.[7] Nevertheless, what he proceeds to say is more in line with the fourth response.[8]

ʿAllama Ṭabāṭabāʾī's argument is even more explicit. He maintains that based on intellectual and narrational arguments, the foreknowledge is inalterable, in that it is the knowledge of "what is recorded in the Preserved Tablet" and "the object of divine and inevitable ordainment" and it goes without saying that no obligation is applicable to the object of such knowledge (in that it is the object of this type of knowledge and it is inevitable), since obligation is only applicable to an action that performing or not performing it depends on the will of the obliged, but no obligation may apply to instances of inevitable happenings. For instances, God may say to His servant, "Perform such and such act which you are able to carry out or not to carry out," but He would never say, "Perform or not perform what is ordained by divinely creative will and inalterable destiny," since such command would be futile and ineffective.

Similarly, man may will something whose actualization may be possible or impossible, and set his goal to take steps towards its realization; however, he may not will something which will inalterably and definitively happen, since human will may not have the slightest effect in realizing something which may be realized since it is capable of being realized (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 2009B, vol. 1, pp. 196-197).

ʿAllama Ṭabāṭabāʾī says elsewhere that it is worthy of note that 'nothing comes into existence unless its existence is not necessitated'. Accordingly, any action is not necessary in relation to its agent, but it is exclusively necessitated in relation to its complete cause (*ʿilla al-tāmma*) which includes divine will. Actualization of an act and its being obliged is not incompatible with its being necessitated, which is similar to human volitional acts, notwithstanding human obligation to perform them while they are necessitated.

The Imams were, therefore, aware of their martyrdom, but performed the acts – Imam ʿAlī proceeded towards the altar, Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Riḍā (AS) consumed the poisoned beverage or pomegranate, and grapes, and Imam al-Ḥusayn (AS), the Lord of the Martyrs, arrived at Karbalā'. They did not try to avert the inalterable destiny and divine preordainment.

"It is worthy of note that man, at times, possesses definitive knowledge that at a certain time and out of his volition will poison himself or will have an accident in a certain street or circle. He may also have definitive knowledge of his having an accident in a certain street or circle or will be shot and as a consequence will lose his life. Nevertheless, the latter incident is dependent on a certain condition or conditions, i.e., it is conditional, rather than definitive, and in the above instances is dependent on making his way towards a certain

place, such that making his way will end in losing his life and not making his way will not end in such consequence.

"There is no sense in finding a solution to the former case, since he knows that his destruction in inevitable, but he does not cast himself into destruction and cause his death, hence the inapplicability of "Do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands" (2:195). Nevertheless, in the latter case, it is possible to resort to finding some solution to the problem and try to avert the incident; hence the applicability of "Do not cast…" Now, we argue that the Imam's taking steps falls into the former category, since they were aware of the inevitability of the actualization of the act (irrespective of their will), and there would be no sense in trying to find a solution and averting the incident by not making their way or not taking any steps, since such attempts would have been incompatible with the given definitive knowledge. In other words, the blessed verse prohibits casting oneself into destruction, but the Imams (AS) were cognizant of their inevitable death and they did not cause it" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 2009C, pp. 333-335; idem, 2009A, pp. 357-359).

Now it is clarified that assuming alterability in the objects of such knowledge by resorting to human volitional acts will be incompatible with inalterability and such assumption will be a contradiction in terms, since one would expect changes to be made to an inevitable incident by rendering it alterable and such assumption will be a contradiction in terms. It is noteworthy that inevitability of human acts in terms of being objects of divine ordainment is not incompatible with their voluntary nature in terms of human voluntary activities, since divine ordainment of acts is applicable to human acts irrespective of their qualities and manners, rather than the acts in absolute terms; for instance, God wills that man performs some volitional act by his own will, in which case, actualization of the volitional act, with respect to its being an object of divine will, will be inevitable, and at the same time, it is volitional and its being performed is a possibility in terms of human volition (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008, vol. 2, p. 246).

Evaluation of the Fifth Response

The outward meaning of the arguments put forward by ʿAllama Majlisī and ʿAllama Ṭabāṭabā'ī indicates that the infallible Imams' foreknowledge is inclusive in relation to inevitable and inalterable happenings. It was mentioned above under the evaluation of the third response that Ṭabāṭabā'ī is reliably quoted as saying that the Imams' (AS) and the Prophet's (SAW) knowledge is not subject to alterability (Rukhshād, 2003, p. 207).

The fifth response, resting on the inalterability of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen, is complete and unsusceptible to the criticisms applicable to the abovesaid responses. However, a supplementary note which will be mentioned below will make it unsusceptible to potential criticisms.

