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Early Islamic Politics and Government

in

Nahj al-balāghah

by

Reza Nazarahari

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences,

Department of Politics and International Relations,

University of Kent at Canterbury,

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Finally, I thank my wife, who has endured the whole experience while herself needed my help and sympathy.

To

the memory of

Mortaḍā Motahharī

TRANSLITERATION

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>
ا	.	ل	l
ب	b	م	m
ت	t	ن	n
ث	th	و	w
ج	j	ه	h
ح	h	ي	y
خ	kh	ة	ah
د	d	<i>Long Vowels</i>	
ذ	dh	ا	ā
ر	r	و	ū
ز	z	ى	ī
س	s	<i>Short Vowels</i>	
ش	sh	ا	a
ص	ṣ	و	u
ض	ḍ	ى	i
ط	t	<i>Persian Letters</i>	
ظ	ẓ	پ	p
ع	.	چ	ch
غ	gh	ژ	zh
ف	f	گ	g
ق	q		
ک	k		

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Transliteration

Introduction

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, the political concepts of Nahj al-balāghah, a Shī'ite source of the eleventh century (fourth century after the *Hijrah*), is examined. The book contains both materials of political philosophy and evaluation of some political events which occurred in the caliphate of Rāshidūn (632- 661 A.D.), especially 'Alī. However, the historical authenticity of the book is not the concern of this thesis and the main concentration is made on the early caliphal government and politics in the book with reference to the Islamic political initiatives of Islam in the prophetic society.

The first step in our approach is to create awareness about the difficulties which appear in any attempt that deals with Islam and history. The different approaches of Muslims and non-Muslims to Islam and their different perceptions of religious politics are included in the first part. In addition, several political initiatives of Islam such as political economy, political activism, integration of society and so on are examined in the framework of the Qurān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. This explanation enables us to observe the politics and government of the first successors of the Prophet in their ideological context. The second part is devoted to explain the major changes in Islamic politics and government after the Prophet.

With this background, in the third part, the political contents of Nahj al-balāghah, or "the peak of eloquence", are analyzed without consideration as to whether 'Alī is its real author. There are some principles of political theory and philosophy, as well as a political account of several events in the book which are the main subjects of analysis of the present thesis. In its politico-theoretical dimension, the value of the world, the theological description of human freedom and responsibility, and the theoretical approach to society and history are explained. In its political capacity, issues such as the need for a government and the extent of toleration in it, the role of people, justice, leadership and its responsibilities are included in the third part.

Introduction

I

Religion has become an influential political factor especially in recent years. A kind of religious resurgence may be observed in Judaism, Christianity and Islam specially after events which occurred in the mid 70s. As G. Kepel asserts, the state of Israel experienced a religious shift in 1977 , when Labour failed to win enough seats in the election to form a government for the first time in its history.¹ In the West the link between Christianity and civic order seems to have been growing increasingly. For example, in the United States, 'Christian values' became the priority in most social planning in the 1970s. And finally Islam may be seen as a typical faith which is experiencing this change.

This rising of religion in the last quarter of the century is a phenomenon which appeared at a time when it was believed that the role of religion since the Enlightenment was devalued by political solutions to social problems . On the other hand, this religious growth has some characteristics that differentiate it from the previous forms of revivalism. This time its followers aim at reviving the principles and values of religion while in the previous attempts they tried to adapt it to existing political ideas. Some researchers are of the opinion that religion today is a source of identity for all those who lost it in the process of industrialization.²

Over the past two decades, attention to Islamic history and thought in general and to the current phenomenon of Islam in politics, in particular, has become increasingly popular.

Part of the recent interest in Islam, especially among western scholars, has centred upon problems surrounding the origins and early formation of Islam.

The Islamic world has experienced a profound change from 1979 when the Islamic revolution occurred in Iran. However, the Islamic resurgence is not a new phenomenon. In the 1880s and 1890s in North Africa and in 1920s and 1930s in the Middle East, the Muslim world was faced with movements in which aims and strategies were similar to the current movements.

As H.A.R.Gibb stated about a half of century ago:

'The history of Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a history of revival and efforts at readjustment under the double stimulus of challenge from within and pressing dangers from without.'³

Gibb observed that the Muslim community had gathered itself slowly together without setbacks but also with increasing energy. Looking to its defence, the Muslim community, re-awakened and alert, began to search for a programme with which to advance united into the future. To Gibb, of the two above-mentioned stimuli the internal challenge among Muslims seems to be the most important, although in the eyes of most Muslims and also Westerners the external factor originating from the political and economic expansion of Western Europe appeared to be the most influential one.

If we confine ourselves to the past decade the major aspects of this Islamic activism may be seen in a series of events which occurred after the Islamic revolution in Iran. It can be said that it intensified the will of resurgence among Muslims. In 1979, an opposition Islamic group occupied the grand Mosque of Mecca at the beginning of the 15th century of the Islamic era. They were demanding more Islamic awareness by Saudi authorities. In 1981, President Sadat was assassinated by Muslim fundamentalists. They believed that they were

killing Pharaoh and recited the verses of the Qurān in support of their action. After the occupation of Afghanistan by the Red Army of the Soviet Union, the Islamic element played an important role in strengthening the Afghans against the Communists.

Islamic opposition groups in some parts of the Muslim world moved towards changing the form of government from a secular to a purely Islamic one by using any means, from revolutionary to democratic ones. This process can be observed in Algeria, Egypt and Turkey for example. Furthermore, the use of Islamic symbols such as women's cover veil (*Hijāb*), and Islamic titles have become increasingly popular.

In 1991, the 'Organization of the Islamic Conference' (OIC) which has more than fifty Muslim countries as members, prepared a text named 'Declaration of Human Rights in Islam'. Their main concern was to insist on their Islamic values against the western values which tended to impose themselves on the judicial system of the Islamic countries. This organization had issued another declaration, in 1988, condemning the author of the book 'Satanic Verses', Salman Rushdie, naming him 'an apostate' and expressing the verdict of all Muslim schools of jurisprudence on apostasy.⁴ Thus, revivalism in current Islam is characterised by a return to the origins and the values continued therein and an attempt to implement them in society. The word fundamentalism implies a return to the values and principles of early Islam.

One of the Islamic principles that contemporary Muslims usually tend to return to, is the religious foundation of politics. Some of them, whether Sunnī or Shī'ite, are trying to purify their political systems from immorality and secularism. For them, politics is a means, not an end, for the material and spiritual growth of human beings. They refer to the political

authority of the prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs to support their viewpoint.

II

The arguments showing the political authority of early Islam have constituted the basis of the Muslim beliefs on the nature of political activities in Islam. Prophet Muhammad was basically a religious and spiritual teacher and messenger and, at the same time, due to the circumstances, a temporal ruler and statesman.

Muhammad established a state of considerable power in the period lasting from his migration to Medina in 622 until his death in 632. He succeeded in incorporating in his alliance most of the nomadic tribes of Arabia, except those who were in the Byzantine sphere of influence. Within six years of Muhammad's death all Syria and Irāq were tributary to Medina, and in another four years Egypt was added to the new Muslim Empire.

Accordingly, Islam since its very birth has been both a religious discipline and a socio-political movement. The status of Muhammad as the Apostle of God who was appointed and sent by Him to deliver His message to mankind made Islam inevitably political. In other words, due to the environment and circumstances in which Islam arose and grew politics became an integral part of this religion.

Whether this combination of politics and religion continued during the reign of the first caliphs or not has been the subject of many studies on Islam. This is particularly true of the first stage of the caliphate which began immediately following the Prophet's death in 632 and lasted to 661 and is known as that of the rightly-guided caliphs. Some Islamists have raised some doubts about that combination of politics and religion and generally believe that the early caliphate was a purely political institution. A few are of the opposite opinion, that

a religious and political authority was indeed concentrated in the early caliphate system.

Inevitably, we have to examine historical events of the first four decades of Islam to be able to understand the nature of that institution. Among the main historical factors were the tribal instincts and traditions of the Bedouin who broke out from time to time in revolts and civil wars. For instance, Abū Bakr in his caliphate (632-4) was mostly occupied in quelling the revolts of certain tribes against the Medinan political system. His victory over them affirmed the strength of Islam in the form of the Caliphate system. Under 'Umar (634-44) a remarkable expansion took place : Syria and Egypt were wrested from the Byzantine empire and Irāq from the Persian. For the first half of the reign of 'Uthmān (644-56) expansion continued into North Africa and Persia ; but about 650 it slowed down , discontent appeared among the troops (who were identical with the citizen body), and in 656 'Uthmān was killed by mutineers. 'Alī , Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was then acclaimed as caliph in Medina. His government and political behaviour have been another controversial subject of the early caliphate. While many believe that 'Alī was responsible for 'Uthmān's death because of his tacit consent during the revolt against 'Uthmān and raise the moral problem of his position, the Shī'ite argue for his right to the caliphate in *Saqīfa* and his excellent performance as caliph after 'Uthmān.

After the election of 'Alī as caliph, Mu'āwiyah, governor of Damascus, refused to recognize him. Two other groups did the same thing: some of the companions of the Prophet among the elite of Medina such as Talha and Zubayr and those who opposed 'Alī from the religious point of view or *Khawārij*. In the struggle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah, the latter eventually gained the upper hand and after the murder of 'Alī in 661 declared himself caliph. The

Mu'āwiyah caliphate was then generally recognized , and the Umayyad dynasty thereby established.

The war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah not only established the Umayyads in power , but also supposedly marked the advent of Shīism as a religious movement divergent from the main body of believers.

III

This thesis is devoted to examine an early Islamic text, named Nahj al-balāghah, aiming at analysing early Islamic politics from a historical point of view. This book contains some sermons, letters and sayings compiled by Sayid ash-Sharīf ar-Radī, (359-406) A.H/ (970 -1017)A.D, an Irāqi shiite scholar. It covers various subjects, which can be classified in the following topics: theology and metaphysics, religious behaviour and worship, government and justice, caliphate and Imāmate, advice and preaching, philosophy, world and worldliness, social principles, characters and individuals, grievances of contemporary people, ethics and refining the self, Islam and the Qurān, prophecies, and other minor issues.⁵

The Nahj al-balāghah, which traditionally is attributed to 'Alī, the fourth caliph of the Sunnī and the first Imām of the Shī'ite, has been paid more attention to by Muslims since the Islamic resurgence began about a century ago. M. 'Abduh (1849- 1905), a famous Sunnī revivalist, devoted one of his works to the annotation of Nahj al-balāghah. He is credited with being the first scholar who introduced this book to the Egyptians.⁶ Considering the religious dogmatism in the 19th-century Muslim world, led by the Sunnī Ottoman Empire, his contribution was considerable. For him, the significance of the book rests on its dual social aspect of worldliness or sociability and spirituality; in other words in the ways in which

politics and religion are combined. Although the main purpose of his work was a linguistic analysis of the book and a demonstration of its eloquence, in many cases he enters into historical fields in which he expresses his ideas. He believed that 'Alī taught his followers in this book the true methods of politics and the ways of leadership.⁷

A contemporary Muslim academic in the west, Seyed Hosein Nasr, emphasised the role of Nahj al-balāghah as one of the main collections of Shī'ite *hadiths*.

'Considering the enormous importance of this work in Shī'ite Islam as well as for all lovers of the Arabic language, it is remarkable how little attention has been paid to it in European languages [...]. The Nahj al-balāghah contains, besides spiritual advice, moral maxims and political directives, several remarkable discourses on metaphysics, especially concerning the question of Unity'.⁸

Nasr mentioned some points regarding this importance such as: the assertions of some leading writers of Arabic such as Taha Husayn and Kurd 'Alī who claimed in their autobiographies to have perfected their style of writing Arabic through the study of the Nahj al-balāghah; the continuous meditation and commentary upon the meaning of the book carried out by Shī'ite thinkers so far; the very widespread of the shorter prayers and proverbs of the work among the populace and its own method of exposition and a very distinct technical vocabulary which distinguishes it from the various Islamic schools which have dealt with metaphysics.

The Lebanese Shī'ite scholar, M.M.Shams ad-dīn, believes that the scientific dimension of Nahj al-balāghah has not been paid the attention it deserves by its commentators. For him, they have studied the book from the point of view of 'Alī's political behaviour and ignored its theoretical passages. He also denies the idea that the book is characterised by an anti-worldly perspective and, therefore, tries to explain it in a manner which is both more theoretical and more realist.⁹

M.Momen in his analysis of Shīism discusses the Shī'ite attempt to bring Sufism into

Shīism in medieval Islam. He refers to the commentary of Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī, a Shī'ite scholar, who has written on Nahj al-balāghah in a Sūfi manner. To Momen, 'Alī's discourses and letters in Nahj al-balāghah are considered the earliest examples of Muslim writings on philosophy, theology and ethics¹⁰:

'while through disciples such as Hasan al-Basrī and Rabī' ibn Khaytham he is considered to have given the initiative to Sūfism in Islam.'¹¹

In Iran, the only Shī'ite country, two factors have caused the greatest attention to be paid to the book. Firstly the Shī'ite majority of the population assume 'Alī to be the first Imām, a religious and political leader who should be followed as a pattern. Some of the Shī'ite revivalists reconsidered Nahj al-balāghah and emphasized the political dimension of it. They criticised the Shī'ites for following only the spiritual manner of 'Alī during the past centuries. A. Sharīa'tī (d. 1977), the Shī'ite famous revivalist, is one of them.¹² Secondly, the Islamic revolution in Iran has posed many questions about the nature of an ideal Islamic state and the ways in which religion should take part in politics and practical affairs. Consequently, considerable efforts have been carried out to derive the political philosophy of Islam from this book. The bulk of works on Nahj al-balāghah which are published by the 'Foundation of Nahj al-balagha' has been carried out in this direction. This centre has launched an attempt to collect all literature related to the book including commentaries, manuscripts, subject analysis, etc. It has also held international and national seminars in Tehran on different issues raised in the book.

M.Motahhari (d. 1979), another Shī'ite scholar, emphasizing the fact that Nahj al-balāghah has been ignored by Muslims throughout the centuries, believes that this book is conquering the Islamic world in our time. He says that it was non-Muslims and Muslim

modernists who initially discovered Nahj al-balāghah. In his opinion, Muslim socialists and nationalist groups found statements in favour of their claims in this book and then tried to use it for their own ends. However, their attempts resulted in a considerable awareness among other Muslims all over the Islamic world.¹³

IV

This thesis is basically a historical approach to early Islamic politics. This does not mean, however, that the author is an expert on the history of Islam nor that his attempts in the present thesis aim to present new discoveries about early Islamic history. It is rather a study of the nature of political affairs of the early Muslim state which is examined in a historical context. To this end it is the contents of Nahj al-balāghah, as they relate to the period of the caliphate of Rāshidūn, which are analyzed.

The nature of this thesis might be better understood in relation to the hypothesis which has occupied the mind of the author from the beginning. It is believed by him that the Islamic principles introduced by the Qurān and implemented by Prophet Muhammad experienced a fundamental change during the first generation of caliphs. It might be an unusual assumption for those who consider the similarities between the Prophetic and the early caliphal authorities. The author admits that this assumption is more a Shī'ite approach to the politics of early Islam. However, he is not trying to justify the changes which happened to those principles and to form a normative judgment about them. Instead, he intends to explain the

contents of Nahj al-balāghah as a source of the Shī'ite sect of Islam which mainly focuses on those changes. Therefore, in regard to the sources and the case of our study, this thesis is a historical analysis of early Islam.

However, since there are different kinds of materials in this book, inevitably we have to deal with theological and conceptual matters as well. In fact conceptual passages about government, leadership, society, etc, are presented as supportive discussions for the historical facts. For instance, a philosophical approach is used in describing the social change in the Islamic society during the caliphate of 'Uthmān and 'Alī; or a theological explanation is used to comment on their political activities.

It should also be mentioned that the nature of the caliphate system which has been a controversial issue among researchers on early Islamic history is dealt with from the Shī'ite viewpoint. The Shī'ites traditionally believe that the choice for the post of political authority after the Prophet's death was not left to the decision of the people. 'Alī, in their opinion, was appointed by explicit command by Muhammad, (*Nass*), in *Ghadīr Khumm*. In the theory of the Imāmate, a leader holds both religious and material authority and these Imāms are infallible. On the other hand, the traditional Sunnī scholars, arguing about the meaning of the words uttered by the Prophet on that occasion, believe that the praise of 'Alī in *Ghadīr* did not imply Muhammad's successorship. They are of the opinion that this post is given to a fallible man whose responsibility is only the material growth of society and whose election is not through *Nass*. The real nature of political authority during the first four caliphs is still a matter of controversy.

One positive aspect of the study of the subject in this context is that Nahj al-balāghah

has been attributed to 'Alī by both the Sunnīs and the Shī'ites, the main sects of Islam. This may suggest a consensus among those who are on opposite sides regarding several political issues. In addition, regardless of the question of who was the real author of the book, its contents deal with the events that took place between the year 656, when 'Alī was elected caliph, and the year 661, when he was murdered. These dates, as above mentioned, provide us with a historical framework in studying the ideas in the book.

Considering that the Qurān was incomplete as a law code or a political manual, Muslims in the new circumstances fell back on what Muhammad had said and done when he was not voicing the words of God but acting as a private person. But it was not possible to establish Muhammad's precept or example in every situation. In those cases the actions of his companions or of the next generation were looked to for guidance. On this basis, a vast body of tradition, *hadīth*, was collected. This tradition was accepted as one of the sources of Islamic knowledge since it was believed that the *Sunnah* and the received custom of the community could not be incompatible with the revelation.

In this manner the believers secured for themselves the freedom of development under God for the solution of their intellectual and political problems. Nahj al-balāghah from this viewpoint may be seen as a special perception of the Prophet's *Sunnah* and of the Qurān in dealing with those new challenges.

Another problem which should be taken into consideration in our study is the selective collection of the contents of the book. As ar-Radī mentions in the preamble to Nahj al-balāghah, his concern was introducing the eloquence and the magnificent style of 'Alī's language. The word '*Nahj al-balāghah*' which means 'the peak of eloquence'¹⁴ indicates this. Therefore, if the book is considered merely from this perspective, then it lacks other

particulars, (i.e. the sources of its contents and a precise attention to the political matters).

One of the most important difficulties in our study is the period to which Nahj al-balāghah belongs. Studying a political subject of the 7th century by means of the language of our time is problematic. This may be the reason why most of the works on Nahj al-balāghah do not deal with the political relevance of the book in the same manner as we do today. This is a difficulty especially when a large number of related works are required in our research.

The method of this study is an investigation of the main political issues in Nahj al-balāghah in the framework of its historical passages. The analysis of this book in this study does not imply the justification of 'Alī's actions in his society and against his enemies. Instead, we are more concerned with the contents of the book itself. The matter of the authenticity of the book and 'Alī's role in early Islamic history could be the subjects of independent studies, but are not of concern here.

In our historical approach to the nature of early Islamic politics, a part of this thesis is devoted to the Islamic political foundations as the origin of what is stated in Nahj al-balāghah. This will be done by referring mostly to the Qurān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet as the main sources of knowledge in Islam. Therefore, at the beginning, the issues of freedom, political activity, community, economy and government are discussed in the Qurānic context. The main concern is to show the novelty of those issues and the Islamic notion of political affairs in 7th century Arabia. This provides a good base for studying the notion of politics in Nahj al-balāghah.

To the author of this thesis, an important problem in dealing with Nahj al-balāghah has been the problem of authenticity. As with many historical documents, the historical value of this book has been doubted by some historians. It was Ibn Khallakān , a Muslim historian (608-681) A.H. who initially raised this doubt. He wrote that it is not known which of the two brothers, ar-Radī, the compiler of the book for the Shī'ites, or al-Murtada, put together this work. ' Some assume that the compiler would also be its author , but that he would have attributed it to 'Alī.'¹⁵ As M.Djebli states, the majority of later writers, either Muslims or non-Muslims, 'have in turn revived these suspicions'.¹⁶

In Shī'ite eyes, the authenticity of the book is not in any question. The image of 'Alī in Shī'ite literature is almost the same as that which can be found in Nahj al-balāghah. Non-Shī'ite writers are not unanimous in doubting the historical value of the book. The Mu'tazilite Ibn Abil Hadīd, Egyptian scholars Dr Zakī Mubārak and M. 'Abduh are among the Sunnī scholars who assume 'Alī as the real author of the book. However, others believe the opposite. For some other Sunnī writers and for some Western researchers the real author of Nahj al-balāghah cannot be 'Alī. To Brockelmann , a German Orientalist and a researcher on Arabic literature, this work was compiled by Sharīf al-Mortada, ar-Radī's brother.¹⁷ Unlike Brockelmann, Laura Veccia Vaglier believes that it is undeniable that a large portion of the Nahj al-balāghah could indeed be attributed to 'Alī since numerous authors, long before the time of ar-Radī, had related the sermons of 'Alī and the fact that it has been possible to identify a considerable number of passages, accompanied by complete *isnāds* dating back to the time of 'Alī.¹⁸ To sceptics, the most dubious matters of the book which make it difficult to attribute it to 'Alī are in the following issues: disapproval of some of the Prophet's companions such as Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, etc, the repetition of some words which were

not known or used at the time of 'Alī such as the words *Wasī* and *Wesāyah*, the lengthy sermons and letters in the book which are believed not to have been popular at that time, using rhythm in statements, dealing with philosophy and theology which entered into muslim knowledge considerably later than the time of 'Alī, precise description of things such as animals, human beings, nature, etc, using the method of classification of materials in speaking and writing, prophecy about the attack of Mongols and Tatars on the Muslim Empire and prediction of the appearance of Hadjdjādj as a Muslim caliph.¹⁹

The author is aware of the doubts raised about the historical value of the book. He decided to make the present work different from a typical Shī'ite attempt to explain Nahj al-balāghah. To this end, he limited himself only to the contents of the book and not to the historical value of it. In other words, he tries to examine the viewpoint of the author of Nahj al-balāghah, without specifying anybody as its author, towards the caliphate system of the Rāshidūn caliphs. He has been more concerned about the analysis of events in the Islamic *Ummah* and the fate of Islam after the death of the Prophet which may be found in the book.

As mentioned earlier, the general plan of this thesis is to examine some of the early Islamic sources to show any possible change that occurred after the Prophet and before the Umayyads. In this framework, Nahj al-balāghah is seen as an expression of early Islamic politics and government and it does not make any difference who might be its real author.

VI

As the first two chapters of this thesis are mainly based on dealing with the political foundations of Islam in the Qurān, I have to mention briefly a point regarding the meaning of the verses which are used in these chapters.

The important point regarding the Qurān, apart from its authenticity which is not the concern of this thesis, is its explanation and interpretation. Ignaz Goldziher in his study of the history of the exegesis of the Qurān insisted that even work on the text involved a form of interpretation. That is because of the ambiguity of some parts of the Qurān. It is full of allusions that were presumably clear at the time of its revelation. But as time went on, especially after non-Arabs became Muslims, it became necessary to have explanations of ambiguous verses and phrases of the Qurān. In addition it was necessary to show the precise meaning of a rare word or the correct way to take a grammatical construction or the reference of a pronoun. In this context men appeared who claimed to know the occasion in which a passage was revealed and tried to perceive the meaning through those events. But due to the unreliability of many sources in such matters a subdivision of the discipline known as the occasions of the revelation (*asbāb an-nuzūl*) was established by scholars. In this discipline they investigated the accounts which might be regarded as authentic, showing how and when a particular passage was revealed.

But as Grunebaum states, the study of the text had to go beyond explaining obscure or contradictory passages since the political and theological movement in later centuries found their legitimation in the Book. Therefore, *Tafsīr* or explanation was followed by *Tawīl* or interpretation.²⁰

Just as with the explanation of the Qurān, the interpretation of it was affected by inaccuracy and imagination. Independent interpretation became so demanded in some periods that some Muslim jurists banned the works of those who interpreted the Qurān in a weak manner.²¹ However, it should be mentioned that the problem of interpreting religious faith in Islam differs from Christianity. H.Enayat believes in this connection that the disagreement among Muslims, unlike in Christianity, does not relate to the nature of God, or the function

of His Emissary, or the manner of achieving human salvation.²²

The Muslim tradition is not less important than the commentaries on the Qurān in respect of historical value and accuracy. The authenticity of Muslim tradition, in general, has been doubted by many researchers on Islamic history, especially Western ones. For instance, Crone and Cook believe that while there are no cogent internal grounds for rejecting the tradition contained in the Muslim historical sources, there are equally no cogent external grounds for accepting it. With this conviction they step outside the Islamic tradition in analysing Islamic history and culture.²³ J.Schacht on the legal tradition in Islam states that these traditions must be not taken as an authentic or essentially authentic, even if slightly obscured, statement valid for the Prophet's time or the time of the Companions, until the contrary is proved. To him, it should be regarded as 'the fictitious expression of a legal doctrine formulated at a later date'.²⁴ However, others, such as M.Watt, based their research on these traditions.

These questions, while interesting, are not germane to the purpose of my thesis. Aware of the above-mentioned difficulty in approaching the Qurān and *Sunnah*, I rely mainly on a general sense of the Qurānic verses in this thesis.²⁵ In other terms, I am using the Qurān as a document illustrative of early Islamic political concepts.

To sum up, the principal object of this thesis is not the authenticity of early Islamic documents: it is to reconstruct, using relevant historical materials, the political theory inherent in Nahj al-balāghah.

Chapter I

Origins of Islam; their political relevance and different approaches to them

Introduction

For Muslims, there exists a direct relationship between politics and their religion, Islam. The Qurān, which is the holy book of Muslims and is known to them as the word of God, contains many verses on the political duties of individual and society. On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad was the political leader of his community for more than 10 years (from 621 to 632 A.D). These two complementary factors have led the Muslims to assume Islam as a political faith to a certain extent.

However, this kind of unification of religion and politics may seem strange to most Westerners, who have been accustomed to think of religion as concerned only with personal piety. The origin of such a perception can be traced back to the European wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ Some authors believe that the issue of separation of politics and religion came into prominence in post-Enlightenment societies.² Furthermore it may also be deduced from the sentence attributed to Jesus: 'Render to Caesar which belongs to Caesar and to God which belongs to God' that politics is something evil, although there is no consensus on this among Christians.

Consideration of this difference is vital in examining any political issue in the study

of Islam including the subject of this thesis which is related to the political analysis of early Islam. Furthermore, as a historical approach to early Islamic politics, a discussion on the origins of Islam seems inevitable.

The purpose of this part is firstly to present a brief and maybe insufficient remark on the origins of Islam and to express different approaches to them. Secondly, to glance at the differences between the Islamic and Christian points of view as regards political affairs.

I

Islamic origins

In dealing with the origins of Islam serious studies and popular accounts of the Qurān and the life of Prophet Muhammad have been written so far. Especially, modern writers have provided much speculation on the genesis and nature of Muhammad's mission. In our research, in which the history of Islam from its advent to the end of the caliphate of Rāshidūn is discussed, a brief account of the ideas about the roots and origins of Islam seems necessary.

Basically, works on the origin of Islam may be divided into two different perspectives according to their historical and cultural context: the insiders and the outsiders.

This division is based on the methodological approach of each group to Islam's origins. The 'insider' or a faithful Muslim accepts the revelation and the 'message' of God as the main cause of Islam and Muhammad as a 'messenger'. He establishes his knowledge on these assumptions. However, 'the outsider', mainly non-Muslim, tries to look at the Islamic origins

from a scientific and critical point of view without any presumption.

As D. Waines believes, these outsiders have contributed to an understanding of Islamic origins by bringing to the early existing Arabic sources 'different concerns, questions, and methods of investigation'.³ To Waines, the new approaches in scholarly research which were applied to the sources of the Judeo-Christian tradition since the nineteenth century in European academies have influenced 'the outsiders' approach to Islam.

Jacque Wardenberg classifies the Western studies on the history of Islam into three groups.⁴ First, those who follow the method of Julius Wellhausen in examining the early development of Islam. They concentrate their studies on the external history of Islam. They observe Islam from outside and examine its rise and collapse without paying attention to its internal grounds. The second group are those who analyze Islamic history in its socio-economic and political context. Bernard Lewis is among these scholars. The third approach towards Islamic history is related to the internal changes of Islam and its cultural aspect. Ignaz Goldziher, as one of the most prominent scholars with such an approach, tried to provide an ideological framework for the historical change of Muslim history.

All these groups are outsiders, or non-Muslim. For insiders, the scripture and *Sunnah*, which is believed to be the Prophet's words and deeds as transmitted by his Companions, constitute the ultimate source of guidance. The advent of Islam was the will of God and He chose Muhammad as His Messenger to deliver His Message. The rise of Islam, therefore, is not necessarily seen through its natural causes.

Sayed Ameer Ali, in his Spirit of Islam and Islam, presents his view as an insider.

