3.16 The Imamate: The Twelve Imams and Their Role in Shia Belief: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Which one of the following is a claim made by those who believe the Twelfth Imam is in occultation?

- ☐ A That the Imam will never return and his role ended in the 9th century
- ☐ B That God protects the Imam and he will return as the Mahdi at an appointed time
- ☐ C That the Imam is a symbolic title for a council of scholars
- ☐ D That the Imam is an angel sent to guide the community

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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2 Give three reasons why some Muslims find the idea of an infallible Imam difficult to accept, in the context of debates between Sunni and Shia thought.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Explain two ways the doctrine of the Imamate affects Shia interpretations of scripture and law, in the context of Twelver belief about religious authority.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Explain the importance of the belief in the occultation of the Twelfth Imam for Twelver Shia communities today.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Explain two contrasting Sunni and Shia beliefs about how Islamic leadership should be chosen after the Prophet Muhammad, in the context of the Imamate doctrine and Sunni caliphate theory.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 Evaluate the statement, 'The Imamate is the most important difference between Sunni and Shia Islam.' In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, and reach a justified conclusion.

(Total for Question 6 is 15 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.16 The Imamate: The Twelve Imams and Their Role in Shia Belief: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

selecting B, belief that God preserves the Imam in occultation and he will return as the Mahdi, cao **B1**

Answer: B

Question 2

reason 1: it seems to conflict with the view that only prophets can have special divine protection, oe **B1**

reason 2: it is hard to reconcile with examples of moral failure in historical leaders, oe **B1**

reason 3: it can be seen as concentrating too much religious authority in a single line, which some worry could be misused, oe **B1**

Answer: Any three: conflict with prophet-only protection; difficulty reconciling with human fallibility; concerns about concentration of authority.

Question 3

point 1: Imams interpretations are treated as authoritative, influencing legal rulings and understanding of Quranic verses, oe **B1**

point 2: Twelver scholars may prioritise hadith associated with the Imams and the Ahl al Bayt when deriving law, oe **B1**

Answer: E.g. Imams interpretations shape legal rulings and understanding of the Quran; hadith linked to the Imams and Ahl al Bayt are given high weight in law derivation.

Question 4

point 1: the occultation gives hope because believers expect the Imam's return as the Mahdi to bring justice and right guidance, oe **B1**

development: this hope can motivate moral living and patience in the face of injustice, oe **B1**

point 2: the occultation provides a theological explanation for current absence of divinely-guided leadership, while maintaining continuity of authority, oe **B1**

development: religious scholars and institutions act as caretakers of guidance until the Imam's return, so community leadership continues, oe **B1**

Answer: E.g. it gives hope for future justice under the Mahdi and explains the present absence of the Imam while preserving a source of authority via scholars until his return.

Question 5

belief 1: Shia belief is that leadership should be divinely appointed from the Prophet's family, specifically Ali and his descendants, oe **B1**

development: this is supported by interpretations of Quranic verses and hadith that are read as endorsing the Ahl al Bayt, oe **B1**

belief 2: Sunni belief is that leaders should be chosen by consultation or election among the Muslim community, the khalifah serving as a political and religious steward, oe **B1**

development: this is supported by the historical acceptance of the caliphs chosen by early Muslim groups and by emphasis on shura, consultation, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast: Shia divine appointment from Prophet's family with evidence from scripture and hadith interpretations, versus Sunni selection by community through consultation and consensus.

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Question 6

Level 4 A well-developed, balanced evaluation that addresses the statement directly, uses detailed religious arguments on both sides, refers to Shia and Sunni beliefs accurately, and reaches a justified conclusion with clear reasoning.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that gives reasons for and against the statement, includes some religious argument and evidence, and reaches a conclusion, though some points may be less developed.	**7-9**
Level 2 An attempt at evaluation that gives at least one reason for and one reason against the statement, with limited use of religious argument and a basic conclusion.	**4-6**
Level 1 Simple, undeveloped comments which are relevant to the question but do not form a coherent evaluation; may be one-sided.	**1-3**

Indicative content:

- Arguments supporting the statement: The Imamate defines a fundamental doctrinal difference, including claims about divine appointment, Ismah and the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, which directly affect ideas of authority, leadership, and legitimacy in Islam.
- Supporting detail: Shia belief that Imams are divinely-appointed and infallible contrasts strongly with Sunni emphasis on selection and consultation, so this is a primary theological division with practical consequences for law and leadership.
- Arguments against the statement: Other differences such as historical disputes over succession, different legal schools and practices, and variations in religious practice and communal organisation are also significant and could be seen as equally or more important in shaping Sunni-Shia relations.
- Counterpoint detail: The historical split, political rivalries and differing collections of hadith and legal methodology have produced distinct identities and practices across the two traditions beyond the Imamate doctrine itself.
- Religious arguments to include: cite Shia reliance on Ahl al Bayt and Quranic/hadith interpretations supporting Imamate; cite Sunni emphasis on shura and the example of the early caliphs as normative.
- Conclusion guidance: a balanced answer might argue that the Imamate is among the most important doctrinal differences because it concerns authority and guidance, but concede that historical, legal and communal factors are also central, and so the Imamate is a key difference rather than the sole most important one.

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