Six Response

The sixth response is based on the assumption that the scope of the Imam's knowledge encompasses the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ Maḥfūẓ*) and the Tablet of Effacement and Reaffirmation (*Lawḥ Maḥw wa Ithbāt*, i.e., the knowledge bestowed by God upon the angels, prophets, and Imams), as a result, it encompasses the alterable and the inalterable. Accordingly, the Imam's (AS) knowledge of the unseen falls into two categories:

1. Knowledge of a concealed truth in the form of a hypothetical proposition (*qaḍiyya al-sharṭiyya*), i.e., without knowledge of the actualization or non-actualization of the condition, e.g., the Imam knows that he will lose his life if he makes his way towards the mosque and he will live if he does not make his way towards the mosque. This type of knowledge results from attending to the world of effacement and affirmation and is dependent on the actualization of conditions and the alterable is related to divine knowledge and that of the Prophet and the Imam in this world. Such knowledge, based on the assumption of attending to the world of effacement and affirmation and actualization of conditions, is obligatory and founded upon the legislation upon which the obliged individual is supposed to act and save his life.
2. Knowledge of some concealed truth similar to a categorical proposition (*qaḍiyya al-ḥamliyya*), e.g., his knowledge of making his way towards the mosque and being martyred by a wretched man. This type of knowledge, deriving from the Preserved Tablet, is neither alterable, nor obligatory, since obligation serves as creating some motivation conducive to happiness and man may have motivation and will in relation to what is considered to be a possibility, otherwise no one, possessing knowledge of the alterability of the object, wills to attain an impossibility. Accordingly, when actualization of something is considered to be certain and the obliged is aware that actualization of its contradictory opposite is an impossibility, actualization of the latter may not serve as a motivation (Wakīlī, 1438/2016).

Evaluation of the Sixth Response

The clarification mentioned for the second type of the Imam's knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the unseen in the form of a categorical proposition, conforms to the fifth response whose evaluation was mentioned above. However, in relation to the first type, i.e., knowledge of the unseen in the form of a hypothetical proposition, it involves ambiguity to some extent, in that the Imam's foreknowledge is not restricted to his own affairs and circumstances, but it encompasses those of other people. The sixth response does not treat the Imam's obligations regarding the affairs of others and the obligatoriness of his knowledge in this respect is unclear. The supplementary response mentioned below under The Adopted View seemingly indicates that this response is also complete, inclusive, and susceptible to the criticisms applicable to the said responses.

THE ADOPTED VIEW

As mentioned above under the evaluations of the last two responses and based on the inalterability of the Imam's knowledge, the fifth response (and the second category of the sixth response which is identical to the fifth response) is complete and susceptible to criticism, but a supplementary note could be added aiming at making the response unsusceptible to potential criticisms of the fifth response and rectifying the error in the first category of the sixth response.

It is to be noted in passing that the events and incidents predicted thanks to the knowledge of the unseen are various in nature. Some happenings leave no room for reacting to them, e.g., the Imam's knowledge of his being martyred in a certain incident. Such instances are indubitable. Nevertheless, certain instances, considering their time and or place of happening, may require some reaction, e.g., the Imam's knowledge of the unseen regarding a tyrant's malicious intentions and devising plans for putting at risk the Imam's or a follower of the latter's life or damaging their property or prestige. Now, is the Imam obliged to make use of his knowledge of the unseen to save himself and others or is he supposed to not consider such knowledge and act upon the requirements of common knowledge and evidence? According to the second assumption, the main criticism, i.e., not preserving himself and casting himself into destruction, will be applicable here.

The requirement as to responding to this question is not particular to some specific basis rooted in the alterability or inalterability of the Imam's knowledge, but the response needs to rest on both bases. The infallible Imams in such cases, seemingly and to the extent of the expedience of religion and umma, made use of their knowledge of the unseen and reacted appropriately, as one of the obligations of their Imamate, aiming at providing the umma with guidance.

A large number of reports support the said argument; according to the former, the infallible Imams, as required by their knowledge of the unseen, performed certain acts and or asked their followers to carry out certain acts to stand unsusceptible to potential damages and perils. An instance is saving ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn ibn Mūsā al-Baghdādī (124-182/742-798) from imminent death, thanks to Imam al-Kāẓim's (AS) knowledge of the unseen. An outstanding Shia jurist and theologian and a contemporary of Imam al-Ṣādiq and Imam al-Kāẓim, he served as a reliable vizier to the Abbasids. Once he communicated with Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim in writing saying that there existed various narrations regarding the manner of performing *wuḍū*, i.e., minor ablution, and followers of different sects and denominations acted variously in performing it. He asked the Imam to reply to him in writing and inform him of the reason for, and the manner of, performing it.