In his books he sets out to explain his faith to a British public which is either indifferent to or ignorant of Muslim thought and practice. He asserts that those who have described Muhammad's character in the West have been mostly hostile to him and their description of Islam is not always friendly. In Ameer Ali's opinion Muhammad was the receiver of the 'Call' of God and he was the destined Messenger of God to his people.⁵ The main reason for his success, according to Ali, was his humility of spirit, nobility of soul, simplicity of conduct and firm devotion to duty which had elevated him from being a humble preacher to the rank of arbiter of the destinies of a nation.⁶

Fazlur Rahman, a Pakistani Muslim scholar, in his Islam and Modernity, views the Islamic origins in the same manner. Rahman's main concern is to present a proper understanding of scripture for modern Muslim life owing to the threat of modernity to religious faith. In Islam, he rejects the idea that the Judeo-Christian factor influenced the emergence of Islam. To many scholars, the Judeo-Christian influence caused Arabia to go through a process of religious turmoil before the advent of Islam. This fermentation, to these scholars, had caused some people to become dissatisfied with Arabian paganism and to arrive at an idea of monotheism. Muhammad's contribution, therefore, emerged from such circumstances and was a confirmation of the idea of monotheism.⁷ Rejecting this idea, he asserts that the Qurān is a document of Muhammad's revelatory experience in which the central concern is with human conduct. He says:

'No real morality is possible without the regulative ideas of God and the Last Judgment'.⁸

Despite this approach, in which the Qurān is a revelation, in the western view it is a man-made historical source. Even if the Qurān is taken as a revelation, Muhammad's role in

history will be studied through his natural motives. He is seen in a historical examination as a 'man' who realized the needs of his time and responded to them properly.

W.M.Watt, whose ideas regarding the political growth of Islam were reflected in the above-mentioned sentences, and who is one of the most famous scholars on early Islam, analyzed the advent of Islam by reconstructing the socio-economic and political context of Muhammad's community of the central Arabian society in the early 7th century. To Watt, the Meccan transition to a mercantile economy was the main social factor that influenced Muhammad's career. The growth of the city as a trading centre came about through its geographical and social conditions. By the time of Muhammad, Mecca was an entirely commercial city which was surrounded by desert and tribal communities. This change in the Meccan society had undermined the traditional tribal order and created a moral and social malaise. Muhammad's call to Islam was a respond to these deteriorating conditions.⁹

P.Crone and M.Cook in Hagarism, which is not as moderate as Watt's work, examine the Islamic origins from a sceptical point of view. Contrary to Watt, they question the historical value of the Qurān and the Islamic tradition on which it is based. They establish their work on non-Muslim, mainly Greek and Syriac, sources believing that no early source attests the historicity of the events of early Islam. Regarding the *Hijrah* from Arabia to the conquered territories, they believe that the emigrants of that time were not called Muslims by non-Muslim sources. To them, that emigration was an irredentist movement in alliance with Jewish refugees from Palestine aimed at the recovery of the Holy Land.¹⁰ They also understand from those sources that Muhammad was preaching some form of Judaic messianism.

Referring to the Judeo-Christian influence in studying the origins of Islam has been the focus of attention of some modern scholars including Charles Torrey and Richard Bell. For Torrey, while Muhammad's 'Islam' varied from previous religions, its development from the very beginning came directly from Israelite sources. Torrey tries to show how Muhammad was inspired by his wide and intimate acquaintance with Judaism.¹¹ He also states that there is no clear evidence that he has ever received instruction from a Christian teacher while many facts prove emphatically the contrary. He describes Muhammad as a man of very unusual originality and energy and the Qurān, as his own creation. For Bell, on the other hand, Muhammad's contemporary Christian environment provided the ultimate stimulus to his religious ideas.¹² According to him, Muhammad with a high religious genius and a great native mental power, but very limited knowledge, was prepared to borrow many things from other religions, especially Christianity, to be able to carry on his own enterprise.¹³

The massive study by Leon Caetani on the life of the Prophet which appeared in Milan in 1905 was another example of an 'outsider's' view to Islam. As Maxime Rodinson states, Caetani's work could rightfully inspire a sense of discouragement among the researchers of early Islam.¹⁴ However Caetani mentioned an important point regarding the subsequent period which is directly related to our study. He believes that the Arab conquest, which occurred during the Caliphate of Rāshidūn, originated from the campaigns begun at the end of the Prophet's life. He asserted that the encroachment of the Arabs on the Fertile Crescent had been a fact for a very long time before Islam and saw the cause of this expansion in the supposed progressive desiccation of Arabia.¹⁵ But Rodinson criticises this assumption and believes that the evolution of the climate was much more complex than had been imagined at the time of Caetani, so that if a period of drought had begun at the time of Muhammad it

could in no way explain the earlier tendency towards expansion.¹⁶

H. Lammens's hypothesis regarding the expansion of Arabia in that period is also worthy of interest. He believes that the main motive for Arabs was an irresistible psychological penchant for raiding.¹⁷

Ignaz Goldziher, doubting the authenticity of the Traditions, pays particular attention to the first two or three centuries of the development of the Islamic community. He believes that Islam extended itself into the larger world by means of external power before its fundamental doctrines had crystallized and taken on definite form, before even the first lines of its practical life had been given definite shape. For him, those who participated in the expansion of Islam in the first decades after the death of the Prophet 'were Muslims who had not yet incorporated Islam into their consciousness to any substantial degree'.¹⁸ Islam for them was a battle cry more than it was a doctrine.

As for the Qurān, it was known only to the small minority of those who fought so successfully for the victory of the Word of God in Syria , Babylon , Persia , and Egypt before this ignorance had been brought under control by 'Uthmān.

Goldziher's important conclusion is that the ritual institutions of Islam did not develop uniformly and that the formal elements of Islamic practice remained without any discipline for a considerable period of time.¹⁹ It is so because the masses, to him religiously indifferent people from the various Arab tribes, shared no firmly established norms at the time of the conquest.

This brief, and perhaps insufficient, account of Islamic origins from these various points of view enables us to have a closer examination of Islamic fundamentals in the Qurān

and the *Sunnah*. The study of these principles is essential in our study, due to their influence on the history of the first four decades of Islam.

Our view in this thesis is somewhere between the Outsider's and the Insider's view. It tries to adapt a 'Muslim' approach to the early history of Islam with an understanding of the 'non-Muslim' critical viewpoint. Moreover, we are neither going to discuss the historical value of the Islamic text nor rely on whatever is known as Islamic tradition.

Western attempts to understand the origins of Islam and its history may be helpful for a Muslim student since they present a 'neutral' or independent approach to the subject, although Westerners may be biased because of their 'non-Islamic' background.

II

The origins of the difference in the perception of Politics between Muslims and Christians

According to W.M.Watt, the early Christian movement did not believe in the separation of religion and politics, but political quietism was merely a matter of survival.²⁰ The different perceptions of politics among Muslims and Christians may have originated from the different social circumstances at the advent of these two religions. In other words the political situation that prevailed when the two religions were born may have caused their different approaches to politics. H.A.R.Gibb accounts for the organizational differences between the Muslim and Christian communities as a consequence of the social and political situation that existed at the early stages of Islam and Christianity.

'Christianity arose within a society in which the natural social ties had long since been weakened or had disintegrated, [...] Membership in the church gave to such individuals a new and needed sense of community.'²¹

On the other hand the situation at the advent of Islam was different.

'Islam arose within a society of strongly marked and self-conscious kinship groupings, and while it created a supertribal community, its social units continued to be kin-groups...'²²

This clarification may explain the position of the Church in Christianity which has no counterpart in Islam.

Another dissimilarity between Islam and Christianity may be found in the way they relate with political power, which also derives from the different political situations at the early stages of development of the two religions. Gibb believes that early Christians first needed the moral support of a controlling hierarchy, which later imposed its authority upon rulers and used the political power thus acquired to reinforce its civil power. While the Christian way to power resulted in theological debates which made political issues secondary to faith, Islam began to grow within a political organization:

'and its earliest differences of opinion were expressed in the garb of political issues.'²³

The Muslims' main concern after the death of Prophet Muhammad was finding the best successor to rule their community. Different sects of Muslims emerged from this standpoint. The choice of a leader was the most important religious duty for them at that time.

Bernard Lewis tries to highlight the impact of the different contexts in which the Islamic and the Christian civilizations emerged, on the political ideas and theories that developed in these two cultures. He explains that:

'Western civilization was born amid the chaos of the barbarian invasions, in a political context dominated by two contrasting facts- the fall of the Roman State and the rise of the Christian Church'.²⁴

As he asserts, the political institutions in Christianity did not gain positive recognition until the thirteenth century. However, Lewis depicts a different picture of Muslim theorists who were influenced by a totally different historical background at the beginning of their civilization. According to him, Muslim historical observation and political analysis moved in the opposite direction, and began not with defeat but with triumph, not with the fall but with the rise of an empire. Political authority, therefore, was not a human evil for Muslims at that time. Instead, it was divine good.

'The body politic and the sovereign power within it were ordained by God Himself, to promote faith and to maintain and extend His law'.²⁵

Apart from historical factors, the dissimilarity between their sources of knowledge has intensified the difference between the Muslims and the Christians' perception of politics. In fact the unification of politics and religion in Islam has been the result of this self-sufficiency in knowledge. W.M. Watt has distinguished between two kinds of knowledge; knowledge for living and knowledge for power. He argues that for a traditional Muslim, knowledge was essentially religious and moral, and was all contained in the Qurān and the *Hadīth* (recorded

practice of the Prophet), while for the Christians it was about the natural world, human individuals and communities, in order to control things and people (knowledge for power). It should be added that Muslims had no difficulty in associating their religious activities with their political ones because both the Prophet Muhammad and the Qurān had encouraged them to do so.

It might be one of the reasons why Muslims were not concerned with or intellectually involved in the political and social issues of the Enlightenment period, until Western imperialism confronted Muslim values in the 18th century and afterwards.

Chapter 2

Foundations of Islam in the Qurān and *Sunnah*

Introduction

The brief introduction to the approaches towards the origins of Islam and reference to the factors which gave rise to different notions of politics among Muslims and Christians enable us to examine some political foundations of Islam in this chapter. Study of these political grounds is very essential to our study.

This relevance comes from the fact that the history of the caliphate in the first four decades of Islam was profoundly influenced by the principles established by Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime. For instance, the policy of expansionism adopted by the first caliphs was partly a continuation of Muhammad's policy in bringing all neighbouring tribes under his control in the name of Islam and partly due to the call of the Qurān that Islam was superior to all religions and that a faithful Muslim's duty was to fight for it. In regard to government, those caliphs followed the Prophet's pattern in their affairs. The institution of *Shūrā* during the caliphate of Rāshidūn and after was rooted in the Prophet's conduct in Medina.

However, these Islamic fundamentals did not remain in their original form during the caliphate of Rāshidūn. This was mainly due to the changing circumstances of the Muslim community which was increasingly expanded and faced with unprecedented affairs. The new wealth, new converts, new opposition, etc, required a new government in appearance which was yet unchanged in fundamentals.

The guarantor for this new government's commitment to principles was a group of Muslims among the first generation , especially the *Muhājirūn* and *Ansār*, who lived with the Prophet and were concerned about the fate of the Muslim community after his death.

From this view, all the disagreements which appeared after the death of Prophet Muhammad and during the caliphate of Rāshidūn were about dealings with the Islamic fundamentals in the new circumstances.

The view presented in Nahj al-balāghah is a typical approach towards the Islamic political principles and an analysis of the method of the first four caliphs in dealing with them. The notion of Imāmate and the kind of authority that an Imām may have according to Nahj al-balāghah is identical to the political authority of the Prophet who held both religious and secular authority. Also it is argued that during the caliphate of Uthman, the main argument about the illegitimacy of his government referred to his bad treatment of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. However, it is assumed that 'Alī with an extensive knowledge of those Islamic principles took a firm stand against this tendency.

Therefore, in understanding 'Alī's politics and government in Nahj al-balāghah, we have to mention some of the Islamic political principles first. In this chapter the issues of government, political freedom, social unity, political economy and perception of history are examined in the framework of the Qurān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. This investigation will be the base of our analysis in the next chapters when the governments of the first caliphs are reviewed.

I

Arab society before Islam

To explain the Islamic political principles from the Qurān and the sunna we have to examine the Islamic society of Medina where Muhammad established his community and where the most parts of the Qurān were revealed. But this aim cannot be fulfilled without having a general view of the political background prior to Islam. The pre-Islamic political institutions, relationships, customs and even geographical conditions have been taken into consideration by researchers who have examined the appearance of Islam.

It has been said that Islam was born in an era when the civilized world stood on the edge of chaos as a consequence of the decline of the old 'emotional cultures' which had given to men a sense of unity.¹ The fifth and sixth centuries are characterised by power challenges of two empires of the time; Persian and Roman. Muhammad is seen as a man who played an emotional role in unifying the scattered tribes of the Arabian Peninsula and mobilizing them to conquer the known world of that time.

There are different ideas about the pre-Islamic history of Arabs since there are not enough written works about that time. In fact the main sources of knowledge in defining the history of Arabs before Islam are the Biblical sources as well as the archaeological findings and other writings by Greeks, Romans, and Muslims in medieval ages. However, there have been some speculations on the matter in our time.

One of the contributions to the matter is the theory of Winckler-Caetani which describes

Arabia before Islam originally as a land of great fertility and the first home of the Semitic peoples. Later, it faced a process of steady dehydration, a drying up of wealth and waterways and a spread of the desert at the expense of the cultivable land. This loss in productivity together with the increase in the number of inhabitants led to a series of crises linked to overpopulation and consequently to a continuing series of invasions of the neighbouring countries by the Semitic peoples of the peninsula.² The dehydration and the spread of the desert in the Peninsula influenced the social life of its inhabitants and formed a special form of life there.

A fundamental fact in respect of the Arab peninsula is the distinction between two large ethnic groups, one northern, the other southern. The people in the north were essentially nomads, while in the south was an agricultural civilisation.³ The main characteristic of the population of central and northern Arabia, where Islam began to grow, immediately preceding the rise of Islam, was Bedouin tribalism. But it should be borne in mind that the inhabitants of that area may in turn be divided into the *Badw* who were inhabitants of the desert, and the *Hadar* who lived in towns.⁴ It has been difficult to trace the background and history of the nomads based on much scantier information in comparison with the development and evolution in the southern civilization of Arabia. But a general outlook of the situation in the northern area has been made using remains of their poetries and some other ancient sources. The following definition given by Bernard Lewis may explain this Bedouin society better:

'In Bedouin society the social unit is the group, not the individual. The latter has rights and duties only as a member of his group. The group is held together externally by the need for self-defence against the hardship and dangers of desert life, internally by the blood-tie of descent in the male line which is the basic social bond'⁵.

Bedouins in Arabia were always in a constant struggle with a cruel environment in which they found themselves always obliged to move in search of water and fertile land in order to live and feed their sheep.⁶ Their political organization was undeveloped. The head of this organization was a leader elected by the elders of his tribe, but who possessed no coercive powers.

M.S. El-Awā denies the opinion that Arabian tribes had some form of political organization.⁷ He argues that two elements did not exist in Bedouin gatherings in the Arabian Peninsula before Islam. Firstly they did not possess any territory to enable them to develop the concept of homeland and secondly they lacked political authority to maintain peace and to work for the continued progress of society.⁸

Dr. Jawed 'Alī counts this kind of tribal authority as the main factor which hindered the establishment of a strong political system. To him, each tribe had its own leader who was nominated according to Arab customs. In addition, each bedouin had his own idol in Ka'ba which played an integral part in the life of pre-Islamic Arabs.⁹ In addition to this cultural factor, two other factors are involved as the main reasons for the absence of a powerful political system before Islam, namely the economic and geographic factors. The economic factor refers to the scarcity of natural resources in Arabia which created problems for the inhabitants. The Arab tribes had to fight with one another in order to gain control over those scanty resources. The geographic factor relates to the inhabitable parts of Arabia. In this connection the inhabitable lands were very far apart. This great distance, in turn, made it impossible for any sort of central authority to control easily its subjects.¹⁰ Owing to these difficulties, some are of the opinion that none of the neighbouring powers of Arabia tried to

spread their rule inside the Peninsula.¹¹

The political situation in towns was a little different. Mecca was a trading community whose ruling group were a kind of merchant aristocracy of business men from the tribe of Quraysh. The ideal of this tribe was nomadic and they did not enjoy an organized political institution. Bernard Lewis counts the commercial experience of the Meccan traders as the origin of their powers of:

'co-operation, organization, and discipline which were rare among the Arabs and of unique importance in administering the vast empire soon to fall under their rule'.¹²

It should be noted that even the Quraysh family who possessed the mentioned commercial experience were divided among themselves into two major clans, *Banī Hāshim* and *Banī Umayya*. It seems that a kind of hidden hostility or at least a competing behaviour regarding the control of the affairs pertaining to the annual pilgrimage to the Ka'ba existed between these two clans.¹³ This feeling had originated from the time of their ancestor *Qusay*¹⁴. The divergence between these two clans continued for centuries, even after the triumph of Quraysh over Arabia.

The situation in *Yathrib*, later to become Medina, was worse than in Mecca. Its pre-Islamic history is occupied by the disputes between two tribes, the *Aws* and the *Khazraj* of southern origin.¹⁵ Also a minority of Jews who were inhabitants of that area for a long time, lived there. Historians assume that these long-lasting wars between these two tribes in Medina were the origin of Medina's invitation to Muhammad in order to make him an arbitrator and peacemaker among themselves. The origin of this conflict again refers to their tribal interests

which lasted until the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.¹⁶

In spite of these problems a kind of political covenant existed in pre-Islamic Arabia which later constituted the basis of unity among the Arabs. These political agreements (*Hilf*) were made mainly by the weaker tribes who had to strengthen their positions by means of treaties with stronger ones. This was necessary in order to survive in the severe conditions prevailing in Arabia. Since war had become the final way to gain resources and to survive, weak tribes were naturally influenced to make pledges with others to deter the threat of enemies.¹⁷ Therefore, it might be said that these agreements were based on common interests. Muhammad himself apparently took such pledge (*hilf al- fuzūl*) when he was 25 years of age, and it was quoted that he approved it later when he preached Islam.¹⁸

As a conclusion it might be said that there had not been existed a perfect form of political system when Islam was born in Arabia. Or as Watt describes it:

'the Arabs of Muhammad's time had no conception of a community, or body of people living a common life, other than the tribe'.¹⁹

Arnold J. Toynbee though believes that by the time of Muhammad's migration to Medina, the Arabs already possessed all the requisites for becoming world-conquerors, except political unity.²⁰ This idea has been further supported by Muslim historians in favour of their discussions on Islamic political system. But it seems that both western and Muslim commentators on the pre-Islamic history of Arabia agree on the novelty and unprecedented government of Medina which unified that society.

As complementary to our discussion it seems necessary to study the political situation of the two empires of the early seventh century since it might be argued that their systems of government might have had impact on the Islamic one. It might be said that the major difference between Arabia and the two Empires of Persia and Rome in the early seventh century and before the advent of Islam resided in their political systems. These two empires enjoyed powerful central governments ruled by the Sasanids in Persia and Caesars in Rome. However, as mentioned earlier, Arabia was broken into pieces by various tribal authorities scattered all over the Peninsula. Each part of Arabia was ruled by some tribes which were gathered on the basis of blood relationships.

Although the two empires of Persia and Rome enjoyed a powerful central government, their political system lacked some fundamental elements. The ruling system in both empires was monarchy and they were based on very hierarchical principles. The Iranians were divided among four absolutely distinct castes so that no-one could change their caste and shift to a higher position. The administration consisted of about fifteen thousand officers who were mostly recruited from the ruling tribe of Pasargade. Furthermore the key positions in the Cabinet were given to those who were assumed to have 'blue blood' in their veins.²¹

In respect of the Roman government, A. stratos believes that the positions in the administration of the Roman Empire at the time of the birth of Muhammad,

'were being sold and those who had bought them milked those subjected to their government in order to reimburse themselves'²².

He asserts that although the Senate in Constantinople continued to play an important part as it had done in Imperial Rome and select the emperors, its role was almost formal and it suffered from 'the lack of legal rules', and many of the Emperors used to invoke its aid in examining or approving the most important Decrees.

Regarding people and their political participation there is a unanimity among historians that neither Iranian nor Roman people had any active involvement in politics. It appears that their role consisted only of supporting the armies and the kings. Those people, especially the cultivators, were subjected to a draconian policy of taxation in the early seventh century.

Some of the Qurānic foundations

To be able to focus on the nature of Islamic government and politics we have to consider both the Prophet's political measures as the head of the Islamic community and the verses of the Qurān. Regarding the Qurān, it should be mentioned that the matter of governing society is examined in this book in a historical context. Most of the verses were revealed on specific occasions.

The viewpoint of the Qurān in respect of government may be seen from different angles. The most obvious confirmation of the legitimacy of government may be linked to the political authority of some prophets mentioned in the Qurān. Generally the Qurān says:

'We (God) sent foretime Our Messengers with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that human-beings may conduct themselves with equity'.²³

In this manner prophets are not only the propagators of their religion but also the political leaders of their societies because providing equity in society for human beings requires participating in political affairs. Some more explicit utterances about the prophets, who were the political leaders of their societies, can be found in these verses: 'And they followed what the Satan chanted of sorcery in the 'reign' of Solomon?'²⁴ ; 'And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Saul to be a king over you.'²⁵ ; Joseph said: 'My Lord! hast given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings.' ; 'But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom'²⁶ 'Oh David! surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice and do not follow desire.'²⁷

Establishing a government and ruling society by means of administration and a political system is a premise in the Qurānic point of view. There are many verses that can be meaningful, had we supposed a certain political system of governing society. Many verses which refer to the economic, social and legal obligations of people are simply practicable in the framework of certain administrations monitored by a political system. For example: 'And know that whatever thing you acquire in war, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Apostle and for the [...]'²⁸ or: 'They ask you about the windfalls. say: The windfalls are for Allah and the Apostle.'²⁹ ; 'And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah; and Allah is Mighty, Wise'.³⁰ Needless to say that judgements about thieves and other criminals, and issuing and implementing verdicts, are the responsibility of a judiciary system which has been stated differently in other verses.

However, one may argue that these injunctions were revealed for the political society of Medina, when Prophet Muhammad was their leader, and that we cannot infer general rules from these time-limited issues. The Qurān introduced itself as a guide for all people forever: 'Surely this Qurān guides to that which is most upright.'³¹ ; 'And certainly We have set forth to men in this Qurān similitude of every sort that they mind'.³² On the other hand the Qurān has not expressed in detail a specific administration for Islamic society but it has introduced the principles and main rules. It has made it incumbent upon the Muslim thinkers to study the divine law and deduce rules and laws according to their existing needs and requirements in different times and societies.

Supposing that the Qurān regards government as an integral part of society; what kind of government is its most favourite? Democratic, monarchic, authoritarian, totalitarian or something else? In fact the Qurānic government has its own characteristics. Its entire legitimacy and power comes from the Book and the example of the Prophet's life (*Sunnah*). 'The authority and control belong to Allah only'³³ and in another verse: 'And whatever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back.'³⁴ To be more precise, God is the Ruler of rulers, or, Greatest of rulers.³⁵ It is Him who gives the power to the rulers (irrespective of their faith): 'Say: Oh Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest'.³⁶

On this basis authorities must observe God's Will and disobey their own desires because man is only the viceregent of God.³⁷ An example of this matter can be given in the case of David who was considered a Prophet in the Qurān: 'Oh David We did indeed make

thee a viceregent on earth; so judge between men with justice and do not follow desire'.³⁸

It was mentioned earlier that, in the Qurān, the Prophet David was a political leader of society as well.³⁹

Briefly, from the Islamic point of view, the spirit of the whole political system is God.

In addition, the purpose of government is to provide justice and equity in society. From this standpoint the whole political system is considered as an instrument for that purpose.⁴⁰

Therefore every means which may help to achieve these goals can be employed and the ruler may be confined by those means. The Prophet is commanded in the Qurān to consult with others in important decision making: 'take counsel with them in all communal business'.⁴¹

The Qurān also makes it incumbent upon Muslims to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong (*al-Amr-e bil Ma'rūf van-nahy-e 'anil monkar*), which is seen as support for an effective element in a political society.

But an Islamic government cannot be conceived so easily unless its other dimensions are understood. Although the ideal type of Islamic government cannot be found in any of the contemporary political systems, we can sketch out the main points of it according to the Qurān. The Islamic government is not based on any kind of aristocracy since the Qurān condemns all advantages originating from social class or wealth or natural differences. In the history of nations quoted in the Qurān, the people who were in a higher economic and social position have been condemned as the first opposition groups to the divine messages. For example:

'Their Prophet said: Allah hath appointed Talut as king over you. They said: How can he exercise

authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance? He said: Allah hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and physique: Allah bestoweth His power on whom He pleaseth [...].⁴²

Another verse says:

'and we never sent a warner to a town but those who led lives in ease in it said: we are surely disbelievers in what you are sent with'.⁴³

And also:

'Certainly we sent Noah to his people, so he said; O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than Him; surely I fear for you ... ,the chiefs of his people said ; Most surely we see you in clear error'.⁴⁴

A Muslim scholar summarises the Qurānic view to these people in three points. Firstly, the elite of those nations almost always rejected the message of God. Also, their rejection was due to their blind disobedience, and to the fact that the equality, justice and freedom which were preached by the Prophets certainly threatened their societies and personal interests. And finally, the first followers of God's messages were always among victims of tyranny who had been seeking salvation from the despotism imposed on them.⁴⁵

Some verses of the Qurān deal with the collective and political duties of people. People are asked not to be indifferent towards other people in their community. 'Enjoining what is

right and forbidding what is wrong' is counted as a fundamental of being a Muslim along with believing in God and the Last Day.⁴⁶ This principle implies that the individual already practising these virtues must remind others to do the same so that society as a whole may be positively influenced. Secondly the principle of 'defence of the Muslim territory' is recommended whenever Islamic society is in danger. These duties make Muslims work actively for the survival of political systems which, if not totally committed to Islam, are at least sympathetic to its goals, and conversely, struggle with regimes hostile to Islam whenever the opportunity presents itself.⁴⁷ It should be mentioned that the Qurān counts the indifference of people towards the moral virtues of their society as one of the reasons for the collapse of communities in its historical viewpoint. The principle of *Amr-e bil ma'rūf van-nahy-e anil monkar* is aimed at preventing people from such apathy according to the Qurān. Each individual in society has the responsibility of enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong. In other words, there should be a social awareness towards moral principles within the context of a particular society. The following verse of the Qurān tries to explain this fact:

'Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measures. God will certainly aid those who aid His cause'.⁴⁸

Immediately it describes the people who aid the cause of God:

'Those who , if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong '.⁴⁹

The idea of enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong is pregnant with tremendous political significance. It is the most important collective duty of Muslims which has the potential to shape their political role and to establish a suitable form of government. The outcome of such a change in the social life of Muslims was the conviction that Islam recommends a unified nation. This idea still constitutes an integral part of Muslim thought.

Prophet Muhammad, his politics and government

Prophet Muhammad was the political leader of his community from 621 (the year of the migration from Mecca to Medina) to 632 (the year of his death). The Qurān pays particular attention to the special role of Muhammad. In fact it considers three different positions for him in the society of Medina. First he is described as a messenger of God. In this capacity his responsibility is just to deliver the message of God to the people: 'Nothing is (incumbent) on the apostle but to deliver (the message)'.⁵⁰ Second, he is introduced in the Qurān as a judge among Muslims:

'But no! by your Lord! They do not (believe in reality), until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them and then do not find any straits in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with either submission'.⁵¹

In addition he had a third role in society, which was obviously political. He led his army in wars against his enemies, made financial decisions, ruled society as a political leader. In this regard, God commanded people to obey Prophet Muhammad:

'O, you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you
[...]'.⁵²

This verse has functioned to legitimize the political conduct of religious leaders.

In his political capacity, Prophet Muhammad played an active role which has impacted upon Muslim political life today. The entire period of the Prophet's life in Medina was characterized by his endeavour to unify all the tribes in the Arab peninsula. He devoted himself to making pledges, used force when necessary and endeavoured to bring the tribes under the control of Islamic Law. He conducted several wars against external enemies, signed pledges with different tribes from all over the Peninsula, and finally engineered society in the Arab Peninsula.

Prophet Muhammad's political behaviour profoundly influenced Muslim political life. It is noteworthy that some verses of the Qurān were revealed occasionally, whenever Prophet Muhammad was facing a political difficulty, to encourage him to fulfil his political duty. Such verses refer to matters such as human nature, historical events, the fate of previous prophets, and even predictions about the affairs in which the Prophet was involved. The Qurān also introduces the Prophet's actions as a pattern of life for Muslims to follow.⁵³

Muslim and non-Muslim authors alike believe that certain political measures were taken for the first time by the Prophet. For instance, Maxime Rodinson says that Prophet Muhammad :

'understood long before Clausewitz that normal means of political warfare covered almost everything including war and murder'.⁵⁴

He argues that the Prophet did not confine himself to mere preaching, that he solved the conflict between 'ends and means' and fulfilled his 'dual role' as a religious and political leader.

A Muslim writer believes that the charter produced by the Prophet to define the rights of the people of Medina (*Dustūr al-Madīnah*) may be considered the first document in history to provide for the principle which allows others to accede to a treaty after it is signed.⁵⁵

II

Islamic community; *Ummah*

It might be said that one of the basic changes in early Islamic history occurred in the form of the unification of the Arab tribes in the Islamic society which was founded by the Prophet Muhammad. The origins of this phenomenon are rooted in the Qurān as the word of God.

According to the Qurān the first persons who made men fully aware of society and turned independent attention to the maintenance of society were the prophets.⁵⁶ In other words God appointed prophets and sent them holy books in order to remove differences and

bring man back to the social unity which would be safeguarded by the prophets' laws.