In response the Imam wrote, "I ask you to wash your face thrice, wash your hands from fingertips to elbow thrice, wash out and wipe off your head completely, wash out and wipe off your ears, and wash your feet up to your shin (similar to the manner of making the minor ablution as performed by Sunnis). ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn was surprised upon the receipt of the letter and whispered to himself, "It is a surprise! Such manner is against the practice of the infallible Imams (AS) and I am certain that it is against the law; but I'll perform my minor ablution likewise upon the Imam's command until the secret be revealed to me."

ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn thus performed his minor ablution in that manner until anti-Shias, before long, said to Hārūn, "O Hārūn, ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn is a heretic who has penetrated your caliphate and aims to help Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar [Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim] to actualize his devious stratagems. He thus said to his companions in private, "I've been informed of his adherence to Shiism, but he is my vizier. How may I discover the truth?" His advisors suggested, "You may test him to obtain certainty. Shias and Sunnis perform their minor ablution differently. Keep him under surveillance to know the manner by which he makes his minor ablution."

Satisfied by the suggestion, he asked for ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn and kept him close and appointed but a servant for him. The servant brought water for him at noon for his performing the minor ablution then closed the door and went away. ʿAlī performed his minor ablution in the manner suggested to him by the Imam and then performed his noon prayer. Having watched him through an aperture, Hārūn entered when ʿAlī had finished his prayers, saying, "You were wrongfully accused of apostasy, but I will never accept anybody's words behind your back and you will be my chief vizier."

Having discovered the secret, ʿAlī received a letter from the Imam the next day wherein he had written the manner of performing the minor ablution after the manner of the Infallible and had emphasized that he expected him to perform it as such since the Imam had feared that some harm might have had come to ʿAlī; however, he was safe afterwards (Baḥrānī, 1413/1992, vol. 6, pp. 346-348).

Therefore, the adopted view of the present study is that the infallible Imams' foreknowledge falls into two categories:

1. Some of the events leave no room for reaction, e.g., the Imam's definitive foreknowledge of his martyrdom regarding a certain incident. Assuming the obligation to alter the event in such instances would necessitate a contradiction. Supported by numerous hadiths and historical reports it could be concluded that instances like Imam ʿAlī's being struck by a sword on the head at the mosque of Kufa and Imam al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Karbalā' leave no room for their not having tried to avert the incident notwithstanding their foreknowledge.
2. It happens at times that the infallible Imams' objects and context of foreknowledge leave some room for making reactions, in which cases the infallible Imam, thanks to his knowledge of the unseen and taking steps towards providing the umma with guidance makes preparations, as an obligation of the Imamate, for making an appropriate reaction to the incidents.

CONCLUSION

The responses to the doubt regarding 'the infallible Imams' not avoiding perilous situations notwithstanding their foreknowledge' are various in terms of reliability and standards. Some responses, in some way or another, acknowledge the doubt while denying certain characteristics of the Imams' foreknowledge. The first two responses are instances of such responses.

There are still other responses that leave the scope and actuality of the Imam's foreknowledge, but they are founded on disputed basis or bases. The third response, based on the alterability of the Imams' foreknowledge, falls into this category, since alterability in this context is subject to dispute in that it is not acknowledged by all thinkers and the hadiths and narrations in this respect are various in nature. The fourth response, i.e., not being obliged to act upon the exigencies of the knowledge of the unseen is not based on specific standards, suffers from ambiguity, and it is incompatible with historical reports.

The fifth response, i.e., no obligation is required by the Imams' knowledge of the unseen, is based on the inalterability of their knowledge – a complete response which is unsusceptible to the said problems. The sixth response, while sharing a common denominator with the fifth response, has the latter's merit, but it is ambiguous in its particular and unshared characteristic, i.e., knowledge of the unseen as a form of hypothetical proposition. The fifth, based on the inalterability of the Imam's knowledge, and the sixth, based on alterability and inalterability, responses, on the basis of the adopted view and by the addition of a supplementary note, are complete and unsusceptible to the doubts applicable to other responses.