According to the Qurān:

'Mankind was one single nation, and God sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed.'⁵⁷

The invitation to unity and gregariousness was for the first time issued by Noah, who was given a book and divine laws. Later on Abraham, and then Moses, and after him Christ, were entrusted with this task.

'The same religion has He Established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah that Which we have sent by inspiration to thee and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely that ye should remain steadfast in religion and make no divisions therein.'⁵⁸

The Qurān proclaimed its invitation in two ways; firstly a call on the principle of social life and unity⁵⁹ and secondly instructions for making an Islamic community on the basis of unity and mutual adherence to safeguard spiritual and material interests of that community and its defence.⁶⁰

Here we have to point out some aspects of the Islamic community since it plays an essential role in Muslim life. There are some words in the Qurān meaning a community of people such as *Qawm*. But this word does not hold a religious reference in comparison with the word *Ummah*.⁶¹ Still, this does not necessarily mean that the word *Ummah* is more sacred than its counterparts because in many cases the group involved is not composed solely

of people who believed in messengers⁶², but as Watt suggests: "an *Ummah* had always a place in God's purposes".⁶³ In respect of the Islamic community (*Ummah*) it should be mentioned again that Islam regards society as the natural framework of human activity. The *Ummah* has special characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of societies. Dr. Ansāri defines the Islamic society as a theocentric, ethico-centric society nourished by the pursuit of godliness.⁶⁴ On the one hand the belief in and devotion to God provides a value-system and on the other hand the love for God, which is to be shown in form of the love for humanity, and the fear of God which is the fear of the Divine Judgment provides an ethico-religious society. In Islam the orbit of human life is considered broader than a worldly material one. Preserving divine teachings by means of purification of the self from every corruption and adherence to moral virtues is the use of this world according to many teachings of Islam. On this basis monotheism has been set as an objective for human society. However, the meaning of monotheism is beyond mere ethics in seeking obedience to the Will of one God. It is a total devotion to God which covers all human activities. In addition the *Ummah* is a family-based society. In fact the family plays an important role in the Islamic notion of society.⁶⁵ When Prophet Muhammad was ordered by God to reveal his mission he was commanded to warn his nearest Kinsmen.⁶⁶

The attitude of the Qurān towards the community of believers implies that this society is to be undivided and united. In this respect some social regulations and rules are set for this purpose. They advise Muslims to deal with their affairs by 'mutual consultation'.⁶⁷ They also make it the obligation of the people to look after and promote the spiritual, moral and general welfare of the community. People are encouraged to 'enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong'⁶⁸ and 'exhort one another to compassion, endurance and truth'.⁶⁹ Also it is written

that 'the believers are but a single Brotherhood' and enjoins them to make peace and reconciliation between themselves.⁷⁰ More importantly it sketches out the main form of Islamic political system which manages the entire affairs of this community which is to be an ethico- religious society. The Qurān also contains social prescriptions, which were elaborated by Muslim jurists later to constitute what is now known as 'Islamic law' or *Sharī'ah*, for the life of this community. M.Watt enumerates the general tenor of these social rules. According to the Islamic Law, *Shahādah* or profession of Faith, in addition to *Salāt* or Prayer, *Zakāt* or Legal alms or poor-tax, the Fast of *Ramadān* and the Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) make up the five pillars of Islam.⁷¹ Also the matters of marriage and divorce, inheritance, food-laws, wine-drinking, and usury, just to name a few are dealt with in the Qurānic social regulations so that Muslim jurists have not been obliged to make laws of their own. They just ascertained and expounded them.⁷²

Muhammad ruled the Islamic *Ummah* for more than 10 years beginning with his migration from Mecca to Medina in 621. During these years the first Islamic society came into existence, experienced power, and faced many difficulties. The attributes of that community give us an idea of the essence of the Islamic government. The way in which the prophet ruled society has constituted one of the main Islamic sources of knowledge regarding the political characteristics of the ideal Islamic government.

From one point of view the whole period of the Prophet's life in Medina may be summarised by his endeavour to unify all the tribes of the Arabic peninsula. During that time he devoted himself to making pledges, using force when necessary, in order to bring the tribes

under the control of Islamic Law. He conducted several wars and signed many pledges with different tribes and groups all over the Peninsula, and finally he succeeded in establishing a society the size and strength of which had never existed there before.

The society of Medina was the first of its kind. The communities prior to Islam were named *Qabilah* or *Qawm*, which meant 'tribe', while the Islamic society of Medina was called *Ummah* by the Qurān which refers to it as a religious community. The basis of this community was brotherhood instead of tribal or family relations. In other words the Prophet created a new kind of community that:

'integrated individuals, clans, cities, and even ethnic groups into a larger community ... in which a new common law and political authority could be built to regulate the affairs of the populace as a whole'.⁷³

It is also worthwhile pointing out that the society of Medina, as a result of long-lasting tribal wars and disputes, welcomed the rulership of the Prophet. However, there is a tendency among some scholars to draw an analogy between the chiefs' authority over their tribes, and the Prophet's authority over the *Ummah*.⁷⁴

The most important political evidence of Muhammad's government is the Constitution of Medina which is mentioned earlier. This was an agreement, which consisted of 47 items, between Muhammad and the people of Medina who asked him to migrate there. According to items 23 and 42 all disputes were to be referred to Muhammad. It was connected with the recognition of him as Prophet as the Qurān says:

'It is one of the functions of a Messenger of God to judge justly between the members of the community to which he is sent'.⁷⁵

In addition he was regarded as the chief of the Emigrants in the preamble, which in turn increased his position to the rank of chief of a clan. In item 36, war declarations are exclusively in the hands of Muhammad. In other items there are more implications of his supremacy over society.

But Muhammad is not known as either a despotic or an autocratic ruler, considering the other items of this charter. Firstly the principle of equality is included in this document as item 47 says: "this document will not protect the unjust and the sinner". Secondly the basis of a territory for a government is recognized in item 39 where Medina is considered a sanctuary for the people of the document. Thirdly as far as the matter of toleration is concerned, the Jews ,who were among the groups living in Medina, were given the same status as other people. In fact they were counted as part of the *Ummah* (item 16). They had to share the expense of war with the Believers, and in turn they shared the spoils (item 24). They had the same standing as the people of Medina with complete loyalty from them (item 46).

Although the Prophet was to be the single ruler of Medina according to the Constitution, he faced many difficulties in order to achieve this. The previous inhabitants of Medina were considerably powerful and their chiefs were not satisfied with Muhammad's position. The Jews and Hypocrites of Medina who are strongly condemned in the Qurān are

these people. On many occasions they caused difficulties for the Prophet . In this regard the Prophet's reaction to them is of great importance. His method was firstly liberal and secondly powerful according to the Qurān.

After the death of the Prophet, Islamic society had to face political situations by itself and without God's clear commands and prepared solutions. In fact the period of revelation ended with the death of the Prophet. Muslims entered a new era, having inherited only some political principles introduced by the Prophet to guide them. They had to conduct themselves in new and unprecedented situations. From this point some Muslim thinkers tried to theorize the political phenomenon according to the principles and rules introduced by the Prophet and the Qurān. This subject will be further discussed in the next chapters.

It may be concluded that the society which was founded by Prophet Muhammad was different from other communities in that particular time and place. However, it cannot be denied that Arab norms and traditions helped the establishment of such a society. Principles such as *Amān* (protection), *Shūrā* (consultation), some rules of war, and *Hilf* (treaty), which were used by Muhammad in the society of Medina, belonged to the pre-Islamic tradition. But as K. Cragg stated, the Muslim *Ummah* was a revision of the prevalent system of living at the time of Muhammad if not a new personalism destined to transform the Arab mentality.⁷⁶

The Prophet's attempts for Unity

Muhammad did not have any success in his own city, Mecca, during more than a decade

of preaching Islam. In fact Arabs deeply believed that the best man to rule a tribe or clan was the man who was prominent in wisdom, prudence and judgement. If they had accepted Muhammad's claim, they would also have had to admit that he was the man best fitted to direct all the affairs of Mecca.⁷⁷ On the other hand the powerful merchants of Mecca might have presumed that the Qurān, in criticizing false attitudes to wealth, was attacking their whole way of life. They also realized that such teachings would gain Muhammad wide support if he became politically minded. Also there was a threat to the political power and influence of the rich merchants in Muhammad's very claim to have been receiving revelations from God. However, as Gabrieli mentions, Muhammad in one of his earliest revelations implied loyal solidarity with "the political and commercial interests by his native city".⁷⁸ In this revelation the invasion of Abraha, the Abyssinian governor at the time of the Prophet's birth, who intended to destroy Ka'ba, is mentioned and his miraculous defeat is attributed to God.⁷⁹ Another revelation refers to the Meccan covenant in their commercial activities and calls them to: "adore the Lord of this House".⁸⁰

The Prophet, however, had to migrate from Mecca to Medina, under heavy pressure from the Meccan oligarchy in 622 A.D. The tribes of *Aws* and *Khazraj*, as a consequence of their long-lasting enmity, welcomed him and accepted him as arbitrator among themselves. Their previous conversion to Islam, the treaties of *'Aqabah*, and the current situation paved the way for the Prophet to implement the revelations which had been received by him for more than a decade. These conditions which later led to the political role of Muhammad had a great impact on Islamic thought and history. However, it should be borne in mind that when he arrived at Medina he was regarded as one clan chief among nine, which implies that he was far from holding full power in Medina.

Upon entering Medina, Prophet Muhammad wanted everyone, irrespective of their race or religion, to cooperate in the cause for the city's progress and improvement. In this manner he did his best to eliminate all the differences between people, which would have been intensified by imposing the problems of the Immigrants of Mecca on the *Ansār* of Medina. He conducted the affairs of Medina in a political manner which led to their unity.

The first way in which he tried to achieve his goal of unity was by the performance of *Mu'ākhāt*, by which pairs of men became 'brothers'. This happened in the early days of Islam, the best example of it being the 'brothering' of Emigrants from Mecca with Muslims from Medina. Muhammad told each of the Emigrants and Helpers to take a brother 'in God' and he himself took 'Alī as his brother.⁸¹ According to Ibn Ishāq, Bilāl who was a man freed by Abū Bakr became brother with Abū Ruwayhah. Ibn Habīb on this matter has a list of over fifty pairs and believes that this brothering was made on the basis of right and sharing which implies that they could inherit from one another.⁸²

Muhammad also made agreements concerning Muslim affairs in Medina. The Jews subjected willingly to this agreement which enabled them to retain their religion and their property. This covenant is deemed so important by some Muslims because it represents the first document in history to 'provide for the principle which allows others to accede to a treaty after it is signed'.⁸³ However, other historians believe that this kind of covenant existed before Islam in Arabia in the form of *Hilf*, meaning 'compact', 'friendship' or 'covenant'.⁸⁴ Although M. Watt considers the Constitution of Medina as the depiction of a federation of clans which had existed before Islam, he discerns the points in which Islam influenced the Constitution.⁸⁵ First of all, there is recognition of 'believers and Muslims' as

those who are subjected to the agreement. Secondly the word 'prophet of God' appears in front of Muhammad's name as the writer of the treaty. Also referring disputes to God and to Muhammad, in addition to Muhammad's authority to give permission for warlike expeditions, are among these points.

At the time of Muhammad's Prophethood, the Arabs worshipped idols. The Ka'ba, which was founded by Prophet Abraham and is called the House of God by the Qurān, was a centre for more than 360 idols at the advent of Islam. This in turn caused them to be separated. Upon his arrival at Medina, Muhammad established a mosque for worshipping God. This measure was taken essentially in order to consolidate the community. The mosque was the place where believers gathered for prayer around the Prophet five times a day. He delivered his addresses, which contained not only appeals for obedience to God but also regulations affecting the social life of the community, besides conducting prayer. It was from the mosque that he controlled the religious and political community of Islam. At the Ka'ba, people used to gather to discuss every day affairs, as well as for important assemblies. T.W.Arnold confirms that during the primitive Muslim society of Medina the mosque was not only a place of prayer but also the centre of the political and social life of the community. Arab tribes were received in the mosque to swear allegiance to the Prophet. He also made political pronouncements from the mosque.⁸⁶

As mentioned before, the Islamic *Ummah* tended to be a theo-centric and ethico-religious community. The mosque, in this respect, was the demonstration of such a religious community. Such initiatives taken by the Prophet, along with other factors, paved the way for the consolidation of the Muslim *Ummah*. Among these other factors are the wars against the Meccan idolaters as well as the disloyal Jews of Medina.

During his 10 years in Medina and after the wars against the Quraysh of Mecca, Muhammad succeeded in establishing Islam as the dominant power in Arabia. But according to the Qurān the worst enemies of the Muslims were the Jews and idolaters who opposed the Prophet during those years.⁸⁷ Two measures taken by the Prophet towards the end of his life aimed at the elimination of these groups in order to make Arabia completely 'Islamic'. The first step was the *Barāah* declaration in the ninth year of the *Hijrah*, which prevented idolaters from performing the *Hajj* pilgrimage. Muhammad sent his messenger to Mecca to declare the 'supremacy' of believers over idolaters, and to inform the latter that they no longer had the right to perform the *Hajj* according to pre-Islamic customs that year. In the verse of *Barāah*, Allah declared 'His and His apostle's dissatisfaction' and abhorrence towards idolaters. They were given four months to embrace Islam.⁸⁸ After this deadline, Muslims were commanded to eliminate any form of idolatry in Arabia.⁸⁹ The second measure was the last will of the Prophet (*wasīyyah*). Muhammad, towards the last days of his life made a will that resulted in making Arabia the sole basis for Islam. He willed that those who remained in Judaism or Christianity be expelled from Arabia after him. This will was carried out later by the second caliph, 'Umar.

III

Equality, political freedom and toleration

The study of the political dimension of Islam in the context of the Qurān and the *Sunnah* cannot be fulfilled without examining the notion of equality and freedom. Starting with freedom, it should be mentioned that although there are several approaches such as philosophical, moral and legal to freedom, we are not going to enter into any of them as the

paradigm of our discussion. The following matters are mainly a description of the Qurānic notion of toleration and freedom, people's freedom in embracing religion, the extent of their right to participate in political affairs and the matter of the non-Muslims' choice in a Muslim state. Again, we are confined here to the Qurān and the Prophetic society of Medina.

To some scholars, the concept of freedom in Islam basically stands for the ultimate responsibility of man. A.A. Kurdi believes that the famous phrase, 'if you are responsible, you are free', significantly corresponds to the Islamic system's application of the concept of freedom.⁹⁰ The origins of this responsibility can be examined in the Qurān.

The story of the creation of Man and a dialogue between God and angels about Adam and eating from the Forbidden Tree depicts the best picture of Man's responsibility in the Qurān. But what precedes man's responsibility is his dual nature. According to the Qurān, human beings are composed of two completely opposite natures; the worldly and the heavenly. It is written that:

'And He (God) began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit.'⁹¹

In a more detailed manner in another verse it says:

'And certainly We (God) created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, Then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation , so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.'⁹²

In these two verses man is considered to be created from both substantial and godly materials. There are many verses that describe the material dimension of a human being in his creation. The words and expressions: 'dry clay such as earthen vessels or *Salsālin Kal-fakhkhār*'⁹³, 'clot of blood' or '*Alaqah*'⁹⁴, 'small life-germ in the seminal elements' or *Notfatin yumnā*,⁹⁵ 'dust' or *Turāb*⁹⁶, the essence of black mud fashioned in shape' or *salsālin min hamain masnūn*⁹⁷ and 'extract of clay' or *solālatin min tīn*⁹⁸ all refer to this dimension of man.

But these expressions are usually accompanied by words which denote another kind of creation which is Godly and divine. For instance it is said that God appointed man as his 'viceregent on earth' (*Khalīfah*)⁹⁹ and He breathed into man of 'His Spirit'.¹⁰⁰ In the story of Adam God made him superior to angels by teaching him 'the names'.¹⁰¹ Stating this dual nature of man it is emphasized that man is always under the attraction of both his material and spiritual powers.

On the basis of this duality in nature, man is asked not to be spoiled by his material needs. He is given the opportunity to obey the divine orders or to follow his own desires. This choice is the essence of man's responsibility. The Qurān says;

'Surely We have created man from a small life-germ uniting (itself): We mean to try him, so We have made him hearing and seeing. Surely we have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful'.¹⁰²

In other words man is free but at the same time responsible for what he does. In another verse it says:

'And follow of which you have not the knowledge; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.'¹⁰³

To the above-mentioned scholar, man is free because he is responsible. When God empowered Adam to choose either of the two ways He made him free as well as responsible. All punishments and rewards portrayed in the Qurān are His rewards for that responsibility.

Another basis of the Qurānic notion of freedom is creativity. It means that human beings are not perfect in this world but that they should try to make themselves perfect. Choosing the right path and rejecting evil desires is for their own benefit. Self-control and restraint from what is prohibited makes man's soul grow.

'Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright ; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray'.¹⁰⁴

The origins of freedom in Islam are in these verses and with this interpretation of human beings. The dual nature of man and the limitations on his material needs are premises for the theory of freedom in Islam which consists of the two notions of responsibility and creativity. This freedom is completely different from the Western notion of it which is usually regarded as 'the absence of obstacles to the realization of desires'.¹⁰⁵

Apart from these ideological passages, there are other expressions regarding freedom of thought and speech in the Qurān. But before any investigation, it should be noted that in Islamic literature there is not just one word denoting freedom or democracy, which are originally Western terms. The words '*Adl* (Justice), *Haq* (Right), *Shūrā* (Consultation) and

Musāwāt (Equality) are all equivalent to freedom and define it.¹⁰⁶

The assumption of freedom is implied in the verse of the Qurān which says:

'Oh, mankind, verily We created you from a single male and female, and rendered you nations and tribes for knowing. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most pious one. Thereupon God is Omniscient and Expert.'¹⁰⁷

The word 'knowing' in this verse is assumed as a distinctive characteristic of human beings which enables them to communicate with one another. Also it is implied that all human beings are equal in the sight of God.

However, in another verse it says:

'Say: Are they equal-those who know and those who do not know? Only those who are highly rational recognize [this fact].'¹⁰⁸

Although the verse does not specify any type of knowledge, it is counted as one of the sources of difference among people. The inequality between men in regard to natural talents is accepted in other passages as well since there are differences among human beings either inherent or acquired.

Also, the right of all men to be protected and to live securely in the community is expressed in another verse:

'Do not kill a man whose soul [*nafs*] has been made sacred, except through the due process of

law.¹⁰⁹

This respect for people in society and their right to enjoy law is stated in another verse. It was said that God had foreordained to the sons of Israel that whosoever killed a human being without any lawful reason, it was as though he had killed all mankind. And, whosoever saved a life, it was as though he had saved the lives of all mankind.¹¹⁰ The Qurān is full of laws revealed as regulations of Muslim society.

In addition to the Qurān, some examples of this equality and freedom can be found in tradition. Watt believes that the proclamation of a new religion by Prophet Muhammad was a response to the malaise of the times and due to the transition from a nomadic to a settled economy. On the basis of this assumption Watt concludes that there was a tendency to replace tribal solidarity by individualism.¹¹¹ For instance, the system of security at Medina which was based on the principle of blood-revenge by the kin-group was replaced by two moderate Islamic rules. Firstly, the rule that no more than a life was to be taken for a life¹¹² and , secondly, that once the equivalent revenge had been taken, the matter was to be considered settled.¹¹³

The saying is attributed to Prophet Muhammad that the greatest sins, which will not be tolerated or forgiven on Resurrection Day, are those of associating a god with God and those of killing a human being without due process of law.¹¹⁴

In regard to political participation, people had a role to play in the early period of Islam. For instance, the procedure for selecting a caliph was firstly through nomination by representatives of the people and secondly through allegiance of individuals in society. In the

case of the fourth Caliph, 'Alī, the people directly selected him as their political ruler.

'Consultation' (*Shura*) may be counted as another ingredient of Islamic political freedom in its early stages. There are some verses of the Qurān in which the Prophet is advised to consult with the others: 'and take counsel with them in the affairs'.¹¹⁵

Prophet Muhammad and his early successors followed this way and made consultation in many occasions. The above verse was revealed after the battle of *Uhud*¹¹⁶, when the Prophet wanted to remain and fight the enemy inside Medina, but after consultation with his companions he unwillingly decided to go out of the city. It should be mentioned that Muslims were recommended to consult each other not only when they took over political sovereignty in Medina but also when they were a helpless and powerless minority in Mecca.¹¹⁷ It is evident that the citizen's independency is the main premise in examining consultation by the administrators of state. The Prophet stated that:

"The differences of opinion among the learned within my community are (a sign of) God's grace".¹¹⁸

Slavery is another issue which is contained in the Islamic discussion of political freedom. Although it had existed among human beings in different forms for a long time, civil degradation was known as the common characteristic of slavery. Slaves were deprived of political activity in society. This phenomenon still existed at the advent of Islam so that a slave may be sold and bought by others. M. Fazlur Rahman believes that Islam did not terminate slavery but met the problem pragmatically. He states that in early Islam, unlike in the pre-Islamic era, the word 'Slave' applied exclusively to those who were taken captives

in the Islamic wars.¹¹⁹ Secondly Islam opened the way to freedom for slaves¹²⁰ and defined their rights. For example the Qurān introduced *Mukātabah* (Correspondence) which meant that a slave could pay some money to his owner by instalments to gain his freedom.¹²¹ Also an owner could state in his will that his slave would be free after his death.¹²² Furthermore, one way of paying the *Zakāt*, which is a social tax and one of the five pillars of Islam, was by freeing a slave.

Freedom of thought and speech in Islam needs more explanation since a religious society is not usually considered an open society. It seems that religious obligations are very deterministic so that they neglect human freedom and independence. As Watt states, the exercise of a certain control on man's activities by Islam does not mean that the vision or religious belief absolutely determines the whole way of life, 'for there are various aspects (in the Islamic world) which have a relative autonomy'.¹²³ It should be mentioned that there is not a homogeneous perception of all Islamic social affairs among Muslims. According to H. Enayat, different groups of Muslims interpret the various Qurānic injunctions and prophetic sayings differently- each according to its historical background, and the realities encircling it- and not always in terms conducive to a doctoral conduct of individual and social affairs.¹²⁴ The Qurān itself contains some passages which explicitly approve freedom to a certain extent. For example:

'Give good news to My servants, those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it'.¹²⁵

Needless to say that listening and following the best words is not possible unless there exists some kind of freedom of speech. Moreover the Qurān emphasizes that:

'There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error'.¹²⁶

and also:

'Oh, you who believe! when you go to war in Allah's way, make investigation, and do not say to any one who offers you peace: you are not a believer'.¹²⁷

In early Islam it meant that who ever greeted a Muslim should be perceived as a friend and not as an enemy except when his enmity was proved.¹²⁸ Moreover it is expressed in many verses of the Qurān that God may not be known and purely obeyed unless by means of reason and logic. The Qurān introduces many physical and tangible aspects of life such as heaven and earth, the alternation of night and day, the ships that sail on the seas, the water sent down from the clouds, camels, bees, ants, etc, as subjects of thought and reasons to believe in God. On the contrary, the practice of past bad customs is condemned altogether.

'We did not send before you any warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said: Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are followers of their footsteps'.¹²⁹

Therefore people are not obliged to accept whatever is presented by customs or habit. Furthermore the role of the prophets in the Qurān presents another dimension of human freedom. When people's rejection of the divine message depressed the Prophet, God gave him consolation by saying that: 'Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder. You are not a watcher over them'.¹³⁰ According to this, Muhammad did not play a despotic role forcing people to become believers.

Toleration

The above-mentioned verses may imply a tolerant aspect of Islam in respect of non-believers. But in investigating the history of early Muslim society, especially from a western point of view, we find some evidence of the opposite. The early wars waged by Muslims, aiming at introducing Islam and converting people to it, are usually regarded as evidence of Muslim intolerance and desire to impose their belief and ideas. As A.Hourani suggests, from the time it appeared, the religion of Islam was a problem for Christian Europe. In the seventh and eighth centuries armies fighting in the name of the first Muslim empire, the Caliphate, expanded into the heart of the Christian world. He argues that:

'the conquest was not only a military one, it was followed in course of time by conversions to Islam on a large scale.¹³¹

One might comprehend that there was a relationship between conversion to Islam and military expansion. In other words, this assumes that military strength was a basis for converting non-Muslims to Islam. Although it might be true in the case of Muslim expansion in later centuries, it seems that during the first four decades of Islam these wars were not organized to change the ideas or religion of the inhabitants of the conquered territories. Many people remained in their lands and retained their own religion, so that Muslim jurists had to allocate a part of jurisdiction to the rights of non-Muslims in a Muslim society. On the other hand the extraterritorial wars led by the Prophet and others led by the early caliphs, were initially defensive and preventive, just as authorized by the Qurān.¹³²

It can be concluded from many verses of the Qurān that holy war (*Jihād*) is legitimate for removing oppression¹³³, preventing the message of Islam from being damaged by non-Muslims, and protecting Muslims from changing their religion by force.¹³⁴

In regard to toleration the verse of the Qurān says:

'Say: O followers of the Book! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say : Bear witness that we are Muslims'.¹³⁵

There are some important points in this verse that are repeated differently in other verses. At the beginning of the verse the followers of other divine religions are called "followers of the Book" which implies the recognition of the divinity of those religions and a high respect for them. Also calling those followers to come to an "equitable proposition" with a friendly tone and a peaceful reaction in case of their denial shows a constructive style of dealing with those religions. D.Kerr commenting on this verse states that this Qurānic invitation to interfaith dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims has rarely been heeded in the subsequent history of relations between the three religions.¹³⁶

In another verse God ordered the Prophet to grant the idolaters protection until they hear the words of Allah.¹³⁷ T.W.Arnold, a Western researcher, points out the missionary spirit of Islam and writes:

"Such peaceful methods of preaching and persuasion were not adopted, as some would have us

believe, only when political circumstances made force and violence impossible or impolitic, but were most strictly enjoined in numerous passages of the Qurān".¹³⁸

Although toleration is rooted in the Qurān and historically many Muslim rulers have observed it as a rule¹³⁹, there are cases in which Muslims have acted intolerantly, for instance in some parts of the Caliphate of Abbasids (750-1258). To Arnold, this behaviour was not based on ideological foundations, but caused by special circumstances. The intrigues and interference by the enemies of Islam or the treacherous behaviour of the latter towards Muslims were the main reasons behind distortion of the Islamic tolerance.¹⁴⁰

Another aspect of toleration in Islam refers to the freedom of economic activity for non-Muslims in a Muslim society. Non-Muslims are generally free in their economic endeavours provided that they comply with Islamic obligations. For example according to item 25 of the Charter of Medina the Jews of the city were allowed to cultivate their lands and have economic activities as long as they did not oppose Prophet Muhammad. Another example in Islamic Jurisprudence is the non-Muslims' right to retain their economic activities in a land conquered by Muslims. For example the cultivated land of a country the inhabitants of which have voluntarily embraced Islam 'will belong to them and no tax will be levied on them', and 'their properties will be theirs wholly as they were theirs before Islam'.¹⁴¹

In case these inhabitants neither embrace Islam nor offer armed resistance to the call of Islam, and they want to retain their religion under the protection of the Islamic state, they have to sign a treaty with it. If the terms of the treaty state that the land belongs to its inhabitants then the land will be considered, on this basis, their property, and the Muslim

society will have no claim or title to it.¹⁴² In this regard Prophet Muhammad said:

'When you are in fight with a certain group, and they are prepared to make peace with you against their wealth (*Amwāl*) in order to save their lives and the lives of their children, then do not take more than what has been due, since the excess (amount) is unlawful for you'.¹⁴³

As a conclusion, it might be said that according to the main sources of Islamic knowledge, the Qurān and the *Sunnah*, freedom in its general sense and as a social value is paid attention. However, the meaning of freedom cannot be conceived unless some other dimensions are involved. Equality, toleration and even justice in addition to the conceptual contents of the Qurān should be examined in this attempt.

IV

The concept of history in the Qurān

It should be mentioned that the political aspect of the Qurān is not restricted only to the affairs of Arabia in the 7th century. The idea presented in the Qurān is based on more theoretical and ideological foundations. To explain this facet of the Qurān it seems that an explanation is necessary.

It is obvious that morality is based on a certain appreciation of being. Those who try to define the relation between 'is' and 'ought to', prescribe certain behaviour according to their understanding of being. Religions recommend their own ways of living with an influential assumption that God, who asks us to love one another and to make peace on the earth, exists. Moral obligations emerge from this outlook.

The arguable point in respect of morality may be its relativity. However, we are not to enter into this matter here. Whatever the definition of moral value is, the Qurān assumes that it is a concept which is understood by all people similarly. It accepts that the minor aspects of moral behaviour may vary in different societies but the principles are not relative. This fact may be observed by examining the concept of history in the Qurān.

In general, if one views history as an active process which is based on certain rules that can be conceived by close examination, one views existence differently from whoever assumes history to be just a collection of events and nothing more. In the first case, we may become optimistic toward life, while in the second case one may find himself in a very desperate and boring life. With the optimistic perception of history we may be advised to observe certain moral values to avoid repeating any detrimental actions which may occur as a consequence of ignoring the rules.

Before any further discussion on the notion of history in the Qurān, an explanation about the interpretation of the verses in this connection is necessary. Most of the commentators believe that God established certain rules in connection with history. The difference, however, is about the circumstances in which a verse is revealed. For example in respect of the verse: 'And how many populations We destroyed, which exulted in their life (of ease and plenty)!'.¹⁴⁴ one assumes that there is a direct relation between the destruction of communities and their way of life, however, the meaning of some words and the event which this verse refers to are matters of controversy.

The author agrees with A.Soroosh that there is not any kind of philosophy of history in

the book. Soroosh believes that while there is not a philosophical analysis of history as a whole, and he rejects the attempts by some Muslim scholars to say otherwise, he confirms that there are certain rules in societies which will be materialised when the conditions exist according to the Qurān.¹⁴⁵

Beginning with these rules, it seems that Non-neutrality of the Qurān is the first approach towards history and the concept of change. The Qurān says: 'God is on the side of those who fear Him and do good'.¹⁴⁶ In another verse, when God appointed Abraham as a leader and said: 'I will make thee an Imām to the Nations', Abraham asked Him if this responsibility also fell on his offspring. God replied: 'But My promise is not within the reach of evil doers.'¹⁴⁷ According to some commentators¹⁴⁸ of the Qurān this verse is about political leadership.¹⁴⁹ Its implication, according to Siddiqī, is the fact that wrong-doers are to be defeated by the historical process and wrong-doing is not conducive to success or prosperity.

In addition it may be discerned from the following verse that only the right actions of men survive in history:

'For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus doth God set forth parable.'¹⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that the word 'earth' may indicate the worldly dimension of this survival. In this respect some Muslim thinkers believe that the basis of the social system is truth in its religious sense.¹⁵¹ When God tells the believers that He will not leave them in an

unsatisfactory condition and that He separates the 'evil-doers' from those who are 'virtuous' it may be in the line of the mentioned verse that Truth will survive.

But the most meaningful idea in the Qurān is enumerating the special causes for the collapse of communities in history. The first reason which is introduced by the Qurān is 'iniquity':

"How many were the populations We utterly destroyed because of their iniquities, setting up in their places other peoples".¹⁵²

As a matter of fact there are many verses in the Qurān which convey this meaning.

The Qurān also tries to specify the cause of injustice in the communities which have been destroyed. When we read the verses concerning the fate of nations we find the words *itrāf*, meaning the excess and luxury which breed easy-going habits among a people, or *mutrif* which means the people who love ease and comfort, in front of the word *Zulm*. The above verse goes on to say that when those people are facing their punishment they want to escape from it, but God asks them not to escape: 'but return to the good things of this life which were given you, . . . ".¹⁵³ In another verse it says:

'When we decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life¹⁵⁴ and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) We destroy them utterly'.¹⁵⁵

It is implied that the oppression and inequities usually originate from this kind of easy

life. People who live in a state of ease and comfort are believed to lose their spiritual control and social discipline sooner than others. Consequently, committing injustice and adopting an attitude of inhuman disregard for the rights of the weak and the powerless becomes easier for them.¹⁵⁶

Another point regarding history in the Qurān is the death of communities. People's disregard for the well-being of their community is counted as the main reason for its disappearance. The Qurān recommends that people take a more positive view of social virtue and righteousness. It holds the ignorance of the majority of the people towards deviation from the social virtues as the cause of their destruction in the following verse:

'Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)? But the wrong-doers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin.'¹⁵⁷

The implication of this verse is that man, as a social being, should not be indifferent to others' behaviours, in order to lead them to a morally virtuous life and not leave them in practices harmful to the spiritual and social well-being of the community. This matter is very essential in understanding the social duties of Islam. Some of these duties are being mentioned later.

Forgetting God's favour is another cause of the collapse of communities which is derived from the Qurān. The following verse may be explanatory in this regard:

'God sets forth a parable: a city enjoying security and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place; yet was it ungrateful for the favours of God: so God made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought.'¹⁵⁸

The point is that 'ungratefulness' for the favours of God which is translation of the Arabic word *Kufr* does not merely mean disbelief. It actually means the misuse of powers and gifts which goes along with disbelief.¹⁵⁹

Dr 'Alī Sharī'atī (1933-77), another Muslim thinker, tries to present a Qurānic philosophy of history in the framework of the story of Abel and Cain. He tries to identify a kind of philosophy of history in the Qurān similar to that of socialism. In explaining why Cain killed Abel, he emphasizes the origin of their social differences. He says that their differences could not have originated from their family background, environment, or race because they both had the same parents. Also the other sources of difference such as education and culture did not exist at that primitive stage. The only reason behind such a cleavage was economic life and class status, according to Sharī'atī.¹⁶⁰ He concludes from the verses of the Qurān and commentaries that Abel was a pastoralist while Cain was a landowner. Therefore he sees the real cause of the conflict between Abel and Cain in their contradictory types of work and differing class status. He depicts history as a conflict between two opposing forces represented by these two characters. Although the story is not detailed in the Qurān, he employed some commentaries to explain his assumption. On this basis Sharī'atī is not satisfied with the classical conclusion of the story which he calls purely moralistic and superficial.

Therefore it can be said that the Qurān tries to introduce a moral base in its definition of history. The causes of the extinction of communities are things such as oppression, luxury, indifference to the social good, ungratefulness or the favours of God, greed, all of which are moral.

Ibn Khaldun, Muslim sociologist, tries to explain changes in history by means of the theory of *'Asabiyyah*. He believes that civilizations emerge and collapse on the basis of 'Group feelings' of the people who establish them. His theory will be dealt with later.

V

Economic foundations

The economic aspect of Islam has been the focus of attention from the very beginning of the growth of the Islamic community. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, his successors had to develop the economic principles which were introduced by the Qurān and implemented by the Prophet to establish a more competent system. The financial decisions made by 'Umar regarding the conquered lands and the imposition of special taxes on them were rooted in the injunctions of the Qurān.

The economic factor became more important when a huge amount of wealth came from Iraq, Syria and other lands after the first wave of the conquests.¹⁶¹ The distribution of this wealth by 'Uthmān among the Umayyads and those who were at his side was taken as a deviation from the sunnah of the Prophet by 'Uthmān's dissidents. Abū Dhar was a typical dissident who believed that the basic teachings of Islam regarding wealth were

different from 'Uthmān's idea.

Even recently, analytical studies of the economic injunctions of the Qurān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet have constituted one of the basic concerns of the researchers. New attention to the economic dimension of Islam has been intensified especially after the third and fourth decades of this century.¹⁶² In some of the recent attempts, the independency of Islamic economics from any factors except the Qurān and the *Sunnah* is emphasized. According to some contemporary Muslims, 'the Islamic solution' to the 'economic problem of man' was introduced by the Qurān and Prophet Muhammad much earlier than the appearance of capitalism and socialism.¹⁶³

In examining the Qurān it should be mentioned that it is not a treatise of political economy and one cannot seek in it approval or condemnation of any economic system. However, there are some concerns which constitute the basis of Islamic economy.

In any attempt to approach the Islamic notion of economy, distinguishing between economic doctrine and science of economy is very essential. Doctrinal economy tries to relate the ideology to the economic activities, while the science of economy attempts to discover the existing realities in economic life. Matters such as social ideals, judgment about ownership, moral considerations about production or distribution and so on refer to doctrine, while others like existing rules and the means of production, distribution, workers' wages, etc, are explained in connection to the natural institutions. While the former is always embodied in a definite ideology of justice the latter rests on realities. The kind of economy contained in the Qurān is doctrinal.¹⁶⁴

First of all, one may wonder why Islam is not silent about economic affairs. This is so because of two reasons. Firstly, because of the idea of the unity of God which affects all aspects of a Muslim's life. M. Rodinson believes that unlike other religions whose sacred texts discourage economic activity and advise their followers to rely on God to provide them with their daily bread and who, more particularly, look askance at any striving for profit, the Qurān looks with favour upon commercial activity and confines itself to condemning fraudulent practices.¹⁶⁵ Generally, the idea of the 'unity of God' summarizes all aspects of human activity, including economic ones, as the worship of God. The Qurān as the main Islamic text contains many verses regarding economic affairs. Secondly, the conduct of Prophet Muhammad who was the leader of the Islamic society of Medina and who was inevitably involved in economic affairs, constitutes another source of encouragement or economic activity among Muslims.

One may find several economic implications in the Qurān. At the beginning it can be understood from some verses that 'work' is the basis of ownership. The Qurān says: '[...] man shall have nothing but what he strives for'.¹⁶⁶ In Islamic jurisprudence, land as the first and most important source of wealth can be owned by who cultivates it. For most Muslim jurists, the *Shari'ah* permits individuals to reclaim and cultivate a plot of land if it was not used at the time of conquest, and has conferred specific rights to individuals in this respect on the basis of their having expended toil and labour in way of its reclamation and re-cultivation. A tradition is cited in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, where 'Ā'ishah reported that the Prophet said: 'He who cultivates a land which belongs to no one has a greater right and claim to it'.¹⁶⁷

It seems that from the very early development of Islamic law two types of ownership, public and private, were taken seriously into consideration. Again, land is counted as the main subject of ownership especially in early Islam. The texts of the Canon Law (*Shari'ah*) are quite explicit about the establishment of the principle of public ownership in respect of land. However, Muslim jurists divide lands according to their status, that is whether the land is a dead land, a cultivated land, an Islamic land by conquest or by agreement, and so on.

Some Muslim scholars are inclined to think that land conquered by force should be subjected to the principle of its distribution among the warriors who were present at the battle. This implies a kind of private-ownership of the spoils, in the same way as all other spoils of war are distributed among warriors. These scholars rely on two things, the verse of *ghanimah* (booty) and the reported practice of the Prophet in the distribution of the booty of *Khaybar*. The verse of *ghanimah* is found in *Sūrah al-Anfāl*:

'As for the fifth of what you have conquered in the battle belongs to Allah, His Prophet, the kinsmen, the orphans, the needy and the traveller if you believe in Allah [...]'.¹⁶⁸

The Prophet's decision regarding the Jewish land of *Khaybar* which fell into the hands of Muslims after the battle of *Khaybar* has formed one of the basic elements of Islamic economy on the issue of ownership. It is reported by al-Bukhārī that the Prophet gave the Jews the land of *Khaybar* to work on it and cultivate it. They had the right to half of what they raised on it.¹⁶⁹ However, there is also a tradition mentioned in the Sunan of Abu Dawud which says that the Prophet divided *Khaybar* (land) into two halves, one to meet his needs, and the other for distribution among Muslims. This he later divided into 18

portions.¹⁷⁰

The issue of ownership may be explained further by referring to the attitude to trade. It is implied in the Islamic sources of knowledge that trade is legitimate and even a superior way of earning one's livelihood if it is carried out by observing God's demands. The Prophet is quoted as having said that: 'The merchant who is sincere and trustworthy will (at the Judgment) be among the Prophets, the just and the martyrs'¹⁷¹, or: 'The trustworthy merchant will sit in the shade of God's throne at the day of judgment'¹⁷² It is also reported that he said that if people profited by doing what was permitted, their deed would be a *Jihād*, and if they used it for their family and kindred, this would be a *Sadaqah* (a pious work of charity). A *dirham* (silver coin) lawfully gained from trade was evaluated as more than ten *dirhams* gained in any other way.¹⁷³

In a few verses of the Qurān¹⁷⁴ inheritance is dealt with as a rule of Islamic law. According to Watt's theory on the origin of Islam and in relation to the changing economic order of Arabia which was mentioned in the first chapter, Muhammad aimed at eliminating the abuses which arose during the change from a communal system of ownership to an individualistic one.¹⁷⁵ Muhammad himself considered by Watt as a man who was deprived of his right to inherit from his family and, therefore, to Watt, the Qurān's insist on the good treatment of orphans is rooted in this matter. He also believes that the main aim of the Qurānic rules was to ensure that no relative towards whom a man had some obligations was defrauded of his fair share of the inheritance.¹⁷⁶

Another economic issue of Islam may be the relative freedom in economic activity.

It is implied in some passages of the Qurān and hadith that every Muslim has the right to behave in the economic realm freely as far as his actions do not contradict the principles of the divine law. In this concern, firstly the Qurān requires people to look for the material means of their individual and social welfare. This can be perceived from various verses such as:

'Oh, you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means of nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful'.¹⁷⁷

and:

'and seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world'.¹⁷⁸

Also it is said that: 'And the earth, He has set in for living creatures'¹⁷⁹. While man in these verses is given absolute freedom to enjoy the riches of the earth, at the same time, he is required to act in a limited domain in some other verses. These limitations have been declared in two ways. First by using the word '*Hudūd*'¹⁸⁰ and ordering people not to neglect them. Secondly by imposing prohibition on certain activities and methods of earning wealth.¹⁸¹ Generally all activities which go counter to the moral principles of Islam and are performed on an unhealthy basis with harmful disadvantages for society are prohibited.

According to Islamic tradition, all of the Islamic rules concerning ownership are eclipsed by the law of vicegerency. Briefly, this means that everything on the earth belongs to Allah and man as His vicegerent is allowed to make use of them. The Qurān says:

'Believe in Allah and His Apostle, and spend out of what He has made you to be successors of;

for those of you who believe and spend shall have a great reward'.¹⁸²

Accordingly there is not an absolute form of private ownership in Islam. Natural resources are regarded as common wealth in the Islamic state. Raw materials, minerals, forests, rivers, seas and all natural resources which can be used without spending labour on them, basically belong to God. According to the view of all Muslim economists these assets remain in the possession of the Islamic government in the form of common ownership in order to eliminate the needs of the Islamic society. It may seem that Islam does not accept the capitalistic approach which reserves the right to possess things whenever a person obtains the ability to use them. However, trying to find a mine or developing raw materials into more useful materials through human labour are categorized in different sections according to the Islamic jurisprudence.

It may also be noted that the differences between people regarding the possession of wealth are not rejected in the Qurān. It says:

'And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn'.¹⁸³

This verse, among others, suggests that since needs and conditions vary from one person to another, consequently the wealth should be distributed justly, instead of equally. In other words natural differences between people are taken into consideration in economic activities.

Besides these economic issues, there exist an explicit order in the Qurān regarding the

payment of *Zakāt* which is one of the foundations of Islam. Any Muslim must pay a certain amount of his surplus income to the government according to the Qurān and *Sunnah*. This three per cent tax constitutes the fifth pillar of Islam. While the other pillars of Islam are mostly related to personal and social relationships, this one is particularly connected with financial affairs. According to the Qurān a Muslim purifies himself by paying a certain amount of his income which is in excess of his annual needs. The purpose of *Zakāt* and *Khums* (another income tax) is referred to in this verse of the Qurān:

'Whatever Allah has restored to his Apostle from the people of the towns, it is for Allah and for the Apostle, and for the near kin and the orphans and the needy and wayfarer, so that it may not be a thing taken by turns among the rich of you, [...]'.¹⁸⁴

Abul Alā Maudūdī tries to dissociate the meaning of the *Zakāt* from that of a tax under the excuse that the *Zakāt* is paid by a Muslim as a sacred act like prayer and fast but tax in its Western meaning is paid in fear of the law.¹⁸⁵

Some Islamic economic ideas

Some Muslim jurists today begin with explaining the differences between the Islamic theory of economic on the one hand, and capitalist and marxist theories on the other hand. The main discussion focuses on the theoretical point that Islam, unlike capitalism and Marxism, concentrates on the theory of 'distribution before production'. As a typical Muslim thinker on Islamic economy, M.B. Sadr believes that the distribution of wealth usually occurs in two stages. Firstly the distribution of the material sources of production which are land,

raw materials, tools and machinery, and secondly the distribution of 'productive wealth' which is the commodity (capital goods and fixed assets) produced by natural human work. To Sadr, discussions of distribution should cover both these kinds of wealth. He criticizes the capitalist approach to the problems of distribution of the produced wealth since it does not represent the entire national wealth. Furthermore, he mentions that the economic freedom in capitalism allows individuals to possess the largest possible share from those sources so that it permits every individual to take into his possession exclusively what 'luck' helps him to take out of the riches of nature and himself. In respect of the Marxist interpretation of history, he believes that the establishment of distribution of the sources of production necessarily is followed by its special system of production at the historical stage of that system. He also criticises the marxist opinion about the exchange-value and its relation with ownership.

'Marxism considers that it is the hired-man in the capitalist system who is the owner of the entire exchange-value which the material acquires through his work and the owner of that materials taking a part of this value in the name of profit is a robbing hired man.'¹⁸⁶

The problem in Sadr's eyes, therefore, is neither one of the instrument (means) of production nor of the system of distribution but rather a human one. In his opinion, man has needs and desires, which should be satisfied in a form which protects his humanity and develops it. Man remains a man with his needs and desires whether 'he tills the land with his hands or employs electric or steam power to that purpose'.¹⁸⁷

Maxime Rodinson, a non-Muslim writer on Islamic economics, tries to find the main economic viewpoints of Islam through the injunctions of the Qurān. His primary question is whether Islam approves, hinders or forbids those practices which make up the capitalist mode

of production.¹⁸⁸ He starts his work by studying the verses of the Qurān which will be discussed later in this part. It seems that he has reached the conclusion that Islam is more in harmony with capitalism than with socialism. His perception of Islam is that the Qurān has nothing against private property, since it not only 'lays down rules for inheritance', but also advises that inequalities be not challenged."¹⁸⁹ Unlike many Muslim writers who refer to a variety of Islamic texts such as *Sunnah* and economic juridical rules of previous Muslim thinkers, Rodinson has exclusively devoted himself to the Qurān . However, in other parts of his book, he attempts to explain the existing economic systems in Muslim countries in respect of the religious laws (*Sharī'ah*).

Abul Alā Maudūdī, Muslim thinker, tries to enumerate the main Islamic economic principles and regulations according to which a person may act. He asserts that the Qurān contains basic instructions for the establishment of an economic system. He refers to the limitations set for economic activities in the Qurān and says that within those limits, people are absolutely free. To him, the prohibitions in acquiring wealth and the restraints on the use of wealth should be considered as 'determiners' of Islamic economics. He concludes that within these limits Muslims can construct their economic life and system as they wish.

'Details we ourselves will have to work out according to the needs of our age. We will have to remember that we cannot establish a free economy like that of the capitalist system and we cannot establish collective control over the entire economy like the communist system'.¹⁹⁰

Charles C. Torrey in his practical theology of the Qurān believes that the mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Taking into consideration many of the Qurānic verses he states that 'Allah is the ideal merchant', who has 'all the

universe in his reckoning'. According to his understanding of the Qurān, Allah, who counts everything, made himself 'the pattern of honest dealing'. In respect to life, it is a matter of gain or loss. The Qurān says that he who does a good or an evil work, receives his pay for it, even in this life.¹⁹¹ In elaborating this commercial nature of the relationship between God and man in the Qurān Torrey continues thus:

'Some debts are forgiven, for Allah is not a hard creditor. The Muslim makes a loan to Allah, pays in advance for paradise, sells his own soul to him, a bargain that prospers. The unbeliever has sold the divine truth for a partly price, and is bankrupt. Every soul is held as security for the debt it has contracted. At the resurrection, Allah holds a final reckoning with all men. Their actions are read from the account-book, weighed in the balances; each is paid his exact due, no one is defrauded.'¹⁹²

In addition, from this expression of the Qurān that believer and unbeliever both receive their wages and that the Muslim receives moreover his special reward, Torrey derives the commercial nature of the mutual relation between man and God.

As a conclusion of what has been discussed in this chapter, it can be said that Islam established a completely novel society (*Ummah*) in seventh century Arabia. Although many characteristics of that society came from pre-Islamic customs and traditions, the innovations of the Qurān and the Prophet's conduct were enough to distinguish the *Ummah* from any other social and political system of the time. According to both 'insider' and 'outsider' opinions, a great change occurred in Arabia after the advent of Islam, a change which altered all the foundations of Arab life, from traditional to innovative.

Chapter 3

Major developments under the Rāshidūn Caliphs

Introduction

In this chapter are discussed the main historical changes that occurred during the caliphate of Rāshidūn. The purpose is to explain the challenges faced by the first caliphs due to the new circumstances and the social and governmental changes. This is necessary because a considerable part of Nahj al-balāghah is based on an analytical view of those events. In general, it can be said that Nahj al-balāghah is an assessment of the function of the caliphate system in dealing with the political principles of Islam by means of an historical approach to them.

Therefore, in contrast to the previous chapter, more historical facts are referred to here. However, the changes that occurred during 'Alī's government are discussed in detail in the third part of this thesis. The reason for making such a distinction is that the government of the first three caliphs is considered different from that of 'Alī in Nahj al-balāghah.

The author has tried to refer to those parts of Islamic history which are generally agreed upon by scholars and not to argue on the basis of any dubious tradition. In fact, his approach is not a normative one and tries to depict a general image of what happened during the reign of the first caliphs as a basis of discussion for the next chapters.

I

Abū Bakr

M.G.S. Hodgson believes that the first question that arose on Muhammad's death was whether any state should survive it at all or not. He argues that Islam was originally a personal relation of men and women to God. Since Muhammad was the preacher of this religion, his death could be regarded as the end of the safest guidance to God's will. Allah had emphasized his unique role and position in delivering His message by stating that:

'I swear by the star when it goes down. Your companion (Muhammad) does not err, nor does he go astray. Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him, The Lord of Strength ; so he attained completion.'¹

Therefore, for the people who had accepted Islam, there existed two ways to obey God: finding their own way to follow Him or waiting for God to send other prophets to be followed. Hodgson justifies the appearance of the claimants of prophethood in this regard.

Besides these people were the Bedouin tribes who felt themselves free of any further obligation since the Prophet was dead. They refused to send any further *zakāt* to Medina, and waited only to see what Muslims at Medina and Mecca would do since they feared from the Quraysh.

There have been some doubts about the real intentions of that group in resisting the

government of Medina. Some scholars, including orientalists, see in the *Ridda* wars an Arab resistance against imposing Islam upon the inhabitants of Arabia. To these scholars, the Bedouins had embraced Islam simply because of their fear of the military power of Medina.

The weakness of such Muslims became more obvious during the event of *Tabūk* in the 9th year of *Hijrah*. After the Muslim' victory over the Quraysh, which led to the conversion to Islam of most of the Arab tribes, and after the declaration of Barāah in the same year, the Prophet called Muslims to fight against the Romans. The weak response from these newly converted Muslims to this call, which is mentioned in a verse of the Qurān,² shows their superficial belief in Islam.

Commenting on this assumption H.I.Hassan believes that not all of these defectors were apostate. He mentions that most of them remained in the religion of Islam but stopped paying *zakāt* to Medina because they thought that it was a tribute which should be paid only to the Prophet.³ As for the Bedouins, he states that they were not really Muslims by heart when the Prophet died. He refers to some Qurānic verses in which 'the dwellers of the desert' are condemned as those who commit hypocrisy towards the Prophet. It says:

'The dwellers of the desert say: We believe. Say: You do not believe but say, We submit; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts; and if you obey Allah and His Apostle, He will not diminish aught of your deeds; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.'⁴

Hassan also quotes the verse of the Qurān in which the dwellers of the desert are described as 'very hard in unbelief and hypocrisy, and more disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to His Apostle'.⁵

It seems that doubts about the intentions of these Arabs and their apostasy were initially voiced by some people during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. It is mentioned that when the news regarding the apostasy of some tribes in *Hadramawt* reached Abū Bakr, he decided to ask 'Alī to fight them. However, 'Umar dissuaded him from doing so for the reason that 'Alī might refuse.⁶ This might imply that 'Alī did not regard them as apostate. It is also said that 'Umar himself did not consider these people as apostate, and also refused to fight them.⁷ 'Abdurāziq confirms this but he assumes that 'Umar changed his mind about them later.⁸ Some historians such as Ibn Kathīr and Nowbakhtī are explicit in rejecting the apostasy of these defectors.⁹ Ibn Kathīr says that some of the tribes only refused to pay zakat to the caliph Abū Bakr, although they had accepted it as a principle.¹⁰

S.Rokāz states that when the news regarding the death of the Prophet spread in Arabia the majority of the tribes broke their relationship with Medina since they did not have any sense of alliance with a political system. They had connected themselves with Muhammad only for religious reasons. According to Rokaz, when they were asked to pay what they used to pay during the Prophet's lifetime they refused to do so and the people of Medina regarded it as apostasy and abandoning Islam.¹¹ A.M.Iqād also believes that some of these rebellions did not object to *zakāt*. However, they had problems regarding whom it should be paid to.¹²

It seems that the problem of the apostasy of some Muslims during the caliphate of Abū Bakr and the way of dealing with them has become another source of controversy among the Shī'ite. Sunnī writers try to justify Abū Bakr's harsh actions against them and introduces these people as having abandoned Islam. Shī'ite researchers ,on the other hand, try to show

the doubts of some of the Prophet's companions about their apostasy, and relate Abū Bakr's actions to his efforts to protect his own authority.

The Shī'ite usually support their view by emphasizing Abū Bakr's stand in support of Khālid ibn Walīd, who fought the apostates as commander of the Medina army. When he faced Mālik ibn Nuwayrah of the tribe of Banī Tamīm, who refused to pay *zakāt* to Medina, he decided to kill him. To the Shī'ite and some Sunnī, Mālik remained Muslim until the end of his life and was not an apostate to be executed. In addition, they raise the possibility that Khālid's real motivation was Mālik's wife, whom he raped according to some Muslim jurists. When the news of this event reached Medina, 'Umar swore to have Khālid stoned for his crime of raping a married woman. But Abū Bakr pardoned him with the excuse that Khālid had done an *Ijtihād* and thought he was doing the right thing.¹³

In contrast to the above-mentioned groups of people, the claimants of apostleship and the so-called apostates, others had a more ambitious conception of Islam and of the *Ummah* community which Muhammad had created. To these people, Islam was not merely a matter of personal interest. On the opposite, they saw Islam as a unified group in which all Muslims were bound to each other, and as a reality even after the Prophet's death. On the basis of this assumption the pattern of life he had instituted could be continued under the guidance of those who had been closest to him, the Prophet's companions. For this group, those who isolated themselves from the community of Muslims were in fact opponents to Islam itself and such people were regarded as traitors to the cause of God. They were in the same position as the idolaters and infidels who were fought by Muhammad and his followers. Hodgson believes in regard to these people that:

'that cause was still to be fought for, and demanded a single chief to whom all would be loyal'.

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This classification of the groups of people that appeared immediately after the death of the Prophet explains the political situation of the time.

II

'Umar

The second caliph, 'Umar, during his Caliphate (634-644 A.D.) laid the foundations of what was to become the classical Islamic state of the first centuries. He also directed the full flood of conquest from Medina. During that time the small community of Muslims developed into a large state formed by various nations under the rule of a strong central government. In particular, the institution of the *Dīwān* is counted as his initiative.

M.Hodgson makes an analogy between the Prophet's and 'Umar's time. He writes that:

'The central problem in Muhammad's time had been to replace a system of feuding within a society, in favour of a common life under a single arbiter. Under 'Umar the same problem was renewed under new circumstances -to bring some common discipline among the rather lawless occupiers of the conquered territories'.¹⁵

Muhammad's solution to the problem of his time had been a divinely sanctioned moral standard which was adopted and extended by the people. The problem for 'Umar, and for the

Medinese whom he represented, was to define the nature of the authority at such a centre. Since he received no revelation from God, he had no independent religious authority. However, the most important thing was military authority since the Arabs, in spite of the Prophet's attempt to establish a community in which individual pious action was completed by joint action in the cause of God, still paid more attention to the military position of the leader. In this connection, 'Umar chose the title of *Amīr al-muminīn*, commander of the faithful, for himself instead of *Khalīfah* which was used by Abū-Bakr. This position for 'Umar rested on both his personal and religious prestige.

To Hodgson, 'Umar's decision to establish a *Dīwān* was based on the fact that his position was a person-to-person relationship, as had been Muhammad's. But 'Umar had to modify this because of the vast increase in the number of persons in the community.¹⁶ The *Dīwān* was one of his initiatives to avoid the immediate intervention of any given individual in the operation of the political system. It was a register of all the Muslims of Medina and Mecca and of the conquering armies.

'The booty from the conquest was to be distributed in individual pensions to the men (and sometimes women) listed in the *Dīwān*, according to their rank therein. Some prominent Muslims received revenue from particular tracts, but most received their share through the *Dīwān* system.'¹⁷

It also included the kinsmen of the Prophet, and the old Companions who received a fixed share from the public treasury though they were not allowed to acquire or possess privately any land in the conquered territories.

One of the main causes of change in the Islamic state was the strengthening of tribal feelings. Donner also believes that in the post conquest period the struggle for dominance within the elite had become exclusively a question of which branch of Quraysh was to rule.

'This issue was raised already in the first civil war in the form of a struggle between the *Banī Umayya*, led by Mu'āwiyah ibn bi Sufyān, the *Banī Hāshim*, led by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, and other branches of the Quraysh, led by Talha ibn 'Ubaydullah and Zubayr ibn 'Awwām.'¹⁸

Like Donner, Grunebaum believes that the disorders during the caliphate of 'Uthmān and 'Alī were rooted in a more fundamental problem pertaining to the Islamic government. He says:

'But the contradiction inherent in the message between theocracy and sovereignty, between the ideal of the 'best' community and the measures resulting from it, developed tensions which destroyed its spiritual as well as its political unity.'¹⁹

The changes that occurred in the Islamic society particularly influenced the Quraysh who were seeking some privileges through new circumstances. 'Umar himself opposed any attempt by the elite of Quraysh to misuse the newly established administration. Apparently, until the end of his life, he suffered because of them and he wished for his death.²⁰ In other words, the united community established by the Prophet and revived by Abū Bakr was gradually dividing into different groups. This division marked the second part of 'Uthmān's caliphate. The Quraysh were detaching themselves from the people. They had been kept under control by the Prophet and the first two caliphs by means of the Qurānic message that all people in the community are equal. The other reason for unity was that the Muslim state was severely threatened by its enemies, either internal or external, during the Prophet's and the

first two caliphs' authority. However, towards the end of 'Umar's caliphate those enemies no longer existed, and the unity among Muslims began to collapse.