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NOTES

1. When he courageously slept in the Prophet's bed (1 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1/13 September 622) when the latter was in a cave on the mount of Thawr, aiming at averting the Prophet's assassination by a number of Meccan polytheists from the Quraysh. Verse 2:207, also known as *āyat al-mabīt* and *āyat al-shirāʾ*, as reflected in Shia and many Sunni commentaries on the Qur'an, is an allusion to the event [Transl].
2. Qāsitīn, Māriqīn, and Nākithīn refer to ʿAlī's opponents who fought him in the battles of Ṣiffīn (followers of Muʿāwiya), Jamal, and Nahrawān (the Khārijites, Khawārij, or Seceders) respectively, as predicted by the Prophet (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's Commentary, *Sharḥ*, on the *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Beirut, vol. 3, pp. 97-98) [Transl].
3. Arabic text:

«و الجواب و باللّٰه التوفيق عن قوله: «أن الإمام يعلم ما يكون» بإجماعنا أن الأمر على خلاف ما قال، و ما أجمعت الشيعة قطّ على هذا القول، و إنما إجماعهم ثابت على أن الإمام يعلم الحكم في كل ما يكون دون أن يكون عالما بأعيان ما يحدث و يكون على التفصيل و التمييز، و هذا يسقط الأصل الذي بنى عليه الأسئلة بأجمعها. (فصل) و لسنا نمنع أن يعلم الإمام أعيان الحوادث تكون بإعلام اللّٰه تعالى له ذلك، فأما القول بأنه يعلم كل ما يكون فلسنا نطلقه و لا نصوب قائله؛ لدعواه فيه من غير حجة و لا بيان.

(فصل) و القول بأن أمير المؤمنين ع كان يعلم قاتله و الوقت الذي يقتل فيه فقد جاء الخبر متظاهرا أنه كان يعلم في الجملة أنه مقتول و جاء أيضا بأنه كان يعلم قاتله على التفصيل فأما علمه في وقت قتله فلم يأت فيه أثر على التفصيل».

4. Arabic text:

«و هذا المذهب هو الذي اختاره المرتضى في هذه المسالة، و لي في هذه المسألة نظر».

5. Arabic text:

«و لو جاء فيه أثر لم يلزم ما ظنه المستضعفون إذ كان لا يمتنع أن يتعبده الله بالصبر على الشهادة و الاستسلام للقتل ليبلغه الله بذلك من علو الدرجة ما لا يبلغه إلا به و لعلمه تعالى بأنه يطيعه في ذلك طاعة لو كلفها سواه لم يؤدها و يكون في المعلوم من اللطف بهذا التكليف لخلق من الناس ما لا يقوم مقامه غيره فلا يكون بذلك أمير المؤمنين ع ملقيا بيده إلى التهلكة و لا معينا على نفسه معونة مستقبحة في العقول. (فصل) فأما علم الحسين ع بأن أهل الكوفة خاذلوه فلسنا نقطع على ذلك إذ لا حجة عليه من عقل و لا سمع و لو كان عالما بذلك لكان الجواب عنه ما قدمناه في الجواب عن أمير المؤمنين ع بوقت قتله و المعرفة بقاتله لما ذكرناه».

6. Arabic text:

«فالمعنى أنه كان بلغ الأجل المحتوم المقدر، و كان لا يمكن الفرار منه، و لعله أظهر الوجوه، و حاصله أن من لا يعلم أسباب التقديرات الواقعية يمكنه الفرار عن المحذورات و يكلف به، و أما من كان عالما بجميع الحوادث فكيف يكلف الفرار، و إلا يلزم عدم وقوع شيء من التقديرات فيه».

7. Arabic text:

«بل هم عليهم السلام غير مكلفين بالعمل بهذا العلم في أكثر التكاليف، فإن النبي و أمير المؤمنين صلى الله عليهم كانا يعرفان المنافقين و يعلمان سوء عقائدهم و لم يكونا مكلفين بالاجتناب عنهم و ترك معاشرتهم و عدم مناكحتهم أو قتلهم و طردهم، ما لم يظهر منهم شيء يوجب ذلك و كذا علم أمير المؤمنين صلوات الله عليه بعدم الظفر بمعاوية و بقاء ملكه بعده لم يصر سببا لأن يترك قتاله، بل كان يبذل في ذلك غاية جهده إلى أن استشهد صلوات الله عليه، مع أنه كان يخبر بشهادته و استيلاء معاوية بعده على شيعته، و كذا الحسين صلوات الله عليه كان عالما بغدر أهل العراق به و أنه يستشهد هناك مع أولاده و أقاربه و أصحابه، و يخبر بذلك مرارا و لم يكن مكلفا بالعمل بهذا العلم، بل كان مكلفا بالعمل بظاهر الأمر حيث بذلوا نصرتهم و كاتبوه و راسلوه و وعدوه البيعة و تابعوا مسلم بن عقيل رضي الله عنه».