For some analysts, the different ways in which Abū Bakr and 'Umar appointed their successors denote their difference in social attitudes. For these researchers, Abū Bakr named 'Umar since he knew that society was so united that nobody would oppose him. However, 'Umar could not do the same because he believed that social groups were not unanimously in favour of one person.²¹ A.al-Wardī states that the attitude of those who thought that 'Umar could have nominated his successor as Abū Bakr had, was very superficial. He believes that 'Umar intended to choose 'Alī but was afraid of the Quraysh's opposition.²²

In addition to tribal interests, the unprecedented matter of ethnic feelings was becoming an important issue. This happened after the rapid expansion of the Islamic territory into the Byzantine and Persian empires. Facing this problem, 'Umar adopted the policy of Arabization. It is mentioned in several historical sources that when the first groups of non-Arabs (*'Ajam*) were captured by the Arabs during the caliphate of 'Umar, he ordered the release of all the Arab slaves because he considered them to hold a higher position than non-Arab people.²³ 'Umar also commanded his followers not to allow any non-Arabs to enter Medina.²⁴ The policy of Arabization was implemented in several ways. For instance, languages other than Arabic were banned, and it became forbidden to dress like the non-Arabs.²⁵ The caliph also emphasized that Arab is the 'substance' of Islam.²⁶ B.Ye'or in his *Dhimmī*, meaning the non-Muslim who lives under the dominance of a Muslim rule, believes that the Arabization of territories conquered by Muslims took place in two stages: firstly 'the Jihad', and secondly '*Dhimmah*'. During the second stage, two different taxes, *jizyah* and

Kharāj, had to be paid by a *Dhimmī*. *Kharāj* was the right of conquest first established at *Khaybar*, which led to the expropriation of the defeated peoples by the transfer of their lands to the Islamic community. The *Dhimmī*, thus dispossessed by the victors, retained the right to cultivate his land in exchange for the payment of a tax to the Muslim ruler. This tax, called *Kharāj*, represented the Islamic community's right of ownership over the conquered lands of non-Muslim peoples. In addition to the *Kharāj*, the *Dhimmī* had to pay a poll tax, the *jizyah* (Qurān 9:29), which was assessed at three rates in accordance with the economic condition of each individual male above puberty. To Ye'or, *Dhimmah* was 'a system of dispossession and colonization aimed at protecting and safeguarding the domination of the triumphant Islamic community'.²⁷ He states that during the first two centuries of their conquest - and certainly at the outset- the Arabs were themselves a minority. In order to impose their laws, their language, and their foreign culture on ancient civilizations, they had to proceed with caution. The *Dhimmah* prepared the way for Arab colonization in the political, economic, religious, and cultural sectors.

The above-mentioned policy of imposing certain rules on the conquered lands was another decision which is attributed to 'Umar. These lands were classified according to the way they were acquired: by force (*Anwātan*), or by capitulation (*Sulhan*). Lands conquered by force became the property of the state but their use was still left to their former owners on condition that they paid tribute to the government in Medina. They became tenants of the Muslims. In the second case, when lands fell into the hands of Muslims through capitulation, the real ownership of the inhabitants was confirmed in return for tribute. 'Umar also founded an empire on the lands of the Byzantine and Sasanid monarchs and substituted it to the previous limited tribal society. Gabrielli states that in these initiatives there is a visible distrust

of 'the abilities of the conquerors as settlers' shown by making as few innovations as possible in the agricultural prosperity of the conquered areas.²⁸

As a result of these policies, a flood of wealth came to Medina and was distributed among Muslims. This revenue was in addition to the spoils acquired by Muslims in the wars with Iran and the Byzantine Empire. This economic change in addition to other developments in the Islamic community had a deep impact on the society. For T.Husayn and Goldziher, it was the end of the Prophet-style of Caliphate.²⁹

III

'Uthmān

With this brief account of the developments in government during 'Umar's reign we turn to examine the events that led to the murder of 'Uthmān. These events which are known as *fitnah*, meaning mischief, disorder or scheming, have been of great importance especially because of their consequences, which created the first civil war in the Islamic state from 657 to 661A.D.

It seems that 'Uthmān changed the Islamic method of leadership during the second half of his caliphate. The aristocratic behaviour of the Quraysh family and their hunger for tribal privileges were revived once again after their dismissal by the Prophet.³⁰ But this time the aristocracy harnessed Islamic authority through 'Uthmān. The main personality of this elite, for instance, was Abū Sufyān, previously the enemy of the Prophet and now the advisor of the caliph. It was narrated that in the first days of 'Uthmān's caliphate he said that he

hoped the leadership would become hereditary among the Umayyads.³¹ His son Mu'āwiyah, later established the first Islamic monarchy.

Most historians included in their works some examples of the 'Uthmān's favouritism for his kinsmen. For instance Ya'qūbī wrote that during his caliphate, 'Uthmān bestowed 500,000 Dinar (gold) upon Marwān ibn Hakam, his cousin and son-in-law.³² Marwān and his brother al-Harith were 'Uthmān's main advisors, and had a great influence on him. 'Uthmān made Walīd ibn 'Uqbah, his mother's brother, governor of Kūfah. He also made Ibn Abī Sarh ('Abdullāh ibn Sa'd), his foster brother, governor of Egypt and granted him one fifth of the spoils of Africa. Ibn Abī Sarh's reputation among Muslims was bad because he had committed apostasy and returned to Quraysh while he was a Muslim and wrote revelations down. He was to have been killed but was later forgiven by Prophet Muhammad.³³ However, the Egyptians' protests against him led to his replacement by 'Uthmān.³⁴ Another controversial man was al-Walīd ibn 'Uqbah, again one of 'Uthmān's relatives with a bad reputation. This man had been sent to a newly-converted Muslim clan by Prophet Muhammad, and tried to spoil relations by telling the Muslims that the clan was going to kill him. This lie encouraged Muslims to take revenge. However, God revealed to the Prophet that :

"O, you who believe if an evil man comes to you with a report examine it closely lest you do ill to a people in ignorance and be sorry for what you have done... "³⁵

and then the tension among Muslims was pacified.³⁶ 'Uthmān appointed al-walid ibn 'Uqbah governor of Kūfah, where he led the prayer drunken.³⁷ Likewise, al-Hakam ibn Abil 'Ās,

who was sent into exile by the Prophet because of his insolent words against Islam, was recalled from exile and given wealth by 'Uthmān.³⁸

The decisions were very badly received by the community during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. Baladhurī wrote that when 'Uthmān awarded 100,000 *dirhams* to Sa'd ibn 'Ās people became annoyed and despatched 'Alī, Zubayr, Talha, Sa'd and 'Abdur Rahmān ibn 'Awf as their representatives to convey their dissatisfaction. 'Uthmān claimed that Sa'd was of his lineage. They questioned this by stating that Abū Bakr and 'Umar had lineage and family as well. 'Uthmān's response was that those caliphs had hoped to gain *Thawāb* (spiritual award) by preventing their relatives from gaining wealth while he hoped for the same result by conveying wealth to his family.³⁹ Financially, these spendings were from the public treasury (*Bayt al-māl*) to which all Muslims had a right for themselves.

Again Baladhurī wrote that when Walīd ibn 'Uqbah was appointed governor of Kūfah, like the other governors at the time he borrowed some money from the treasurer, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, the Prophet's companion. When the duration of the loan expired, ibn Mas'ūd asked him to return the money but Walīd refused and wrote a letter to 'Uthmān instead. 'Uthmān ordered the treasurer not to ask Walīd again, emphasizing to him that: "you are our treasurer". Ibn Mas'ūd resigned, responding that: "I thought I was the Muslims' treasurer not yours. I am not going to be your treasurer."⁴⁰

The controversial case of the *Fadak* land is another issue of double importance since it initially belonged to Fātimah, the Prophet's daughter and 'Alī's wife. *Fadak* was a Jewish land which had been taken from the Jews at the battle of *Khaybar*. When the verse of *Khums*

was revealed, one fifth of war booty was allocated to the Prophet. Muhammad gave *Fadak* to Fātimah as his share of the booty at *Khaybar*. However, after the Prophet's death, Abū Bakr brought *Fadak* into the Public treasury, according to the sentence attributed to the Prophet that 'prophets do not leave anything as inheritance'. Although the land was returned to Fātimah by 'Umar, 'Uthmān took it again from her but this time, unlike Abū Bakr, made it his own property, and since he personally did not need it, he then gave it to Marwān.⁴¹ Again, 'Uthmān's action was considered very oppressive by 'Alī's friends for whom *Fadak* became a symbol of 'Alī's ignored right.

But people's discontent with 'Uthmān did not just revolve around economic corruption. 'Uthmān's manner in dealing with Islamic rules was another factor which should be taken into consideration. He was accused of changing the path of religion and abandoning the ways of the Prophet by his dissidents. For instance, the first dissension in his caliphate arose when 'Uthmān did not sentence 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar who had killed three innocent people and should have been punished.⁴² It is attributed to 'Alī that he warned 'Uthmān of being involved in ignoring the rules of Islam by this decision.⁴³ He was several times reminded not to abandon the divine instructions, according to the historian al-Isfahānī.⁴⁴

The historian ibn Qutaybah referred to a letter written by some of the Prophet's companions to 'Uthmān about his deviation from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and the first two caliphs. Generally this letter dealt with nine matters as follows: 1-Why did 'Uthmān grant a fifth of the booty of Africa to Marwān while all Muslims had a right to it? 2-Why did 'Uthmān make seven buildings in Medina for himself? 3-Why did Marwān make several palaces for himself? 4-Why did 'Uthmān give all the posts in government to his cousins and

relatives while there were more experienced people available? 5-When Walīd, the governor of Kūfah, said four *Rak'ah* for the morning prayer instead of two because he was drunk, why did not 'Uthmān implement the Islamic punishment for him? [...]⁴⁵

It may be assumed that the opposition against 'Uthmān was partly political because there were some opponents who enjoyed the same wealth and properties as 'Uthmān's relatives'. The famous historian, al-Mas'ūdī, in describing the economic situation of some of the Prophet's companions such as al-Zubayr, Talha, Abdur Rahmān ibn 'Awf and Zayd ibn Thābit, who used to oppose 'Uthmān's policies, said that they had become affluent and major landlords at the time of 'Uthmān.⁴⁶

As a general opinion, it can be said that 'Uthmān's policies in favour of the Umayyads and the people's dissatisfaction which such policies gradually led to a gap between the ruler and the ruled in the Islamic government, and it seems that a change happened in the concept of Islamic politics. 'Uthmān's advisors, mainly from the Umayyads, tried to persuade him that all his difficulties originated from his leniency towards his dissidents and , therefore, made him less tolerant towards the people who saw the problem in another light.⁴⁷ The general trend of deviation from the path of Prophet Muhammad in the caliphate of 'Uthmān is mentioned in a sermon of Nahj al-balāghah. It is written that:

'Certainly there was over the people a ruler (before me) who brought about new (un-Islamic) things and compelled the people to speak out. So they did speak, then rose up and thereafter changed the whole system.'⁴⁸

However, the people's discontent was not totally due to their concern about religion.

Some of them were the newly converted to Islam who saw in the financial system of distribution of wealth, initiated by 'Umar, a source of inequality and injustice. In this regard in a sermon of Nahj al-balāghah the change in the attitude of the people towards the end of 'Uthmān's caliphate is implied. It is stated that:

'Before me the people used to complain of the oppression of their rulers but now I have to complain of the wrongful actions of my people ; as though I am led by them and they are the leaders or that I am the subject and they are the rulers.⁴⁹

And in another occasion 'Alī is believed to have said that the people had realized that, to him, all men had equal rights and because of that they turned to selfishness and partiality.⁵⁰

IV

'Alī's role during the reign of the first three caliphs

The political role of 'Alī during 'Uthmān's caliphate, especially towards the end of it, is still the subject of intense debates. Even contemporary Islamists include in their works reflections regarding what really happened prior to 'Uthmān's murder.⁵¹ That is because of the positions of 'Alī and 'Uthmān as representatives of two famous clans of Quraysh and their posts as caliphs. It is noteworthy that the disagreement between 'Alī and the first two caliphs had not been as strong as with 'Uthmān.

To examine 'Alī's behaviour in challenging the new circumstances of the Islamic society, we may analyze his endeavours according to his three different positions after the

death of the Prophet in society: his position during his first two caliphates, during 'Uthmān's caliphate, and during his own government. The third issue, 'Alī's government, is reflected in Nahj al-balāghah and will be discussed in the following chapters. But in regard to the first two periods, it should be noted that 'Alī remained basically silent at that time.

One of the reasons for 'Alī's silence during the first two caliphates was his respect for the role of the people in the appointment of a leader, as highlighted by Nahj al-balāghah. It is also said in the book that 'Alī knew that his rejection of the caliphate of the first three caliphs, which he reserved as a right for himself, would damage the strength of the young Islamic state. Therefore, while he thought he had been appointed by the Prophet as his successor, he accepted the authority of those caliphs and even helped them to overcome their problems. On one occasion, when 'Alī was consulted by 'Umar about his ('Umar's) participation in the march towards Syria, 'Alī delivered a sermon which is very meaningful. In this sermon he dissuaded 'Umar from taking part in the march, stating that:

'If you will yourself proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send there an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Allah grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims.'⁵²

It can be inferred from historical sources that 'Alī was not considered a political dissident during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, and that he chose silence during that period.

For some recent Shī'ite thinkers, this silence was neither a matter of political quietism nor a hostile stand against those caliphs but a planned strategy which encouraged Muslims to tolerate others in a similar situation, a silence which aimed at the unity and healthiness of Islamic society as the final goal of Islamic teachings. Some Shī'ite Muslims are of the opinion that this silence inspired the idea of *Taqīyyah* which is one of the main particulars of the Shī'ite ideology.

According to Nahj al-balāghah, 'Alī said that he found no supporters, apart from his family, to revive his ignored right after the meeting of *Saqīfa*. Therefore, he kept his eyes closed despite 'motes in them'.

'I exercised patience despite trouble in breathing and despite having to take sour colocynth as food.'⁵³

But it does not seem that lack of supporters was the only reason for his silence. In a similar statement he said that in the new situation after *Saqīfa* he found endurance wiser, so he adopted patience:

'[...] there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat. I watched plundering of my inheritance [...].'⁵⁴

For some researchers, 'Alī's silence was due to the fragile situation that emerged after the death of the Prophet. In relation to this statement A. 'Abdulmaqsūd believes that since the Prophet was one of the clan of *Banī Hāshim* of Quraysh, and considering the long lasting competition of *Banī Umayya* with them, after the death of the Prophet, the latter tried to

precede the former in the form of his successorship. Therefore, 'Alī who saw the real intentions of the claimants of power, refused to be engaged in such groupings. On one occasion, immediately after the death of the Prophet, Abū Sufyān, the head of *Banī Umayya*, tried to encourage 'Alī to stand for his right, for the reason that Abū-Bakr was not from the Quraysh family. Abū Sufyān himself did not have any ground to do it himself because he had resisted the Prophet until the last year of his life. 'Abdulmaqsūd states that 'Alī, knowing Abū Sufyān's intentions, rejected his proposition because it was based on tribal relations which essentially contradicted Islamic principles and would renew the hostilities among the old tribes.⁵⁵

This hypothesis is supported by a sermon of Nahj al-balāghah. As a compiler of the book mentions it, that sermon was delivered when the Prophet died and 'Abbās ibn 'Abdul Muttalib and Abū Sufyān ibn Harb offered to pay allegiance to 'Alī for the caliphate. However, 'Alī refused to accept the proposal saying that both men were in 'the path of dissension' and had put on 'the crowns of pride'. Then he stated that 'One who plucks fruits before ripening is like one who cultivated in another's field'.⁵⁶ It can also be understood from this sentence that 'Alī believed he had no popular grounds to be a caliph, therefore he approved Abū Bakr's caliphate. According to Tabarī, 'Alī accused Abū Sufyān of trying to create mischief by this proposal.⁵⁷

Therefore, 'Alī did not try to change the political authority of the state by making any opposition or mobilizing his supporters during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Rather, he swore an oath of allegiance to them and even consulted with them on several political matters. Some contemporary Muslim revivalists who are seeking unity between Sunnī and

Shī'ite usually refer to this assumption to support their claim.⁵⁸

Another noteworthy point regarding 'Alī before his caliphate is his role during the events which led to the murder of 'Uthmān. Lewis believes that the main characters in the murder of 'Uthmān were Talha, Zubayr, 'Āishah and 'Amr, who resented 'Uthmān for replacing him in Egypt with one of his nominees. However, he has strong doubts about 'Alī's role in the event. For Lewis, 'Alī does not appear to bear any direct responsibility for the murder although his behaviour encouraged people to revolt.⁵⁹

In Nahj al-balāghah, which includes some disputes between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah, the latter is also blamed being involved in the murder of 'Uthmān. Mu'āwiyah had accused 'Alī of being the main cause of the murder of 'Uthmān and tried to blame 'Alī for forgetting the merits of the first caliphs in addition to the other allegations. 'Alī as part of his reply to these accusations wrote him a letter stating:

'which of us was more inimical towards 'Uthmān and who did more to bring about his killing ; or who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him; or who was he whom he called for help but who turned his face from him and drew his death near him till his fate overtook him?'⁶⁰

According to this letter, 'Alī affirmed that he was not going to offer any excuses for reproving 'Uthmān for 'his innovations'. He added that if his 'good counsel' and guidance to 'Uthmān were a sin, then very often a person who is blamed has no sin and sometimes the only reward a counsellor reaps is suspicion. 'I desired naught but reform what I am able to (do)'.⁶¹ In another letter 'Alī wrote to Mu'āwiyah that:

'As regards your prolonging the question of 'Uthmān's murder the position is that you helped 'Uthmān when it was really your own help while you forsook him when he was in need of help'⁶²

Motahharī believes that in Nahj al-balāghah , 'Alī accuses Mu'āwiyah of being involved in the murder of 'Uthmān by delaying in sending help for him during the seizure, and this is a new assumption regarding the murder of 'Uthmān.⁶³

Eventually, after some disputes and clashes between 'Uthmān and his supporters on the one hand, and the people, especially the Egyptians who had demanded reforms several times but had not yet received any satisfactory response, 'Uthmān was murdered and 'Alī elected caliph five days later⁶⁴, when Medina was facing anarchy. According to the majority of historians, 'Alī held back and offered to swear allegiance to either Talha or Zubayr. This could be because he knew the task which 'Uthmān's successor would have to face.⁶⁵

This election did not change the deteriorating conditions of the time and the murder of 'Uthmān did not end the chaos among Muslims. On the contrary, it became the beginning of a new era which resulted in some unprecedented events. B. Lewis believes that the murder of 'Uthmān by rebellious Muslims established a sinister precedent. Also, the religious and moral prestige of the office of caliphate as a bond of unity in Islam was severely weakened. To him, after 'Uthmān the only connection between the government and the tribes was political and financial.⁶⁶

Chapter 4

The nature of the early caliphate

Introduction

The notion of political authority under the first four caliphs has been a controversial and disputable subject. This is because of the problem of authenticity in the narration of events and the importance of the subject in the Shī'ite-Sunnī polemics on government and leadership.¹ When studying the nature of authority in the mentioned period, some researchers begin with examining the meaning of the words '*Khalīfah*', '*Khalīfatullāh*' and '*khalīfatu Rasūla-llāh*' by which caliphs were titled.

As a general account of political authority in that period, we may refer to P. Crone's and Martin Hinds' God's caliph. They believe that the caliphate of early Islam was a kind of religious authority. One of the reasons, for them, was that 'no Muslim could achieve salvation without allegiance to the (caliphs)'.² However, as it is stated in the same source, there was an opposite view which denied any sense of divinity to that authority.³ They pay attention to the fact that the title *Khalīfatu Rasūlu-llāh* (the successor of the Prophet) is not attested by any early source. By contrast, *Khalīfatullāh* (successor of God) appears on coins minted in 670-90 A.D.

B. Lewis believes that the title *Khalīfatullāh* denotes a claim to 'a divine right of monarchy' or 'an authority deriving directly from God'. For him the more usual interpretation of the *Sunnī Ulema* is that the caliph was the deputy or successor of the Prophet. This

successorship covers both the moral and material heritage of the Prophet. The caliph, then, functioned in the Prophet's double capacity as:

'founder of the faith and creator of the Islamic polity and community, but not in his spiritual office as Prophet and as the bringer and interpreter of God's word'⁴

Ali 'Abdurāziq believed that Muslims at *Saqīfa* tried to establish a kind of government which by no means was divine: Abū Bakr explicitly said that he was an ordinary man. He had asked people to correct him if he was not on the right path. To 'Abdurāziq this perspective of the Caliphate later changed and Muslims mistakenly assumed that the caliph was appointed to a divine position. The title *Khalīfato Rasūla-llāh* might have implied the divinity of the position.⁵

W.M.Watt states that the meaning of the word '*khalīfah*' changed within the thirty years after the Prophet's death. According to him, the primary meaning of the word was merely 'successor' but the vagueness of the meaning allowed for change as the office of Caliphate grew. Umayyad caliphs needed to exalt their office therefore began to use the title *Khalīfatullāh* or 'caliph of God' in the sense of ruler or viceroy appointed by God. It was a new Qurānic interpretation of the word.⁶

T. Husayn in his *al-Fitnah al-Kubrā* divides the era of the first four caliphs into two parts:⁷ first, the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, and second, the caliphates of 'Uthmān and Ali. He argues that the political authority of the early Islamic state was formed by two factors: its divine reference and aristocracy. By aristocracy, he does not mean a social or

family entitlement but a privilege derived from endeavour in the path of Islam and being supportive to Prophet Muhammad. Those who had a better record in supporting Muhammad and Islam enjoyed a better position and privilege in Islamic society. In his opinion, while these two factors were the nature of the strength of the authority during the reign the first two caliphs, they became the cause of its weakness during the reign of 'Uthmān and Ali. This happened because religious consciousness declined in the later generations, while the Islamic aristocracy disintegrated. Some people were insisting on the Prophet's and the first two caliphs' way of conduct while others emphasized the eligibility of the Prophet's family to the caliphate. One group changed the simplicity of the caliphate into a luxurious style similar to Caesar's and Kisra's kingdom, while the other emphasized the council of people as the basis of government. Husayn's conclusion was that the bitter events that occurred during the caliphate of 'Uthmān and Ali originated from the bad social and political circumstances.⁸

Accounts of the nature of the early caliphate in *Minhāj al-Barā'ah* reflect part of the Shī'ites' ideas. Imām Sādiq, the sixth shiite Imām, was asked about the essence of the different functions of government during the reign of the first four caliphs. He replied that worldly affairs such as the caliphate could not be managed unless a certain proportion of *Haq* (just; good; moral; what is based on the Qurān and the Prophet's way of conduct) and *Bātil* (immoral; bad; contrary to the divine laws) was balanced. For him, the first two caliphs behaved so. Thus, they succeeded in establishing a strong government. However, 'Uthmān tried to conduct the affairs completely in a *Bātil* manner while Ali wanted to act absolutely in the line of *Haq*. Therefore they failed to establish a powerful government.⁹

Whatever the nature of caliphate, it seems necessary to take several particularly

significant historical events and factors into consideration in order to have a better understanding of it. The study of the function of the caliphal system in dealing with these events may highlight its characteristics and explain its nature.

Tribal relations among Arabs may be counted as an influential element in shaping the early caliphate. As far as the notion of leadership is concerned, tribal leadership was very often combined with priesthood in pre-Islamic Arabia. The two words house (*bayt*) and honour (*sharaf*) were understood in direct connection to each other. From the time of Qusay, Muhammad's ancestor, the custodianship of Ka'ba, the holiest place in Mecca, had been in the hands of tribal leaders so that the Prophet's family had obtained the fame of service to Ka'ba by the time of the advent of Islam.¹⁰ As a result of managing the *Hajj* pilgrimage and trading with some of the neighbours of Arabia, Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe and one of the most important tribes in Arabia, had become acquainted with political affairs.

On this basis, the Quraysh family in general and some of its clans in particular, played an important role in early Muslim history. For example, some participants in the *Saqifa* Meeting reasoned that no one could rule Islamic society unless he was Qurayshite. The notion of a Qurayshite origin as a condition for being a ruler had a strong impact on the political domain of Islam. Abū Bakr and 'Umar both were Qurayshite. Also the six people nominated by 'Umar to choose the third Caliph from among themselves were from the Quraysh. This practice of the first caliphs later became a condition in selecting a caliph.

But the main problem in regard to tribalism in general, and Quraysh in particular, arose during 'Uthmān's caliphate. As it was mentioned previously, Islam appeared to be

opposed to tribal priorities and Muhammad tried to substitute a spiritual superiority for tribalism. But during his Caliphate (644-656), 'Uthmān gave the posts of authority and wealth to his kinsmen, and offended both the party of the old Companions and the pious men who:

'saw in the rising fortunes of the Umayyads something like a resurgence of defeated paganism'¹¹

As a result of this behaviour, 'Uthmān was criticized by his opponents. When a group of Kūfans gathered to examine 'Uthmān's actions, they blamed him for choosing governor among his own kinsmen.¹² Some of the relatives favoured by 'Uthmān had a bad reputation and this gave a negative impression to the idea of family nobility as a condition for taking a post. Therefore, the *Khawārij*, an opposition group who appeared during the second half of 'Uthmān's caliphate,¹³ rejected any tribal or family privilege in taking the posts of government. El-Awā, a Muslim researcher, like T. Husayn, whose opinion was mentioned above, holds the new generation of Muslims responsible for the instability and disorder during 'Uthmān's caliphate. He argues that these people were not so well versed in Islamic ideas and had embraced Islam as a result of the conquests.¹⁴

The way of selecting a person for the post of caliph may be counted as another influential factor in regard to government. After the death of Muhammad, a group of *Ansār* and *Muhājirūn* gathered at *Saqīfa Banī Sā'idah* to select a ruler among themselves. All the Muslims took the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr, the first caliph after this meeting. Even Ali, who had a claim to this post and did not participate in the meeting, did so several months later. However, 'Umar, the second caliph, was not selected in the same manner. He was appointed by Abū Bakr in the last days of his life. To select the third caliph, 'Umar formed a six-member council to choose one from among themselves.¹⁵ As for the fourth caliph, after the people's revolt against 'Uthmān in Medina which led to his murder, they came to

Ali and selected him as their caliph. However, some companions¹⁶ believed that the selection of Abū Bakr could not be regarded as a just decision since some of the prominent companions of the Prophet, namely Ali, had not participated in it. Some of them also believed that Muhammad had selected Ali as his successor at *Ghadīr Khumm*¹⁷. There are other criticisms in the Shī'ite camp about the selection of 'Umar and 'Uthmān to the caliphate. For instance, they blame 'Umar for setting up the council who was to select the third caliph. All the members of that council were from Quraysh, although 'Umar had rejected the idea of unification of prophecy and caliphate from the same clan in *Saqīfa*.¹⁸ Moreover, these criticisms did not only come from the Hāshimite family of Quraysh who believed in Ali's right:

In *Saqīfa*, *Ansār* nominated Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah, the chief of the *Khazraj* tribe of Medina and one of the twelve guarantors of the Medinan *Ansār* chosen by the Prophet during the meeting at *al-'Aqabah*, for the caliphate. According to Tabarī, they had not told *Muhājirīn* about their decision when they gathered on the portico. The *Ansār's* right to the Prophet's successorship may be found in *Sa'd's* words :

'Company of the *Ansār*! you have precedence in religion and merit in Islam that no other tribe of the Arabs can claim. Muhammad remained ten-odd years in his tribe, calling them to worship the Merciful and to cast off idols and graven images, but only a few men of his tribe believed in Him

,¹⁹

On the basis of these facts, it is clear that the early caliphs were faced with the problem of legitimacy and this matter could highlight the need for having consultations with the other parties. Abū Bakr had promised in *Saqīfa* that 'matters shall not be settled without

consultation, nor shall we decide on them without *Ansār*.'²⁰ Also it is accepted that some of the reasons behind the people's revolt against 'Uthmān were his increasing reliance on his cousins and the lack of consultation.

The *Ridda* wars and the early conquests can also be counted as another factor in the formation of the government at the beginning of the caliphal system. In explaining this factor, H. Kennedy believes that the Arab tribes were not converted to Islam until they had found in the Islamic state a new source of power. Therefore, with the Prophet's death, they assumed that this power had disintegrated, and they decided to disobey the central government under the new circumstances.²¹ This matter can be observed in the opposition movements which sprang up in Arabia during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr (632-635). F. M. Donner classified these movements into two different groups. Firstly those who challenged both 'the political control of Medina and the religious claims of Islam by proposing rival ideologies'²² and secondly a class of movements that had a more strictly political character. But the economic factor was also important since in some cases it took the form of a tax rebellion against the Islamic state.²³ Talha ibn Khūwaylid, Musaylama ibn Habīb and al-Aswad al-'Anasī, who had also claimed prophecy, were people from the first group.²⁴ And the rebellion of Banī Tamīm and Bani Fazāra against the Islamic state formed the second group. All of these movements are known as *ridda* which means "apostasy" or "repudiation". However they were settled after the *Ridda* wars which were carried out by Abū Bakr. The importance of the *Ridda* wars comes from their role in the transformation of a small community of Muslims based on faith into a powerful and unified Islamic state. It can be said that Abū Bakr extended the Islamic hegemony over 'all the nomadic tribal groups after the wars'.²⁵

There is also a discussion about the nature of these conquests. Ibn Khaldūn related it to the strong tribal group feelings among the Arabs which were intensified and strengthened by religious belief.²⁶ While some Islamists emphasize the Arabic factor in the conquests, Donner rejects the discounting of the religious factor which is usually implied by skeptical modern scholars. He believes that:

'as an ideological system early Islam came with great force onto the stage of Arabian society- we have seen how it appears to have laid the groundwork for a radical social and political transformation of that society.'²⁷

There are other opinions about the nature of early Islamic government among scholars. But what can be concluded from the matters mentioned so far denotes that the concept of government changed during the first two or three decades of Islam. This change was mainly due to the socio-economic shock in the Islamic community as well as to the different behaviours of the first caliphs. Another point is that the caliphal system was essentially a combination of religious and temporal authority.

Chapter 5

Political Philosophy and Theology in

Nahj al-balāghah

Introduction

Any political idea inevitably relies on a certain interpretation of being as a whole in describing human social behaviour and suggesting appropriate social order . This general outlook of human nature and social life has directed scholars in their intellectual endeavour to find a solution to political problems. Some political thinkers, especially in earlier centuries, originally were philosophers and expressed their ideas in the form of philosophy. This is because of the basic association between 'is' and 'ought to' which places the general outlook of being in a higher position than moral advice.

In examining the importance of this philosophical approach in political issues we may observe, for instance, the theories of freedom and their definition of human nature. In these theories, freedom is a dependent variable of either of the two main philosophies: optimism and pessimism. From the optimistic point of view, human beings are benevolent by nature and able to control their instincts and animal desires so that they must be given absolute freedom in establishing their relations with society on an optional basis. By contrast, the pessimists believe in humanity's sinful and evil nature, and, in a more moderate view, in its impressionability with depravity and corruption in human society. On this basis they may believe that despotism and dictatorship are necessary to a certain extent in order to guarantee

the use of freedom by individuals.

In studying Nahj al-balāghah as a source of political ideas, at least for the Shī'ite, we find a philosophical approach to politics. Definitions of God, man, the world and the relations of these three concepts with each other are referred to in some passages of the book. In this chapter this aspect of Nahj al-balāghāh is being discussed since it can be the key to understanding the other parts.

This general Islamic outlook on existence has its own interpretation and explanation in Nahj al-balāghah. These matters are dealt with in a considerable part of the book and sometimes are expressed in a more detailed and specific manner than in the Qurān. This aspect of Nahj al-balāghah is the subject of study in this section which will be followed by some other theoretical issues such as predestination, society and history in the next section.

It will be argued that the political dimension of man's life in Nahj al-balāghah comes from its special interpretation of the world, God, man and his position on the earth. The Quranic style of the book in explaining these notions denies man's apathy towards the world. Similarly to the Qurān, Nahj al-balāghah depicts a potential dual value of this world which is considered as a purposeful creation: a good stage for obtaining the eternal prosperity of the other world and an unreliable foundation to build a permanent life. In respect of God, He is actively involved with His creatures' actions and has set certain rules for their social and personal life. Man in this order is commanded to adjust his relations with God and the world on the basis of God's instructions preached by the prophets. God can be experienced by man only by rendering the ultimate obedience and devotion in all aspects of his life.

In regard to society and its notion in the book, it seems to be accepted that the human being is a social creature by nature according to Islamic Knowledge. This idea might have originated from the Quranic view of society which was reviewed in the previous chapter. But the matter has been approached in Nahj al-balāghah from other perspectives. The origins of social life, the reasons for the collapse and the flourishing of societies and the rules governing them are among the issues of this book. What is to be discussed in this regard is the view that 'society' is something beyond the mass of individuals and which, as a whole, has its own reasons for rising and falling according to Nahj al-balāghah. This matter is referred to in some parts of the book under different issues. It is necessary to consider the special characteristics which conditioned Islamic society during the last years of Uthman's government and all of 'Alī's caliphate in order to have a better understanding of society in Nahj al-balāghah.

And finally the concept of history is examined in Nahj al-balāghah from a conceptual point of view. It is argued that if society has an independent existence and if its development obeys certain rules and principles, as we observed in the previous section, this involves a certain notion of history. The author of Nahj al-balāghah theorizes trends of history, analyzes events and predicts the future. Obviously, the word 'history' as we understand it today, when we examine it from a scientific point of view, did not exist in mid-seventh century Arabia. But this notion can be comprehended from such other words as *Zamān* (time), *Qabl* (before), *Madā* (past), *Dahr* (era), *Qurūn* (centuries) etc, as well as from stories about the fate of people in the past. Briefly, history in Nahj al-balāghah, can be approached from a conceptual point of view so that a general pattern of change can be conceived.

It seems that the main elements of change in history, as mentioned before, are people

and their social behaviour. Their solidarity or weakness stemming from their commitment to common values makes them influential in changing the direction of history. Some other issues such as might, economic factors and individuals are all subjected to the will of people in affecting the trend of history. This idea, however, is not so explicit in Nahj al-balāghah. It is implied in sentences which mainly are in the form of advice to people to learn from the past in order to solve current problems and prevent collapse. In this chapter some points regarding history in Nahj al-balāghah are discussed. Since the issues of change and society are very inter-connected with history, some matters may be similar to others found in the previous section. However, it should be mentioned that they are discussed from a different perspective here. Needless to say, as with any other issue in Nahj al-balāghah, the notion of history is based on Quranic knowledge.

Before entering into such discussions, the kind of philosophy which is dealt with in the book and the importance of this matter in Islamic political thought should be explained. The fact is that Nahj al-balāghah is mainly a religious book, therefore, one might not expect to find philosophical discussions in it. The implication of such discussions in the book actually legitimizes the intellectual activity to a certain extent. In addition, it should be mentioned that Nahj al-balāghah has been one of the most influential sources of Shī'ite thought. Based on these facts, it is natural to commence by reviewing the origins of rationalism in Islam and the philosophical dimension of Shī'ism from a general point of view.

I

A glance at the origin of rationalism in the Qurān

Muslim scholars, in defending their inclination to philosophy and theology (*Kalām*), cite as their reasons passages from the Qurān and *Sunnah*. One of their justifications is related to the position of knowledge in the story of Adam's creation. By a comparison between the Qurān and the Bible they conclude that acquiring knowledge or wisdom is not something contradictory to divine orders in the Islamic creed while it seems so in Christianity.¹

The Quranic verses in this regard are those in which the creation of Adam before coming to the earth is described. In these verses, God said to the angels that He was going to place on the earth a successor (*Khalīfah*) but they said:

'What! wilt thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate thy praise and extol thy holiness?''²

God replied that: 'surely I know what you do not know' and added:

'He (Allāh) taught Adam all the names then presented them to the angels: then He said; Tell me the names of those if you are right....''³

When the angels could not answer they confessed to their lack of knowledge and admitted Adam's superiority. In the following verses, Adam's sin of eating from the Forbidden Tree is expressed without stating any specific link between his 'knowing of the names' and that

'sin'. This kind of description of the event led some Muslim commentators to assume that it was Adam's knowledge which made him responsible for his actions. For them, knowledge is the virtue which makes man capable of distinguishing between evil and good. And 'committing sin' becomes meaningful in this context. From this view, acquiring knowledge makes man superior to angels who are not obliged to choose either the good or the bad way.

The Biblical account of the story, on the contrary, depicts a different image of man.

According to the Bible, God ordered Eve (and Adam):

'Not to eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'⁴

But the serpent tempted Eve by telling her that God knew that once she ate of it her eyes would be opened, and she would be like God, 'knowing good and evil'. Therefore they committed the sin and ate of the fruit. Several verses later, relating that sin to knowledge, God said:

'See, the man has become like one of us. knowing good and evil ; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat , and live forever- therefore the Lord God sent him forth the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life'.⁵

M.Motahhari, a Muslim philosopher, observing these two different approaches to knowledge,

concludes that intelligence as a means for acquiring knowledge does not contradict faith in Islam. According to his interpretation of the verses, knowledge is something which places a human in a higher position than animals and angels.⁶

Muslim commentators, in addition, support their argument for rationalism by some other Qurānic verses in which reason and intelligence are recommended in obtaining faith. As Arberry states, the Qurān itself laid down the method of argument in some particular matters such as the doctrine of resurrection.⁷ In general, in such verses, people are advised to think about the signs of God in two dimensions; in the natural and physical world (*Āyāti-hī*) and in the self (*Anfosahom*).⁸ The sky, the stars, the seas, the animals, the changing seasons, the growth of live things, death, etc, are introduced as subjects for observing God's power and other unseen truths. Arberry believes that the teachings of the Qurān on the two orders of revelation, 'God's power as seen in His creation' and 'God's will as disclosed to His Messengers',

'opened the way to a rational discussion of religious truths long before the rise of theological controversy'.⁹

On the other hand Muhammad was advised in the Qurān to use a logical method in dealing with his ideological opponents.¹⁰ *Hikmah* (wisdom) and *Jadal* (dispute) were methods which could be carried out only by means of reason and logic.¹¹

Philosophy, Shī'ism and Nahj al-balāghah

Philosophy and metaphysics are dealt with in Shī'ism in general and Nahj al-balāghah

in particular. Since Nahj al-balāghah is considered the main ideological source of the Shī'ite school, after the Qurān and the *Sunnah*, its philosophical contents have occupied a unique position in Shī'ite thought. Concerning philosophical and theological passages of Nahj al-balāghah, some Shī'ite scholars believe that this kind of discussion made Shī'ite thought philosophical from the early stages of its growth.¹² S.M.H. Tabātabāyī, the contemporary Shī'ite philosopher, pointing to Nahj al-balāghah, believes that:

'He ('Alī) was the first in Islam to delve directly into the questions of metaphysics (*falsafah-ye Elāhī*) in a manner combining intellectual rigor and logical demonstration. He discussed problems which had never appeared before in the same way among the metaphysicians of the world.'¹³

This author also states that 'Alī's discussions are philosophical rather than theological. For him, this method is particular to 'Alī and none of the twelve-thousand companions of Prophet Muhammad, whose names have been recorded, had such ideas.¹⁴

Tabātabāyī's significant conclusion is that as a consequence of the philosophical discussions of Nahj al-balāghah, Shī'ites tend to rely on their own speculations, in addition to the Book and the *Sunnah*, in perceiving Islamic rules (*Ijtihād*).¹⁵ Similarly, S.H. Nasr states that, while there is a greater emphasis upon intelligence ('*Aql*) in Shī'ite theology, in *Sunnī kalām*, or theology, especially in the predominant Ash'arite school, an emphasis has been put upon will (*irādah*).¹⁶ This emphasis on wisdom might have led Shī'ites, in practice, to question the legitimacy of *Sunnī* rulers during Umayyads and afterwards.

The Shī'ite inclination to philosophy has become one of the points in the *Sunnī-Shī'ite*

polemic. The Sunnī analyst A.Amīn in arguing about the relationship between Shī'ism and philosophy considers some subsidiary reasons such as nationality and inner feelings or esotericism (*bātin garāyī*) among Shī'ites in their inclination to philosophy. He rejects the conformity of Islam and philosophy. On this basis, he doubts the authenticity of the passages of Nahj al-balāghah by arguing that the Arabs were not familiar with these philosophical discussions at the time of 'Alī.¹⁷ He mentions that philosophical matters entered into Islamic knowledge after Muslims became acquainted with Greek Philosophy. He also assumed that Shī'ites had to make use of philosophy in order to justify their feelings. He supports his assumption by stating that the dynasties of the Safavīds, Būwāids and Qājār's in Iran and Fātimīd's in Egypt were more pro-Philosophy than the others.¹⁸

In addition to Amin's theory, in the second assumption regarding philosophy and Shī'ism, Iranians as a distinct nationality are the focus of attention. B.Russell believes that 'Persians' in comparison with Arabs were more religious and speculative from the earliest times. Therefore after their conversion, they made out of Islam something much more religious and more philosophical.¹⁹ For this reason, according to him, the Persians found Shī'ism a better religion and mixed it with their philosophical talent. Again in this assumption, philosophy has imposed itself externally on Shī'ism.

Motahhari, denying these assumptions, emphasizes the role of Shī'ite Imāms and the Qurānic knowledge in highlighting the philosophical method.²⁰ As mentioned earlier, he argues that this method was initially used by the Qurān and Shī'ite Imāms, who taught these notions to their followers.²¹

Since the essence of philosophical discussions is intelligence and free thinking, this may look rather different from the first impression of religion which requires complete devotion. This matter has been a subject of differences among Muslims of the Sunnī school of thought in the second and third centuries of Islam. The most prominent group who opposed logical discussions on the Qurān were the Asha'rites. Although they legitimized the use of Islamic theology (*Kalām*) they gave this an especial meaning.²² They believed that face-value reading of the Qurān and *Hadīth* was the basis for its interpretation and that Reason should fall under the authority of revelation. Another group, the Mu'tazilites, on the contrary, emphasized speculation and Reason in addition to revelation in perceiving divine matters. The latter were overpowered by the former in the third century and since then the Sunnī school has been dominated by Ash'arite thought.

Some Theological issues of Nahj al-balāghah

Although discussions of philosophy and theology are not included in this thesis, some general points are worth mentioning in order to better understand the political concepts of Nahj al-balāghah. In what follows, some of these elements are explained.

Before entering this debate it should be noted that the language of Nahj al-balāghah in this kind of argument is different from that of Muslim theologians. For example, Mu'tazilites and Asha'rites, the first two groups of Muslim theologians, debated about the concepts of rational good and evil (*husn wa qubh-e aqlī*) which cannot be found in Nahj al-balāghah.

Also, in describing the attributes of God, the method of Nahj al-balāghah is different from those schools of thought. In the first sermon, describing the way of achievement which is foremost in religion, it recommends denying any attributes to God because:

'whoever attaches attributes to Allāh recognises His like, and who recognises His like regards Him two, [therefore] recognises parts for Him, [therefore] mistook Him, [therefore] pointed at Him, [therefore] admitted for Him limitation, and numbered Him.'²³

This description may seem different from the verses of the Qurān in which God's attributes are enumerated. But it is said at the beginning of the sermon that there is no limit to God's description. Rāwandī, one of the first commentators of Nahj al-balāghah, writes that in this sermon the rejected attributes are those which are attributed to the creatures of God.²⁴ In other words there are two types of attributes: the limited and the unlimited. In this sermon this separation is made at the beginning. Then a unity is suggested between God, as an unlimited entity, and His unlimited attributes. Mu'tazilites, who came into prominence about two centuries later, denied any kind of attributes of God and did not pose such a separation between these two kinds of attributes.²⁵

Free will and predestination

It has been said that 'the debates on predestination inaugurated rationalism in Islam'.²⁶ Examining the notions of free will and predestination in the Qurān may give us a better insight into Nahj al-balāghah.

As a general background, Watt argues that two opposing trends are realised in the Qurān in respect of this matter. First there are verses which are about human responsibility

and the concept of the Last Judgment. In those, which are mostly in the earlier chapters (*Sūrah*) of the Qurān, a presupposition of human responsibility is stated.

'A man must be responsible for what he does , at least in the sense that he may be justly rewarded or punished for it. The warning uttered by the Prophet, and his call to repentance, imply in his hearers the capacity to respond.'²⁷

The second group of verses are about Divine Omnipotence in which God is presented as the almighty Lord of the Worlds.²⁸ In this case man is subordinated to the power of God. There are also other verses in the Qurān which deal with predestination and free will in other ways.²⁹

In Nahj al-balāghah there are not many discussions directly about the matter. But in one case it is dealt with explicitly. This is included in the third part of the book where the sayings of 'Alī are compiled. It is related to the return from a war led by 'Alī against the Syrians. A man came to him and asked: "Was our going to fight against the Syrians destined by Allāh?" 'Alī replied that he (the man) took it as a final and unavoidable destiny and that:

'If it were so, there would have been no question of reward or chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allāh's promises or warnings. (On the other hand) Allāh, the Glorified, has ordered His people to act by free will and has cautioned them and refrained them (from evil).'³⁰

'Alī also stated that the theories of compulsion, predestination or predetermination of fate were satanic beliefs and doctrines of faith among the enemies of God. Man from this point

of view has been given freedom of will and action so that he is at full liberty to obey God's Commands or to disobey them. In 'Alī's interpretation of religion neither compulsion in accepting religion nor force to obey God's Commands are preached by His apostles. According to Faydul Eslām's commentary of Nahj al-balāghah, the man ended his enquiry by asking : "What kind of destiny was it by which we had to go?" In answering this question 'Alī interprets the Qurānic word of *qadā* (destiny) to mean 'command of Allāh'³¹ from the verse; 'And commanded your Lord has that you shall worship not but Him'.³²

The conclusion of this expression might be a moderate approach to the issues of *Jabr* (predestination) and *Ikhtiyār* (free will) in Shī'ism which was taken in later centuries by Shī'ites. M.R. al-Muzaffar, the contemporary Shī'ite scholar, defines two extreme approaches to the matter, beside the moderate Shī'ite one.

Regarding the first approach, (*Mujabbirah*), he explains that it maintains that the actions carried out by people are really God's actions, because it denies natural causes (*as-sababīyah at-tabī'īyah*) and is of the opinion that the real cause (*al-sabab al-haqīqī*) is Allāh, otherwise the belief that He is the Creator without any partner becomes meaningless. People are the locus of Allāh's activity therefore it is God who forces them to do evil or good and then punishes or rewards them. On the contrary, the second extreme sect (*Mufawwidah*) believes that God has given full power to His creatures for their actions because the attribution of man's actions to Allāh necessitates attributing imperfection to Him. They emphasize the chain of causes and consider particular causes (*asbāb al-khāssah*) for existing things. They believe that in the first assumption Allāh is separated from His power and is given partners in His creation.

In describing the Shī'ite idea on the matter, a narration from the sixth Shī'ite Imām , Ja'far al-Sādiq, shows a moderate position:

'There is no compulsion (Jabr) (from Allāh), nor is there absolute delegation of power (*tafwīd*) (from Allāh to man), but the real position is between the two extremes.'³³

In this view, man's action is really his own action and he is responsible for what he does. But, on the other hand, all these actions are subjected to God's power since he has created us and made for us certain rules. Muzaffar admits that there is ambiguity in this definition and states that predetermination (*Qadā*) and Divine decree (*qadar*) are one of the secrets of Allāh.

II

Monotheism, the World and human responsibility

The unity of God as the core of Islamic monotheism is dealt with in several passages of Nahj al-balāghah . This subject is explained in two forms: philosophy and a description of the amazing nature of some of God's creatures. As regards the latter, for example, a locust³⁴, a bat³⁵ and a peacock³⁶ are described as wonderful beasts which exhibit God's wisdom. But the main part of the book is devoted to a logical method of description of God's existence.³⁷

In respect of the philosophical style of Nahj al-balāghah a novel interpretation of

God's unity and monotheism is presented. Some of these issues are: the rejection of any plurality and separation of God's soul, the reality of God's existence in the world and His eternity, His superiority to Time and quantity,³⁸ His absolute dominance over being³⁹, etc. In these issues, some attributes of God are discussed in a particular manner. As stated before, according to Tabātabāyī and Motahharī, this kind of philosophical approach was so unique and profound that it affected Shī'ite thought considerably. A. Jawādī Āmolī, the Shī'ite scholar, believes that philosophers such as Fārābī, Sheykh-e Ishrāq, Mullā Sadrā and Tabātabāyī were all influenced by the philosophical discussions of Nahj al-balāghah.⁴⁰

Although the possibility of the influence of Greek philosophy on these parts of Nahj al-balāghah is still under discussion,⁴¹ it should be noted that these notions differ from Greek philosophy from a conceptual point of view. This independency led some researchers to conclude the authenticity of Nahj al-balāghah.⁴²

However, neither studies of philosophical issues and their origins nor the authenticity of the book concern us in this work. The focus of our attention here is the practical dimension of the theoretical concepts and general outlook of Nahj al-balāghah.

To this end, we start with the subject of 'experiencing God' for a Muslim. Doing this will enable us to bridge theoretical and practical ideas. If, according to Nahj al-balāghah, God is He who is and nothing is similar to Him since He is out of the reach of our minds and He who cannot be reached in his reality by our profound speculation⁴³ since He is something beyond the access of humans and transcends all that can be thought, then how can He be experienced and worshipped by us? Answering this question reveals how belief reflects on

practice or, in other words, how God relates to human beings.

An answer to this question is offered by A.Falātūrī ,a Muslim professor of Islamology and philosophy, by referring to the following Qurānic passage:

'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a niche, and within it a lamp: the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as if it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor the West, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it. Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His light. God doth set forth parables for men, and God doth know all things.'⁴⁴

Describing God as 'the light' which 'emits from itself' and which is the light of the cosmos leads Falātūrī to conclude that the relationship between God and the world is not physical and that God is the 'creator' and 'cause' of all that exists.⁴⁵ In this verse God and His presence in the cosmos is compared with the presence of the sun in our world through its light. The existence of the cosmos, of which man is also a part, in this sense, is the light of God . He is everywhere, without being localized. He is the ultimate cause of every happening which one otherwise ascribes to man, nature and so on.⁴⁶

But what is the situation of man in this context? If everything originates from God, including human actions as a part of His creatures, what does human responsibility mean? Is this the same idea as that of *Jabrīyah*, that attributed all man's good and evil deeds to God?

For Falaturi, the Qurānic statement: 'I (God) only created *Jinns* and men, that they may serve Me'⁴⁷ is very explanatory in this regard. The interpretation of the word 'serve' in this verse is decisive. For him, this service (*'ibādah*) means realization of the light of God

which is sent down to our world by the prophets in the form of religion and the divine message. This realization cannot be fulfilled completely except by sincere devotion to God in both ritual and all other human actions, including drinking, eating, sleeping, walking, and so on.⁴⁸

Islam, which is the worldly form of the Light, should be enacted by man as the purpose of his creation and also his experience of God. In Falaturi's hypothesis, this action of man is not included in Godly predestined affairs because it is exempted by the verse already.

'There is only one activity which is, by definition, not ascribed to the sole activity of God, that is, service of God, which is the object and goal of creation. [...] If we accept this exception we can understand man's obligation to service and every other activity as presuming freedom of will with no contradiction.'⁴⁹

This hypothesis comes from the premise that worshipping Himself is a logical impossibility for God. In other words, He could not be the cause of man's service to Him. The importance of serving God which is stated as the purpose of creation refers to human freedom in fulfilling it.

We can sketch out the same plan in explaining the view of the world, God and man in Nahj al-balāghah. It means that we find the same expressions and methodology in describing theoretical matters. Sermon 178, particularly, is explanatory in this regard. According to this sermon, a man named Dhi'lib al-Yamānī asked 'Alī whether he had seen (experienced) Allāh or not. 'Alī replied: "Do I worship one whom I have not seen?" Then he

began to explain the attributes of God and the quality of His experience:

'Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. [...] He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight).'⁵⁰

This characterization of God resembles that which was stated earlier. He is everywhere but not physically. On the other hand, 'seeing God' by heart is experiencing Him in that sense.

Also man's freedom in his actions is explained in the same manner. It is conceivable from the sermon *al-Qarrā'* that man enjoys free will in his actions in spite of God's influence in all matters. In a part of this sermon God is described as He who has timed for us 'our lives', given us 'covering of dress', scattered for us 'livelihood', etc, but at the same time man is advised to choose the right path in this world and God rewards him according to his deeds.⁵¹

The way in which man can serve God and obtain salvation, or in other words, realize the Light, is another aspect of experiencing God. This realization is not possible without devoting the self to God's commands as sent down to the prophets and fulfilling them. More specifically, it will be realized when man believes in the Divine message and, consequently, tries to obey it.

This practical dimension of monotheism is stated in Nahj al-balāghah in the form of defining the world and dealing with it and worship. In a part of the sermon of *al-Qāsi'ah* the way of worshipping God is dealt with in a detailed manner. According to it, this worship and

obedience to God, which is the purpose of creation, can be realised by means of solving successfully the tests which are imposed on man by God. The point is that man is free to choose his way of dealing with them. However, he is obliged to pass these tests in order to show his obedience:

'But Allāh tries His creatures by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship [...].'⁵²

As a condition of obtaining God's satisfaction and fulfilling his obligations, a Muslim should separate himself from the world and bear difficulties in the prescribed way. In a letter to Uthman ibn Hunayf al-Ansāri, 'Alī's governor of Basrah, 'Alī criticised him for attending a luxurious party given by the rich of Basrah. The first part of the letter deals with the prohibition from enjoying worldly pleasures even though they may be lawful. In the second part of it, a more general view of the world is depicted and the world is addressed: 'Get away from me, Oh world'. In the last paragraph a relationship is made between discharging one's obligations towards Allāh and enduring hardships.⁵³ In spite of the rejection of any over-benefiting from the world, there is not any denying of engagement in it.

In another sermon the behaviour of some of the prophets are mentioned as examples. Muhammad is described as he who deprived himself from the pleasures of the world and turned away from its adornments. In the same manner Moses, as a second example, said to have been so indifferent to the world that 'he asked Him (God) only for a bread to eat'. In addition, David, the author of the Psalms, used to prepare baskets out of date palm leaves with his own hands to be purchased and merely ate bread. Also Jesus is described as using

a stone for his pillow, putting on coarse cloths and eating rough food. He was so disconnected from the world that:

'He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to give grief, nor wealth to deviate (his attention), nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance and his two hands his servant.'⁵⁴

Prophethood (*Nubowwah*) in this sense is showing people the way of serving God since men need to be guided in fulfilling their tasks. 'Otherwise he (man) will not be safe from ruin.'⁵⁵

What makes this kind of obedience to God (*Rīyadah*) important in Nahj al-balāghah is its political implications. Political power, tyranny, oppression and so on are all worldly affairs which a servant of God should avoid from using and making the means of his pleasures. However, engaging in political activities is not prohibited.

This kind of approach to temporal affairs is sometimes considered as the origin of Sūfism which came about several centuries later. The Sūfi idea of the 'perfect Man' (*Insān-e Kāmil*) resembles the infallible leader (*Imām-e Ma'sūm*) of the Shī'ite belief. M.Momen states that 'Alī's words in Nahj al-balāghah are considered to have given the initiative to Sūfism in Islam through some scholars such as Hasan al-Basrī and Rabī' ibn Khaytham.⁵⁶ On the other hand he mentions Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī (d.679/1280), one of the commentators on Nahj al-balāghah, as one who interpreted much of the material of that book in a Sūfī manner.⁵⁷ This idea is similar to L. Massignon's statement about the origin of mysticism. In his opinion:

'the mystical movement was the direct heir of primitive Muslim asceticism, itself derived from the Qurān and the practice of the Prophet.'⁵⁸

For these writers, Nahj al-balāghah as a text on early Islamic ideas might have inspired the Sūfī view. It is noteworthy that 'Alī has a distinguished position among Sūfīs to the extent that they have become close to Shī'ites in this respect.

The perception of the world in any theoretical system may be counted as the main factor in making it actively involved in worldly affairs. The above-mentioned considerations about the world could imply that it is a decayed place which should be dismissed altogether. The dichotomy of such a conclusion presents itself when we consider that strong advocacy regarding worldly affairs such as political systems, economic affairs and so on, from a considerable part of the Qurān and Nahj al-balāghah. This contradiction can be justified by means of reassessing the matters stated so far.

According to Nahj al-balāghah, the world is not a place for suffering. Instead, it is the opportunity for a human being to perfect his soul. It is in the world that man is able to render his obedience to God and worship Him. In fact this worship becomes meaningful only in the context of the world. From this point of view it is a grace of God and people are recommended to take advantage of it.⁵⁹ With this prospect, Nahj al-balāghah approves this value of the world only in so far as man chooses it as a means of obeying God and not as an end for resting in. In other words, as a means, it is good and should be used to obtain God's satisfaction, otherwise it is evil.

This distinction between means and end is expressed in a sermon which divides people into two general groups: those who take the world as a means and those who use it as an end. According to this distinction, the first category is composed of three groups. Firstly those

whose lack of means and shortage of wealth has prevented them from mischief. Secondly, those who commit mischief openly by devoting themselves to securing wealth, leading troops, 'rising on the pulpit' and allowing their faith to perish. And finally those who seek the 'benefits of this world through actions meant for the next world'. These people pretend to be religious and in the service of God but in fact are using the 'position of Allāh's connivance as a means of committing sins'. The second category, however, are a minority of people, in whose case:

'The remembrance of their return (to Allāh on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of resurrection moves their tears, [etc]'⁶⁰

The point is that the first three groups are categorised according to their ways of dealing with the world. They are criticised as those who are facing it as a means of harnessing religion for committing sins.

'How bad is the transaction that you allow, (enjoyment of) this world to be a price for yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allāh for you.'⁶¹

This definition of the world enabled Shī'ites, who derived their political principles from Nahj al-balāghah, to assume a divine nature for political affairs. They did not see any objection to engaging in worldly affairs. On the contrary, they tried to provide a just political situation in which people could realize their obedience to God. In this sense politics and religion supplement each other.

This notion of the world can be seen in a saying attributed to 'Alī. It is stated that when 'Alī heard a man abusing the world, he criticised him. 'Alī said that he should not accuse the world because it is not evil by nature. Then he mentioned death as an example that was shown by the world to remind us about our fate. He added that:

'Certainly this world is a house of truth for him who appreciates it; a place of safety for him who understands it; a house of riches for him who collects provisions from it (for the next world); and a house of instructions for him who draws instructions from it. It is the place of worship for the lovers of Allāh; the place of praying for the angels of Allāh; the place where the revelation of Allāh descends; and the marketing place for those devoted to Allāh. Herein they earned mercy and herein acquired Paradise by way of profit.'⁶²

On the basis of this definition of the world, M.T.Ja'farī infers that 'Alī's criticism of the world does not mean that he rejects it, but that he recommends the establishment of a sound relation with it.⁶³ This deduction seems right since again it makes man responsible for his dealings with the world, an idea which is closer to the idea of 'free will'.

III

Society

Before commencing the discussion on society, a point regarding the theoretical aspect of this issue in Nahj al-balāghah should be mentioned. The matter of the sociability of human beings has been the focus of attention from the very beginning of philosophy. For Ibn Khaldūn (732-808 A.H), whose ideas about the change of societies will be described later in

this study, people are gathered on the basis of 'Group Feeling', something similar to nationalism in our time. In his theory tribal interests have strengthened the solidarity among a group of people and made them active in establishing a civilisation.

To Abū Nasr Fārābī (259-339 A.H), the Muslim philosopher, providing for essential physical needs and apprehending spiritual values are the two factors in establishing social life. He argues that these spiritual and physical needs cannot be realized except by means of a collective life.⁶⁴

The contemporary Shī'ite philosopher M.H. Tabātabāyī believes that social life is based on the instinct of man's employment. Unlike the two above-mentioned thinkers, Tabātabāyī believes that the will to employ others is superior to the instinct of social life in human beings. He states that man in the first stage wants to employ nature for his own before he wants to live in a community. In the same manner, when a man faces another man, he wants to employ him for his own. Therefore, in Tabātabāyī's opinion, the idea of living in society is not naturally instituted in human beings but it is based on a mutual agreement of employment.⁶⁵

Some scholars believe that the idea presented in Nahj al-balāghah belongs to the third type of opinions presented above.⁶⁶ For them the following passage describes such an idea:

'Oh people, surely no one (even though he may be rich) can do without his kinsmen, and their support by hands or tongues. They alone are his support from rear and can ward off from him his troubles, and they are the most kind to him when tribulations befall him. The good memory of a man that Allāh retains among people is better than the property which others inherit from him.'⁶⁷

According to this passage, the rational action of man in attracting others' help and repulsing their harm is the basis of collective life. In the continuation of the sermon it is mentioned that if anyone should find his near ones in want or starvation, he should not desist from helping them with that which will not increase if this help is not extended, nor decrease by thus spending it. On the opposite, it is stated that whoever holds up his hand from helping his kinsmen, he holds only one hand, but at the time of his need many hands remain held up from helping him. This description of human behaviour assumes social life as the subordinate interest of human beings.

However, society and issues relating to it are more often discussed in Nahj al-balāghah in respect of the essence of the common feeling among people and the moral principles which are at the base of such feelings. There are some indications in the book that the consensus of opinion among the individuals of a community is the basis for identifying them as a society among others.

Oh people, certainly, what gathers people together (in categories) is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement.⁶⁸

In describing this initial definition of society an example is presented, immediately after this sentence, which is self explanatory. It notes that although only one individual killed the camel of *thamūd*⁶⁹, Allāh punished all the people of that nation because of the joining in the sin by their acquiescing 'in their consenting to it'.

The words *Ridā* and *Sakht* used in the sentence denote some internal feelings with a less external appearance. As a consequence, the common inclination towards or against a matter, which may cause the establishment of a society, is of a great importance so that people are recommended to be concerned about their desires more than their actions in Nahj al-balāghah. It is attributed to 'Alī that when he defeated the enemy at the Battle of *Jamal* one of his companions told him that he wished his brother had been present and seen the victory. 'Alī asked him if his brother regarded 'Alī as a friend or not. When he answered yes, 'Alī said:

In that case he was with us. Rather in this army of ours even those persons were also present who are still in the loins of men and wombs of women. Shortly time will get strength through them.⁷⁰

In other words the essence of society is a kind of moral commitment to some principles which may make the individuals move towards a certain objective. This idea may also imply that any endeavour in contradiction with the values of a society is doomed to fail because of the existence of that common feeling which destroys any ground for unacceptable standards.

In another case in a comparison between pre-Islamic people and 'Alī's contemporaries, 'Alī said that people had not changed significantly since they had the wrong conviction that they knew something which their predecessors did not. 'Alī rejected this idea by pointing to the fact that, for people, knowledge in itself was not the only factor for being different from the people in the past, but they should also change their desires and wants.⁷¹ However, in

Nahj al-balāghah, solidarity stems from the common perception of moral principles among the members of a society. As general guidance, people are recommended to 'tread on the path He (Allāh) has laid down for them and stand by what He has enjoined upon them'⁷²

M.M. Shams al-din, the Shī'ite lebanese scholar, believes that the basis of Muslim society in Nahj al-balāghah is self-protection (*Taqwā*). He argues that in realising the origin of social classes in Nahj al-balāghah we have to know 'the principal value' in it. To him, while in Marxism this value is economy, in Islam in general and in Nahj al-balāghah in particular, it is *taqwā*. This means that all the aspects of human social life are subjected to self-control and protection by individuals in order to establish a pure Islamic society. Nothing is valuable except if it is performed in Allāh's way. However, realization of this self protection is not left only to human beings. The divine laws in the Qurān are revealed to safeguard this basis.⁷³ Therefore, the recommendation to observe certain moral values as the vital means of protecting society from collapse is seen in many parts of the book.

Although moral values may seem to be a relative concept and vary from one society to the other, it is dealt with by Nahj al-balāghah in a simple manner without referring to this matter. This notion is something which may be called self- measurement. A typical example of this method is stated in a letter apparently written by 'Alī to his son:

Oh, my child, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress as you do not like to be oppressed. Do good to others as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you....⁷⁴

In advice to governors⁷⁵, they are recommended not to destroy the good behaviour prevalent among their administered communities since it is the essence of their social solidarity. In fact from the viewpoint of Nahj al-balāghah the moral values within a society are something fixed

and stable and a change in them means a change of society.

In addition to the aforementioned factors, some material necessities seem to be considered as one of the causes in the establishment of society. Although the language of Nahj al-balāghah in the following sentences is not similar to that of contemporary political thinkers in this regard, still there is a resemblance between them in attributing the social tendency of man to his numerous material needs which cannot be provided for entirely except within the framework of social life. It is stated that society consists of 'classes who prosper only with the help of one another, and they are not independent of one another'.⁷⁶ These groups are: the army, the secretarial workers of the common people and the chiefs, the dispensers of justice, those engaged in law and order, the payers of taxes, the traders and finally the lowest class of the needy and the destitute. The emphasis on the fact that these classes cannot prosper without the help of one another resembles the discussion of the physical and tangible needs of man, which can be provided for only in society, as the origin of the social life of human beings.

Furthermore, in the objection of the *Khārijites* who denied any form of government and 'Alī's response to them which is referred to in our work in the discussion of government, the main reasons for establishing government are regarded as: fighting with enemies, protecting roadways, collecting taxes and taking the right of the weak from the strong.⁷⁷ None of these tasks can be managed by individuals although they are the necessities of social life.

On the basis of what has been discussed so far, an approach which deals with the

causes of change in societies can be found in Nahj al-balāghah. Losing sensitivity against moral values and being indifferent towards the health of society are among these causes. Before proceeding further in this discussion, it should be noted that 'Alī, or whoever wrote the book, was profoundly under the influence of the social changes which occurred in the Islamic society from the second half of Uthman's caliphate, or perhaps even earlier, from the last years of 'Umar's caliphate to the end of 'Alī's.

According to Ibn Khaldūn's theory about the early development of Islam, the strong tribal 'group feeling' among the Arabs of early Islam was harnessed by religion and created a powerful state which had never existed there before.⁷⁸ For him, as long as they possessed that feeling and the other conditions that enabled them to surmount the hard life of the desert, they defeated their enemies. They also could expand themselves by searching for fertile lands and better conditions of life.⁷⁹ But once they were accustomed to a luxurious sedentary life, they lost their hard nature and tribal feelings and consequently their power declined. Ibn Khaldun even attributes the conflict between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah to their different tribal interests and group feelings. But this conflict by itself may be regarded as a sign of decline in the solidarity of that tribal community. During the first two decades after the death of the Prophet, the first wave of conquests was settled and a huge amount of wealth received by the Islamic state. Such wealth has not been achieved by the Arabs ever since that time.⁸⁰ This affected all aspects of Muslim life including their expectations and desires so that some contemporary Muslims are of the opinion that, consequently, they no longer concerned themselves enough with religious obligations and principles.⁸¹ In contrast, it seems that from the second half of Uthman's caliphate, an epidemic discontent about the eligibility of Uthman's governors, and then of Uthman himself, started among Muslims.⁸² They believed

that Uthman was giving posts of authority and wealth to his kinsmen. This was seen as a deviation from the path of religion as well as of social justice.⁸³ However, the revolt against Uthman which led to his murder, did not stop after 'Alī's election to the caliphate, and instead continued in the form of opposition to him from three distinct groups; the *Qāsītīn*, *Māriqīn* and *Nākithīn*.⁸⁴ In addition to the economic and political factors in creating the previously mentioned crisis in early Islamic society, a psychological factor is often mentioned. It is believed that the new generation of Muslims were not so well endowed with Islamic characteristics and values since they had embraced Islam as a result of the rapid conquests, mainly during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Therefore, they tended to return to their racial, tribal and group prejudices later.⁸⁵ Also another element which should be considered in describing political change in early Islamic society is the tensions within the *Ummah*, namely the Meccan oligarchy, which had been kept under control by Prophet Muhammad. After his death, however, divisions came once more to the surface.⁸⁶

This could have been the essence of the dispute between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah on the 'blood of Uthman', which later led to a painful civil war. Mu'āwiyah held 'Alī responsible for Uthma's murder while 'Alī denied this accusation and blamed him for disobeying the legal caliph and attempting to become a caliph himself. Their battle in *Siffīn* led to an arbitration (*Hakamīyah*) from which the *Kharijites*, another opposition party against 'Alī, arose. The third opposition party were those who had accepted 'Alī's caliphate at the beginning and took the oath of allegiance to him but later disobeyed him and denied his right to the caliphate.

Most of the materials that we have in Nahj al-balāghah, actually, are its author's

opinion on the mentioned issues and under the influence of them. Islamic society is seen on the verge of a change which may result in its collapse. The factors of this change were opposition groups and all the people who were losing their commitment and loyalty to the principles of Islam. Advice to those who betrayed Islamic values and abandoned the basic principles of Islam, urging them to defend the unity of the Islamic state, contained materials regarding society, history and change.

The sermon of *al-Qāsi'ah* may be considered a typical text concerning the origins of change in societies in Nahj al-balāghah. In this lengthy sermon, 'Alī criticised his contemporary Muslims for not being in the path of Islam, explained to them the origins of their disobedience and told them that the change in the position of their society was one of its consequences. The first part of the sermon deals with the Qurānic verses concerning the creation of Adam and Satan's refusal to obey the command of God, which is explained earlier. The behaviour of those who disobey 'Alī's political authority is related to their lack of morality. He calls these people 'the followers of Satan'. This is the basis of what is stated in this sermon and what the people were advised to beware of.

After a lengthy description of human disobedience and attributing it to Satan, the condition of the people who lived in the past and the 'evil deeds' which caused them to collapse are defined. In this regard, the reasons behind the prosperity of those people are counted as 'abstention from division, sticking to unity, calling each other to it and advising each other about it' and, therefore, people were advised to:

"... avoid everything which broke their backbone and weakened their power, such as malice in the

heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance."⁸⁷

This definition of moral values deemed to increase the 'power' of a society is explained in the light of specific cases in the continuation of the sermon, beginning with the fate of the Children of Israel and Pharaoh's dealing with them. It is stated that since they were suffering problems with God's 'love' and their 'hearts were moderate', God changed their weak position to a powerful one and made them the 'ruling kings'. It is also mentioned that Pharaoh's attitude towards Moses was full of vanity since he relied on his wealth and worldly power to deal with Moses who had nothing. However, when the children of Israel began to fight with each other and differences arose between 'their words and their hearts', God deprived them of 'His favours'.⁸⁸ There is another example in the sermon about change in society and, in particular, the fate of the Arabic society at the advent of Islam. According to this part of the sermon, those societies were made the bond servants of the 'Caesar of Rome' and 'Kisras of Persia' by their divisions, anguish, ignorance and their immoral behaviour such as burying daughters alive, worshipping idols, practising robbery and so on. Shortly after the advent of Islam Arabia became a strong country. This happened because the people responded positively to the prophetic mission and became united under its call. The main point in these sentences is that vanity is the essence of division among people, that it ruins social unity, and that, therefore, it should be considered in every change in society. In other words, the weakness or the strength of a society is dependent upon this feeling among the people.

Considering the situation in *Kūfah* in which the sermon was apparently delivered, and the disobedience of its people to 'Alī in his fight against Mu'āwiyah, the main part of the sermon deals with the justification of their disloyalty. It should be noted that since the words 'vanity' and 'haughtiness' and similar words are considered as the essence of human sin, these words are repeated in the sermon. However, in other parts of the book we may find the general word of 'sin' as the cause of change in societies.⁸⁹

As a summary, it can be concluded that people have social as well as individual characteristics in the community and that their social dignity is more important and prior to their personal one. They are advised to care about the situation of the moral principles in society and try to remedy every deviation from them. Indifference towards those values is seen as the fundamental reason of division, and consequently, of change in society. This indifference, however, has its own roots which can be summarised as 'intoxication with wealth and plenty'.⁹⁰ This matter will be explained in further detail in the discussion about economic factors.

IV

History

Before discussing history, several points should be mentioned. As A.Soroosh states, Nahj al-balāghah does not conclude any discussion regarding the philosophy of history. He tries to separate between the deductive and inductive methods of dealing with the rules of history. For him, it is wrong to look for some sort of philosophy of history with certain

scientific predictions for the whole period of history in Nahj al-balāghah or the Qurān.⁹¹ However, he believes that many predictions can be found in these books on the basis of similarities between causes and effects in historical events.⁹² 'Making assurance for appearance of some changes in the future of the Islamic community and the predictions in the contemporary philosophies, such as Marx's, are not the same', Soroosh believes. 'They are, rather, some rules deduced from the past events and lessons taken from their similarities and the ways of dealing with them'.

As a general view of history, there is an implication that time is a creation of God. This meaning may be seen in the sentences in which God's attributes are described. 'His knowledge about those who died in the past is the same as the remaining survivors.'⁹³ On the other hand, Time is something like the other creatures of God; 'He determined the limits of things at the time of His creating them'.⁹⁴ History in this regard is the framework in which those principles of social life are implemented and materialized. It is history in which the times of all things have been allotted by God.⁹⁵ This kind of approach to Time may raise the issues of determinism and the limitations of will. They do not concern us since we are not entering the philosophical field in this research. However, in the following discussion about the will of people and their ability to change their fate by changing their behaviour, this matter may be better explained.

In order to better understand the notion of history in Nahj al-balāghah, we ought to look at statements in which history is regarded as a conscious being with certain qualities. In a comparison between those who 'amass wealth' and 'those endowed with knowledge' the

former are considered dead even though they may be alive, while the latter are believed to remain as long as the world lives on. 'Their bodies are not available but their figures exist in the hearts'.⁹⁶ Despite this sentence that may convey just support for knowledge and wisdom, the statement in letter 53 denotes an awareness in history. Among the commands to Malik, it is said that:

'Then, know Oh Malik that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticise you as you criticised them (rulers)'.⁹⁷

There is an interesting statement about crises and troubles in which one cannot easily see the truth (*fitnah*). It is believed that time removes this ambiguity. In a statement which is part of a sermon delivered after the battle of *Nahrawān*, in which two groups of Muslims fought with each other, making ordinary people wonder who was right and who was wrong, it is stated that:

'when mischiefs come they confuse (right with wrong) and when they clear away they leave a warning. They cannot be known at the time of approach but are recognized at the time of return. They blow like the blowing of winds, striking some cities and missing others.'⁹⁸

These mischiefs (*fitnah*) are the main pre-conditions for making changes in a society. They are trials which improve the quality of societies in a dialectical manner. In other words no community grows without dealing with difficulties which are unknown and obscure at the time of their occurrence.

In addition to these points, history is seen as a uniform phenomenon in which events are repeated at different times in the same way. In other words the order of events is meaningful and can be useful in predicting the future.

"Infer about what has not yet happened from what has already happened, because occurrences are ever similar."⁹⁹

Similarly, in letter 69, the governor of Mecca is told that present and past conditions 'resemble' each other and all of time founded on the same rules.¹⁰⁰ There is also the statement that every period in the world has an end and every living being is to die.¹⁰¹ Again, this sentence shows a similarity between what happens at different times. In addition, history is regarded as a whole by implying the fact that all human beings from the creation of man to the end of the world are subjected to similar rules.¹⁰² This view may also be concluded from the allusion in the above-mentioned sentences that 'on the footsteps of the predecessors walk the survivors'.¹⁰³

On the basis of these principles, a unification of history is suggested in Nahj al-balāghah. There are many mentions in the book that past, present and future events are repeating the same facts since they are linked with one another by means of fixed rules. Although this view of history is conditioned by problems in early Islamic society, there are many indications which convey the perception of unity of history. As a general introduction to the matter it may be said that history, in Nahj al-balāghah, has been constituted by the will of people. Their solidarity, their commitment to common values and their social cooperation are the essence of their growth and strength. History, according to Nahj al-balāghah, is the

manifestation of this role of people.

However, two points should be borne in mind: the will of God and the way in which social changes occur. It is God who has fixed certain rules for the decline and rise of societies and civilizations and has tried His people in order to change their status to a higher or lower position. Also, the way in which those rules and regulations are performed is noteworthy. It means that the will of God is being performed within a causal framework. People are advised to take lessons from what happened in the past to be able to eliminate the causes of the collapse.

'He to whom experiences have clearly shown the past exemplary punishments (given by Allāh to peoples) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts.'¹⁰⁴

There are also statements denoting that none of the changes in history happened at once.

'By Allāh, no people are deprived of the lively pleasures of life after enjoying them, except as a result of sins committed by them,...'¹⁰⁵

Even the social change in Arabia caused by Prophet Muhammad is not considered a divine change without any temporal preparations.¹⁰⁶

The main pre-condition for changing the status of communities is the reaction of people towards obscure obstacles. The word *Fitnah* or troubles which is frequently used in describing change in societies conveys this meaning.

In order to have a better view of the notion of the historical changes in Nahj al-

balāghah, an explanation of the events prior to, contemporary to and after the time of Nahj al-balāghah seems to be necessary. These matters are discussed in the following paragraphs.

According to Nahj al-balāghah, certain rules and principles exist in societies. This is shown in the book by referring to the fate of past civilizations and prophets. It begins with the story of Adam and how he was tried by God and sent to earth.¹⁰⁷ The fate of the Children of Israel, the change in the Arab society after Islam and so on are stated in this regard. In these events, people were tested by God who sent prophets to them, to warn them to abandon egotism and vanity and remind them of their Creator and the Day of Resurrection. The response given by a society to this message provides them with a new position. In a statement regarding the purpose of deputing prophets, it is said that their aim was 'to try people as to whom from among them performs good acts'.¹⁰⁸

As far as the wholeness of history is concerned, the rules governing societies are not limited to a specific place or period of time. They are applicable to all times. In Nahj al-balāghah, people are advised to take note of this reality in performing any kind of behaviour. However, they are completely responsible for their actions. The idea of the existence of certain rules in history has been criticized on the grounds that 'every man with a heart is not intelligent, every ear does not listen and every eye does not see (these rules).'¹⁰⁹ However, this idea does not ignore the role of other factors in determining the direction of a society. Leadership, poverty, genealogy, even geography and so on are introduced as influential factors in the behaviour of man. But they are considered to be but secondary factors.

The present is evaluated by the same means as the past. The crucial period of the 4th

decade of the Islamic society which is the subject of a considerable part of Nahj al-balāghah is seen as a period of fitnah which put society on the edge of a great change. It is attributed to 'Alī who said:

"I fear about you lest you fall into ignorance (that prevailed before the appearance of the Prophet)".¹¹⁰

The ignorance referred to in this statement was also a factor of the collapse of societies in the past. As mentioned above, the cultural and social situation around the year 550 in the Islamic state can be characterised by disorder, lack of confidence in the political authority and conflict among different parties as a result of economic as well as cultural and territorial change.¹¹¹

Since people are seen as the main factor of change in society, great focus is placed on their attitudes and desires in Nahj al-balāghah. In order to describe the status of the community of the 550s in Arabia, we may refer to sermon 32 in which the general situation is explained. People are classified into four categories. The first group are those who do not commit mischief because of their lack of means, or shortage of wealth. The second group are those who have openly committed mischief by every means including force and deceit. They have devoted themselves to securing wealth. Those who seek the benefits of this world through actions meant for the next world and use the position of 'Allāh's connivance as a means of committing sins' constitute the third group. And finally those 'whose weakness and lack of means have held them back from conquest of lands' make up the fourth one.¹¹²

The society in which 'Alī lived was defined as a society experiencing a dangerous

change. The Arabs of that society are introduced as those who had acquired a high position among their neighbours (newly converted Muslims) and other nations (non-Muslims) as a consequence of unity under Islam. However, the Arabs were accused of ignoring Islamic principles and following 'the wrong-doers', discarding their responsibilities after that development.¹¹³

In the above-mentioned statements, considerable attention is paid to the role of people as if they were responsible for what happened in the Islamic state in the 550s. This fact is also stated in another sermon, in which people are explicitly held responsible for change in society and are compared with the Children of Israel.

'Oh People! If you had not evaded support of the truth and had not felt weakness from crushing wrong then he who was not your match would not have aimed at you and he who overpowered you would not have overpowered you. But you roamed about the deserts (of disobedience) like Banī Israel'.¹¹⁴

This description of people and their desires seems to represent a changing society which turns from a virtuous to an immoral path. The important point is that even tyranny is seen as a consequence of people's behaviour.

'Alī is quoted as saying that people used to complain to him of oppression by their rulers while he complained of the wrongful actions of his people ; 'as though I am led by them and they are the leaders or that I am the subject and they are the rulers'.¹¹⁵

People's grievances are seen in some other parts of Nahj al-balāghah. It is stated that 'Alī

during his caliphate faced with disobeying the people of the community. For instance according to one sermon, once the news of the attack by Muawiya's men on al-Anbār reached 'Alī, he himself came out walking till he reached an-Nukhaylah, where people overtook him and said: 'Oh, 'Alī, we are enough for them'. He replied: 'You cannot be enough for me against yourself, so how can you be enough for me against others?'¹¹⁶

On the basis of these premises and according to the rules governing societies, we can find predictions about the future of the Islamic state. Despite the opinions of some critics of Nahj al-balāghah, most of these predictions are based on the above-mentioned historical view of society and a logical sequence of events, and not on pure prophecies. Most of the predictions in Nahj al-balāghah are about the future of the political situation of the Islamic state (after 'Alī's caliphate). This is done by an evaluation of interaction of society in dealing with difficulties (*fitnah*).

The resistance of the Umayyads against the legitimate authority of 'Alī is called 'the worst mischief'. It is also predicted that the Umayyads will rule the state in a despotic manner so that the gap between the people and their rulers will again increase. This would result in conflict and disharmony in society and finally in the collapse of the Umayyad.¹¹⁷

It is emphasised that the Umayyads will have a fixed period during which they will be having their way.

'But when differences arise among them then even if the hyena attacks them it will overpower them.'¹¹⁸

Radī comments on this saying that it is as though 'Alī has likened the period of *Banū Umayyah* to a limited area meant for the training of horses for racing where they are running towards the limit , so that when they reach its extremity their organization will be destroyed.

In describing the social and political conditions under the Caliphate there is an assumption that the Arabs changed after the conquests.¹¹⁹ At the advent of Islam, they were unaffected by external influences, with a brave and undaunted nature and other qualities which made them strong and enthusiastic, while after establishing an empire and obtaining a huge amount of wealth those national values changed. This period which corresponds to 'Alī's government indicates the social change that occurred in his community. There is also the fact that the first Caliphs were completely involved with the expansion of the territorial dimension of the Islamic state, which could be at the origin of the lack of belief and morality in the newly converted Muslims. The political conflicts among the Prophet's companions can be counted as the third reason in the weakness of people in 'Alī's government. 'Uthmān, Talha, Zubayr, 'Āishah and many others who opposed 'Alī were among the companions of the Prophet. It would have been too difficult for people to distinguish between right and wrong by observing the behaviour of these individuals.

As a conclusion it might be said that history and social change are rooted in the attitudes of people towards moral values. These values are seen as a factor of solidarity in a community. However, as influential elements of social life, they should be treated properly by people. The way in which the people of a society treat those values determines the status of their society. Even their political authority is a reflection of their commitment to moral principles. This commitment, in turn, can be recognised by observing the behaviour of a

society in dealing with problems.

This idea may resemble the view that emphasizes the role of society ,instead of the individual, in constructing human social and personal life. In other words the traditional argument about individualism and socialism might be thought to be applicable to our discussion. However, it should be added that there is not such a distinction between these two concepts in Nahj al-balāghah. Although society as a whole is the basis of growth, it is constituted on the foundation of moral values which are related to the human's self. For instance 'malice in the heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance' are introduced as the factors of the collapse and weakening of social power.¹²⁰ All the recommendations to perform social duties such as Jihad (holy war), forbidding the wrong and enjoining the right and so on are moral obligations which are rewarded by God in the other world.

Chapter 6

Leadership and Imāmate

Introduction

Imāms or leaders play a vital role in the fate of the people according to the Islamic tradition. In Nahj al-balāghah, in addition to explanations about government, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, the problem of leadership is approached closely. The importance of the issue is so great that it has become the major point of discussion in the Sunnī-Shī'ite polemics. The Shī'ites consider it a divine viceregency for the Prophet's successor (Imāmate) and are of the opinion that Prophet Muhammad appointed his successor, namely 'Alī, during his lifetime.

They believe that Prophet Muhammad had selected 'Alī as his political successor in *Ghadīr Khumm*¹ only three months before his death in 632. On March 16 of that year, on his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet stopped at *Ghadīr Khumm* to make an announcement to the pilgrims who had accompanied him from Mecca before they dispersed. Taking 'Alī by the hand, Muhammad asked of his followers whether he was not closer (*awlā*) to the Believers than they were to themselves; the crowd cried out: "It is so, o Apostle of God!". He then declared:

"He of whom I am the *mawlā* (the patron), of him 'Alī is also the *mawlā*. O God, be friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of him who is his enemy ...".²

The Shī'ites support their claim with the *Thaqalayn* tradition in which the Prophet said:

"Surely, I leave among you *thaqalayn* (or two worthy things); the Qurān and my *'Itrah* (family).

You will not be misguided as long as you take hold of them".

For the Shī'ites, the Prophet's saying in *Ghadīr* was the divine transferring of religious authority. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds believe that the political authority of the first caliphs corresponded to the Shī'ite's claim.³

However, this event has neither been perceived nor paid attention to similarly by anybody other than the Shī'ite. As far as the authenticity of the event itself is concerned, it has hardly ever been denied or questioned even by the most conservative Sunnī because it has mainly been recorded by them. Nevertheless some traditional sources on the life of the Prophet such as Ibn Hishām, al-Tabarī and Ibn Sa'd are quiet on Muhammad's stop at *Ghadīr Khumm*.

The Sunnīs look at the issue from a different perspective. For the majority of them, the Prophet intentionally rested the issue upon the decision of the *Ummah* without any sense of divinity in it (*Caliphate*). The main Sunnī polemic on the Shī'ite perception of the Prophet's sayings in *Ghadīr* refers to the meaning of the word *mawlā* in his sentence; '*man kuntu mawlā fa hādihā 'Alīun mawlāh*' (or he of whom I am the *mawlā* of him 'Alī is also the *mawlā*). The Shī'ites have interpreted *mawlā* as 'leader' with its political sense while Sunnīs exclude this meaning and simply interpret it as patron or supporter without any political significance. This difference resulted in the two branches of Islamic thought. Had Prophet Muhammad meant political leadership, then his sentence would be a '*Nass*' which

would make it incumbent upon all Muslims to accept 'Alī as a divinely ordered leader. Reverse, if his intention was just to exalt 'Alī then it could be assumed that the selection of the Prophet's successorship had been left to the *Ummah*. For the Shī'ites, there are other justifications of 'Alī's supremacy and religious character.

As some suggest, the Shī'ite view towards leadership may be rooted in the pre-Islamic Arab tradition that priesthood was very often combined with tribal leadership, even with kingship especially in the south of Arabia. It was mentioned earlier that the custodianship of the Ka'ba, the holiest place, was in the hands of the tribal leader a long time before Islam. Crone and Cook suggest that the Islamic 'Imāmate' parallels 'a Samaritan' political body (claque) because of the structural resemblance of the two institutions. This analogy, for them, stems from a primary qualification in both of them in combining supreme political and religious authority and a blend of religious knowledge with a sacred genealogy.

"In both Shī'ism and Samaritanism, the religious knowledge is characterised by a noticeable esoteric aspect. Furthermore, the genealogical qualification of authority in both cases is comparable, with the proposition in Shī'ite traditions that 'Alī is to Muhammad what Aaron was to Moses".⁴

However, Shī'ites, in addition to the issue of genealogy, usually emphasize the theory of '*Ismah* or infallibility. In other words, what they believe about 'Alī's role in this event is based on more ideological factors rather than historical ones.

This ideology is based on the assumption that there had been a supernatural relation between Prophet Muhammad and 'Alī. They believe that Muhammad did not have enough time to implement (although he did deliver) all the Islamic *Shari'ah* since he was conditioned

by time and other forms of limitations. With his death, Muslims faced new circumstances in which they felt that religion was silent on new problems. The Shī'ite believe that 'Alī was taught by the Prophet, in some supernatural manner, about divine laws which were rooted in the Qurān but which the Prophet had no opportunity to implement. It was not *wahy* (revelation) or ordinary teaching. It may be something parallel to what happened to other prophets' offspring such as Abraham, to whose children (*Āl Ibrāhīm*) God gave 'the book and the wisdom and a great kingdom'⁵ or in another case when 'God bestowed His bounties from the Prophets of the posterity (*Dhurriyah*) of Adam and those with Noah (in the Ark) and of Abraham and Israel and of those whom We guided and chose'.⁶ Verses like these denote some kind of hereditary merits in several Prophets' lineage.

The above-mentioned notion of leader is referred to in many parts of Nahj al-balāghah. However, these passages are about both the concepts of caliphate and Imāmate. What is in Nahj al-balāghah about the leadership mainly refers to the general meaning of the word, since 'Alī himself practically was one of the caliphs. On occasion, statements are advanced describing the divine viceregency or Imāmate in its special meaning. In fact it can be described as the special and ideal form of leadership.

In what follows, an explanation about the notion of Imāmate in Nahj al-balāghah in its two meanings is being attempted and various aspects of leadership are discussed next. In the second part of this chapter, the implications of the book on the Shī'ite's notion of Imāmate are discussed. However, it should be borne in mind that the material in Nahj al-balāghah in this connection is very simple and far from the Shī'ite ideology which developed in later centuries. To complete this discussion, in the third part of this chapter the notion of

justice among the Shī'ites, mainly by referring to Nahj al-balāghah, and among the Sunnīs will be examined in order to have a better understanding of the notion of leader.

Obviously, the contents of the text are all conditioned by the circumstances in which the civil war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah was taking place. This is followed when necessary by a short explanation of historical factors.

I

General discussions on Leadership

According to Nahj al-balāghah, principally, using the service of a guide is necessary in order to be on the right path;

"Certainly, the most hated man with Allāh is he whom Allāh has left for him own self. He goes astray from the right path, and moves without a guide".⁷

In another case, in grievance about the division of the community into factions, 'Alī emphasised that those who do not follow their leader think that they are the leaders of themselves and therefore they follow their own passions in dubious matters. This kind of behaviour is condemned because social unity and strength would collapse.⁸ People are urged not to rely on their own understanding and judgments of good and evil and to follow their leader, otherwise people may choose the easiest way as the good and reject the vital activities which are mostly difficult to perform, like war against enemies, as evil ones. Therefore, they are criticized as those who:

'[...] do not move on the footsteps of their prophet nor follow the actions of the vicegerent [...] (but) [...] their confidence in regard to dubious matters is on their own opinions as if every one of them is the leader (Imām) of himself.'⁹

People should be guided and advised both spiritually and temporally according to Nahj al-balāghah. This conclusion is implied in the description of a human being as a non-determined creature who is always inclined to go astray and commit injustice towards himself and others. On this basis, even ordinary rulers are divided into two groups; 'the leaders of guidance' or 'the just Imāms' and 'the leaders of destruction' or 'the oppressor Imāms'.¹⁰ The former are those who act according to the divine laws and the method of the prophet while the latter are those who act in the opposite manner.¹¹ The definition of these two kinds of leaders originates from the same viewpoint on man which leads to the dual responsibility of leaders in society. Imāms are not just meant to conduct the worldly affairs of the people in society, according to some parts of Nahj al-balāghah. On this basis those who are not committed to their religion and its moral obligations cannot be good leaders.

'Oh, People, secure light from the flame of lamps of the preacher who follows what he preaches and water from the spring which has been cleaned of dirt.'¹²

The traditional leadership of pre-Islamic Arabia is also rejected. It is said that obeying the leaders and elders who feel proud of their achievements and boast about their lineage is wrong.¹³ These leaders, who are mainly the tribal leaders of Arabia, are described as the 'main foundation of obstinacy', the chief pillars of mischief and the swords of pre-Islamic boasting over fore-fathers. These leaders are criticised due to their actions which are based on a quest for personal benefit instead of moral values.

Legal position of a leader

There are also some issues in Nahj al-balāghah which deal with the judicial and legal position of a leader: the issues about the procedure of his election and dismissal and his capacity. Most of the matters in this regard can be matched to what happened during 'Alī's caliphate. They seem to be part of the polemics between 'Alī and his rivals who either did not recognise 'Alī's right to power, like Mu'āwiyah, or those who broke their oath of allegiance to him, like Talha and Zubayr.

At the beginning, the election of a ruler to power has been paid attention to in the book. From a legal point of view, a leader should be elected by the people but this is not a direct election. It is mentioned that since it was not possible for all people to be present at the same time in order to decide on a person, they should follow what had been agreed upon by those who were entitled to do it.¹⁴ These authorized people are referred to by the names of *Ansār* and *Muhājirīn* in another sermon.¹⁵ These two groups were those who had accompanied Muhammad after he declared the revelation and migrated from Mecca to Medina. They played a major political role during the first phase of the caliphate. These groups which constituted the council (*Shūrā*) that elected Abū Bakr to the caliphate were to impose their decisions on others who were not to participate in them. In other words the process of electing the ruler was an indirect one and by means of certain representatives. After this election, automatically, some rights would be assigned to both people and leader.

'Allāh, the Glorified, has, by placing me over your affairs created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you.'¹⁶

The leader is the unique decision maker in society and others are just his assistants and advisors.¹⁷ As long as he acts within the boundaries of religion, no one can challenge his decisions and choose another leader. In other words his assignment cannot be terminated.¹⁸

The other rights of a ruler are :

'As for my right over you, it is fulfilment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.'¹⁹

But the most important right of the leader is people's obedience to him.²⁰ What can be concluded from different statements in Nahj al-balāghah, and it matches historical facts, is that 'Alī was greatly dissatisfied with the disobedience of his people in dealing with Mu'āwiyah, who declared his disloyalty to 'Alī by accusing him of participating in the murder of 'Uthmān. In many of these grievances 'Alī accused people of being indifferent to his commands and therefore weak in facing their enemies. The point raised by 'Alī is that a good leader cannot establish a government unless the people show an equal desire for it. Although 'Alī called himself the most knowledgeable man in regard to the Qurān and the Prophet's method (*Sunnah*), he predicted that Mu'āwiyah and his men would overcome him and his people because of 'their hastening towards the wrong with their leader and your slowness about my right (to be followed)'.²¹

On the people's side, they have the right to advise the ruler: the book emphasises that everyone, regardless of his doctrinal authority and his distinction in religion, needs the cooperation of others, including those who may seem to be 'small', to fulfil the obligations which have been placed on him by Allāh.²² The duties which a ruler should fulfil as part of

the rights of the people are; 'paying out the people's dues fully, teaching them the knowledge and instructing them the best behaviour'.²³

The right to advise the leader is a special one. It is religion that defines the boundaries of a leader's action and people should limit their advice within the framework of the divine instructions. The implication in this matter is that all necessary and useful social regulations such as justice, equality, freedom, unity and so on, are installed in the divine laws and they are common values among all the people: therefore, they should enjoin those values on each other instead of their own desires. Since this kind of advice is also a kind of religious fulfilment, it is of a dual importance. If a ruler goes beyond those limits and does not pay attention to the people's advice, it becomes the people's right to change him.²⁴

II

Shī'ite Imāmate and Nahj al-balāghah

It can be shown that the essence of Shī'ite reasoning about leadership exists in Nahj al-balāghah. However, as it was mentioned earlier, materials in that book do not deal only with the Shī'ite notion of Imāmate. For instance, an immoral leader is legitimized in letter 52. M.T.Sharī'atī defines the meaning of 'Imāmate' and believes that while this word has a broad meaning in Nahj al-balāghah, the Shī'ites use a special meaning of it.²⁵ He defines the word 'Imāmate' in Nahj al-balāghah as 'priority and domination over the others'. The subject of this domination could be everything including man, book, idea, etc. If it is a person he can be either an oppressor or just. He can also be a religious authority that people refer to for

their religious problems. This person can also be inequitable.

In general, the Shī'ite Imāmate is defined by three aspects according to Motahhari.²⁶ These aspects are; political leadership of society, religious authority, and *velāyah* or *Hujjah* which means proof in its general meaning. As the political leadership, it means the ordinary leadership which was implemented by the Prophet and his successors. It seems that the Sunnī and some of the Shī'ite look at the successorship of the Prophet from this perspective only. For instance, for the Shī'ite who adopt this view, the implication of the Prophet's statement in *Ghadīr Khumm* was nothing but this political viceregency. They compare 'Alī with the other caliphs on the basis of their political capabilities and chance in taking power.²⁷ From a Sunnī perspective, Ibn Taymīyah, a critic of Shī'ite belief from the 14th century, criticizes the Shī'ite conviction on 'Alī's divine election (*Nass*) from the same viewpoint. He states that the Shī'ite's claim of 'Alī's election in *Ghadīr* is contradictory with God's justice because He would have known that 'Alī was not accepted by the majority of Muslims and his leadership would result in internal war.²⁸

But this is not the only capacity that most of the Shī'ites consider for 'Alī. In addition to that political position, he is also a religious authority for them. This is the first point which distinguishes the Shī'ite from the Sunnī. The former believes that 'Alī, as an especial pupil of the Prophet, acquired the Islamic knowledge in a mystical and unknown way from Muhammad who did not have enough time to implement all the Divine Laws. This ability is more or less similar to that of the Prophet in receiving the revelation. One of the benefits of this special knowledge is making its holder immune to committing sins. This is the origin of the infallibility of Shī'ite Imāms. For the Shī'ite, this talent is hereditary in 'Alī's descendants

ending with al-Mahdī. The Sunnīs essentially deny such a position for anyone else than the Prophet. They are of the opinion that all that was needed by society was uttered by the Prophet to his Companions in an ordinary manner. But for the Shī'ites, as a result of their assumptions, 'Alī and eleven of his descendants, who are believed to have been foretold in name by the Prophet, are regarded as religious authorities in addition to being political leaders. Unlike the Shī'ites, the Sunnīs have not had any intention of covering the historical facts regarding the ordinary knowledge of the first caliphs. They openly narrate the events in which those caliphs made wrong decisions.

This extraordinary dimension of the Imām's knowledge is referred to by later Shī'ite thinkers. In *al-Kāfī* there are some narrations by Shī'ite Imāms in which they uttered that they knew all the prophetic knowledge from Adam to Muhammad.²⁹

As it was mentioned earlier, this position of the Shī'ite Imām has been commented and analyzed repeatedly. For W.M. Watt the idea of the inheriting of special powers within a family is 'truly Arab'. He also mentions that there is a suggestion of an anti-democratic feeling in this concept of the imam.

'He was the person who knew best, so that, if he were obeyed, all would go well, whereas, if the opinion of the common people prevailed, mistakes were likely to be made.'³⁰

The third aspect of the Imāmate in Shī'ism is stated in the form of *Hujjah*. M.G.S.Hodgson defines the meaning of the word in Shī'ism as:

'The notion that something or someone was visible 'proof' of God's presence or will. It refers most

generally to that person through whom the inaccessible God becomes accessible, who serves at any given time as evidence, among mankind, of His true will; thus the Prophet was *hujdja* of God.'

Referring to Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī* in which the twelve Imāms' notion of *Hujjah* is discussed, these representatives of God among mankind make God known to human beings and show them the way to serve Him. According to the Shī'ites, there must always be such a representative because he is an authorized interpreter of the records of a former representative and even of the *Qurān* itself. Otherwise disputes and uncertainty will arise. 'The present *hujjah* is the hidden twelfth imam.'³¹

Motahharī in his definition of the word '*Hujjah*' emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the concept and states that the Imām as a *Hujjah* is a perfect man on earth whose soul dominates all other souls.³² This kind of superiority is called '*Velāyah*'. The man who holds this spirituality and perfectness is called *Hujjah az-Zamān* or proof of the time. He is considered as the main ideal pattern who holds both spiritual and material capabilities to be followed.

Ghazzālī in his explanation about *velāyah* names it 'a special guidance' which comes from God and is received by prophets and *awliā*'. He also mentions two other kinds of guidance; 'the general guidance' which is revealed by means of wisdom and revelation, and 'guidance to the path of God' which is acquired by endeavour in the way of Him.³³ According to him, the Imām's guidance is of the first kind.

It is noteworthy that the idea of *Velāyah* and *Hujjah* in Shī'ism resembles the idea of the perfect man and *Qutb* in Sūfism to the extent that the matter of relationship between Sūfism and Shī'ism is posed. It can be said that the word '*Qutb*' in Sūfism is more or less

'*Valī*' in Shī'ism. In Sūfism one seeks to attain knowledge of God by a process of inner purification, while believing in a hierarchical membership. This resemblance was discussed in the dialogue which took place between Henri Corbin and M.S. Tabātabāyī, the Shī'ite philosopher. Corbin's pre-supposition was that a relationship existed between Shī'ism and Sūfism since the notion of Perfect man exists in both of them. Tabātabāyī's account of the matter was that Sūfism came to existence when these issues already existed in Shī'ite literature. He concluded that Shī'ite was the originator of these discussions which later formed Sūfism.³⁴

This explanation of the Shī'ite concept of Imām sheds a new light on several passages of Nahj al-balāghah. It should be mentioned that this book had inspired Shī'ite thinkers to develop the idea of the sacred successorship of the Prophet and to establish the Shī'ite ideology. Several famous Shī'ite sources such as Sheykh at-Tūsī's *at-Tajrīd*, Sheykh al-Mufīd's *Kitāb al-Irshād* and Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*, a part of which is devoted to the notion of *Hujjah*, are examples of this fact. In other words the origins of their discussions exist in Nahj al-balāghah. Another noteworthy point is the above-mentioned classification of the aspects of the Imām. Such separation and clarification were made recently. As a consequence, a Shī'ite with a general background on the matter may not have much information about these aspects in detail. They may also deny to accept one of them as the characteristic of a Shī'ite Imām.

The notion of Imām in Nahj al-balāghah

There are several other statements in which special dimensions of leadership are dealt with. These sentences are in different forms. Some argue for 'Alī's right to the caliphate and

name the first caliphs as usurpers. Others offer definitions of the Imāmate and count the attributes of the Imāms.

The enumerations of the requisites of a leader is an implication for the theory of Imāmate or 'divine leader' in Nahj al-balāghah. There are various statements in Nahj al-balāghah which implicitly and explicitly denote the qualifications of an ideal leader. One of them is nobility of birth which is stated in form of the superiority or holiness of the prophets' lineage. In describing the virtues of Muhammad as a prophet and a leader for believers, his descendance was referred to in the book. It is said that Muhammad, as well as other prophets, was brought by God out of the most distinguished sources of origin and 'the most honourable places of planting.'³⁵ Furthermore, Muhammad's descendants, kinsmen and lineal tree are named as the best ones which 'grew in esteem and rose in distinction'. After this praise of Muhammad's lineage in the sermon, it immediately acknowledges that he is the leader of all who exercise fear (of Allāh) and is 'light for those who seek guidance'.³⁶ The sequence of these two matters suggests a relationship between the issue of leadership and the descendance of a ruler. In another sermon insisting on his right to the leadership, 'Alī emphasized his lineage by stating that Imāms (in the divine term) would be from the Quraysh and they had been planted in that line through Hāshim. 'Alī in the same sermon believed that Allāh had raised them (the Hāshimite family of Quraysh) to the position of leadership.³⁷

In addition, a leader should possess knowledge and intelligence to a certain extent. On the eligibility to the caliphate, it is noted that the best person for the job is the 'most competent among them to maintain it, and he who knows best Allāh's command about it'.³⁸ Since the main lawmaker in the judicial system of Islam is Allāh and a part of his instructions

in the Qurān are applied as social laws, then an Islamic ruler should be familiar with them. But this knowledge is not just a simple one of the divine laws. Recalling that the early Muslims had to make laws in unprecedented matters out of the general instructions of the Qurān, this knowledge would be more complicated. They had to be firstly familiar with the Prophet's words and sayings as well as his way of conduct. They should also have a sound ability in deriving the best decision out of those facts. It might be this kind of knowledge which was referred to in a sermon delivered at the occasion of a battle between two groups of Muslims. The case was very tricky since they were accustomed to fight only against unbelievers. Making a decision regarding such an internal war was more difficult and needed more moral support. In this regard 'Alī said:

'The door of war has been opened between you and the other Muslims. And this banner will be borne only by him who is a man of sight, of endurance and of knowledge of the position of rightfulness.'³⁹

The most essential aspect of a leader according to Nahj al-balāghah may be his moral obligation. Generally, a leader should observe certain moral obligations in order to be able to rule others. At the beginning of the instructions received by Mālik, the governor of Egypt, he is ordered to 'break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil'.⁴⁰ Since human beings in general are inclined to follow their passions and act emotionally then all people are advised to restrain themselves from moral evil. However, the loss of self-control and the deviation of a leader would be more harmful than those of ordinary people and bring about more damaging consequences to society. Then Mālik is advised to be more careful with his conduct:

'Whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others; and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by tongue.'⁴¹

These recommendations to combine morality with authority were seen as the first step in preventing rulers from oppressing people and behaving in a despotic manner.

In a more detailed advocacy of the moral values which should be observed by a ruler, several issues are mentioned independently in Nahj al-balāghah. For instance, truthfulness in dealing with people and restraining from hypocrisy towards them appear in the command to Mālik. In another letter to a governor, keeping company with the lower classes of the community is recommended.⁴²

Keeping in mind the Shī'ite's concerns about the qualities of an Imām, there are passages which denote 'Alī's superiority in knowledge as a religious authority. This kind of supernatural knowledge is studied by Ibn Khaldūn. In his attempt to introduce the means by which various types of human beings may come into possession of supernatural perceptions, Ibn Khaldūn considers two general ways; natural disposition and exercise. To him, some inspired human beings possess such a natural disposition that they are good and innocent people even before receiving a revelation. In other words, they are disposed to avoid corrupt actions and this is what is meant by infallibility.⁴³ Regarding this idea, it can be implied that the Prophet's family enjoy this natural trait too. What is important in this hypothesis is the precedence of personal virtues over the obtention of that particular knowledge.

The non-Muslim writer on 'Alī's political life, George Jurdaq, attributes 'Alī's special knowledge to his engagement with the Qurān during the years when the other companions of the Prophet, namely Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, were busy with the affairs of the caliphate.⁴⁴

'Alī also urges people to ask him before they miss him because he is 'acquainted with the passages of the sky more than the passages of the earth'.⁴⁵ This sentence is commented on by most of the commentators of Nahj al-balāghah. By translating the passages of the earth as the matters of the world and the passages of the sky as religious matters, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī concludes that the scope of 'Alī's religious knowledge is larger than his knowledge about matters of the world.⁴⁶ Ibn abil Hadīd, referring to the prophecies made after this utterance, believes that what 'Alī says about this is on the basis of knowledge and not in the way of chance.⁴⁷

In a part of the sermon of *al-Qāsi'ah*, some considerable sentences in respect of 'Alī's unique religious knowledge are attributed to him. The first point in these utterances is that 'Alī acquired this capability from Prophet Muhammad in a strange way. 'Alī describes his relation to the Prophet like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. He states that the Prophet showed him some of his high traits every day while commanding him to follow him. Emphasizing that he was the third Muslim and a member of the Prophet's family, 'Alī mentions that he used to see and watch the brilliance of the divine revelation and breathe the scent of Prophethood. But the following statement about the descendance of the revelation seems to be something more than the result of an ordinary relation with the Prophet.

'When the revelation descended on the Prophet of Allāh, [...] I heard the moan of Satan. I said: "Oh, Prophet of Allāh, what is this moan?" and he replied: "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. Oh, 'Alī, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue".'⁴⁸

In another sermon 'Alī emphasised that he was informed by the Prophet of everything which could be told. Some sort of knowledge about the future such as the death of everyone who dies, the salvation of every one who is granted salvation, and the caliphate are among them.⁴⁹ It is also said that 'Alī was similar to the Prophet in respect to people and that he ('Alī) had divulged to people that which the prophets used to preach and conveyed to them what the vicegerents of the prophets conveyed to those coming after them.⁵⁰

M.T. Sharī'atī sums up these statements in Nahj al-balāghah and concludes that the Imām is infallible in his actions and ideas and that his knowledge is extraordinary and unobtainable.⁵¹ It should be mentioned here that the idea of infallibility emerged much later than the compilation of Nahj al-balāghah though the roots of it can be found in that book.

In addition to the passages in which the notions of the knowledge and political ability of the Shī'ite Imām are discussed, there are other statements that denote the third notion of Imām as *Hujjah*.

The first instance of this matter may be seen in a part of the first sermon where the choice of the prophets by Allāh is discussed. However, the statements in this regard are very rare and need more explanation. It is said in a sermon that:

'Allāh never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet deputed by Him, or a book sent down from Him or a binding argument or a standing plea. These messengers are such that they did not feel little because of smallness of their number or of largeness of the number of their falsifiers.'⁵²

Ibn abil Hadīd in commenting on this statement considers two possibilities for the 'binding argument' (*Hujjah lāzimah*): firstly the Shī'ite idea that there is an infallible man in every time, which is called *Hujjah*, and, secondly, human wisdom.⁵³ Rāwandī admits the first hypothesis and believes that this binding argument later developed as the idea of *Hujjah*.⁵⁴ It seems that the notion of *Hujjah* is not separated completely from the other attributes of a leader found in Nahj al-balāghah. It can be said that it was developed much later than the time of the compilation of the book particularly in Sūfism.

'Alī's right to the caliphate and criticisms about the first caliphs

First of all, criticism of the first caliphs, especially Abū Bakr and 'Umar, is not very common in Nahj al-balāghah. This is partly because of the fact that 'Alī, during their caliphates, was more an advisor than an opponent. According to historical sources 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb often used to call upon 'Alī for the solution of many unsolved problems and to benefit from his knowledge. But Abū Bakr, due to the shortness of his caliphate, and 'Uthmān, due to the special circumstances of his caliphate and his staff, seldom used to call on him or benefit from his advice. It is reported that 'Umar praised 'Alī on many occasions, saying that : 'The most Knowledgeable person among us in jurisprudence and judgment is 'Alī.'⁵⁵

In one case, for instance, when 'Umar decided to divide some conquered lands among the Muslims, he ordered that the inhabitants be counted. Each Moslem had three peasants for his share. 'Umar asked the Prophet's Companions for advice, and 'Alī said, "Leave them that they may become a source of revenue and aid for the Muslims". Accordingly, 'Umar accepted this idea and assessed on each man a certain amount.⁵⁶

But, in order to study the notion of Imām in Nahj al-balāghah which was later used by the Shī'ites in defining their ideal leader, it is inevitable to refer to the sermon of *Shiqshiqīyah*.

This sermon has been very controversial since it is believed that 'Alī explicitly criticized the first three caliphs in it. This disapproval has been counted as one of the elements in the Shī'ite negative attitudes towards the most respected Sunnī leaders. For the Sunnī, the matter is more controversial since 'Alī himself was their caliph in addition to Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. If they accept the authenticity of Nahj al-balāghah they find a contradiction between the ideas of the first three rightly guided caliphs and the fourth one, all of whom are highly esteemed in Sunnīsm. The Sunnī commentator of Nahj al-balāghah, Ibn Abil Hadīd, narrated that one of the Hanbalī Imāms stated that he did not know how he could explain 'Alī's complaints about his predecessors.⁵⁷ As a result, this controversy has caused some doubts about the authenticity of this sermon.⁵⁸

J. Mostafawī divides the Sunnī reaction to these statements of Nahj al-balāghah into three categories. Firstly, those who deny their authenticity, such as Ibn Khallakān, and attribute them to the compiler, Sayed al-Radī. Second, those who justify these statements

according to their understanding of them. As a typical commentator in this regard he names Ibn abil Hadīd whose commentary on the book is very eminent. As the third group, among whom are M. 'Abduh, Marsafī and M.A.Ibrāhīm, he identifies those who are silent on these issues.⁵⁹ Since we do not intend to deal with the historical value of the sermon we examine the sermon itself in order to derive the characteristics of an ideal Imām.

At the beginning of the sermon Abū Bakr is immediately described as the one who 'dressed himself' with the caliphate unjustly. He is blamed of doing this while knowing that 'Alī's position in relation to it was the same as 'the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill.'⁶⁰ Then it mentions the fact that Abū Bakr during his lifetime wished to be released from the caliphate, and it blames him for giving the caliphate to 'Umar after his death in spite of this.

It seems that criticism about 'Umar is stronger than about Abū Bakr. 'Umar is accused of toughness in his behaviour and of committing plenty of mistakes and:

'One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its ring the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown. Consequently, by Allāh people got involved in recklessness, wickedness, unsteadiness and deviation.'⁶¹

But still this statement seems moderate in comparison with what is stated in the later sentences regarding 'Uthmān, who is described as a man who 'stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder'.⁶² He is also accused of letting his relatives (the Umayyads) misuse public wealth.

In the next paragraph, there is an assessment, from 'Alī's point of view, of the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, and his reaction. According to it, 'Alī remained patient during that period despite the length and intolerability of it. Then he mentions his election as one of the six members of the consultation group appointed by 'Umar. On this point he begins to ask:

'But good Heavens! what had I to do with this 'consultation'? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones?'

This sentence bears implications about the meeting of *Saqīfah* and Abū Bakr's appointment as caliph. But again it is reaffirmed that 'Alī did not try to take his right from the others and he engaged in these affairs objectively. This matter once again is emphasized when the affairs of his taking the reins of government are explained. While describing the event when the crowd elected him to the caliphate he mentions that:

'[...] if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allāh with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders.'

This last part of the sermon, which was interrupted by an Iraqi handing a message over to 'Alī, has been very meaningful for the Shī'ite scholars who try to support their traditional belief by means of contemporary political language.

N.Sālehī Najaf Ābādī, a Shī'ite cleric, is one of them. In his *Velāyat-e faqīh*;

Hokūmat-e Sālihān which is an academic attempt to theorize the political system of present Iran, he makes use of this statement of Nahj al-balāghah to explain the role of people in the establishment of government. He states that the vote of the majority for someone and their support for him is the main element which makes the post of leadership incumbent upon a person and convinces him of taking the charge of power to implement the will of God.⁶³ For him, the reason why 'Alī did not participate in political affairs, or at least did not take any measure to gain political power, in spite of his claim to it, was the lack of the vote of the majority.

The grievances from the caliphs may be observed in the second sermon of Nahj al-balāghah where the Prophet's family are regarded as those who possess the two chief characteristics for vicegerency, namely the 'will' and 'succession' (of the Prophet).⁶⁴ In commenting on this statement and subsequent clarification of will and succession, Ibn Abil Hadīd writes that there can be no doubt about the vicegerency of 'Alī. However, he admits this succession only in learning and does not accept the Shī'ite interpretation of it which is the succession in position. Commentator Rāwandī in commenting on this utterance pays attention to the sentence: 'right has returned to its owner' which immediately follows the above mentioned sentence. Rāwandī believes that this sermon was delivered when 'Alī returned from *Siffin*. Then he concludes that 'Alī meant he had been waiting for his imamate since the death of the Prophet and by his election as caliph his right had been returned to him.⁶⁵ This explanation implies the idea of succession in position.

'Alī's right to the caliphate, according to several passages of Nahj al-balāghah, cannot be denied if it is discussed on the basis of the Qurān and *Sunnah*. The first three caliphs and

Muā'wīyah took over the caliphate while they knew that 'Alī was the best man for the post. This idea is different from what is usually stated in favour of those caliphs and in disapproval of 'Alī's ability for being caliph. In sermon 124, answering the Khārijites about the acceptance of arbitration, 'Alī said that if arbitration were truly done through either the Qurān or the *Sunnah* he, as the Prophet's closest relative, would be the most rightful of all people for the caliphate.⁶⁶ The following narration made by Ibn abil Hadīd supports this hypothesis. He related that when Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr was appointed as 'Alī's governor of Egypt he wrote a letter to Mu'āwīyah criticising him for being disobedient to 'Alī and ignoring his merits and his right to authority. In his reply to this letter, Mu'āwīyah referred to the part where 'Alī's virtues were stated. He said that during the Prophet's lifetime all of his companions, including the first three caliphs and Mu'āwīyah himself, knew that 'Alī was appointed by the Prophet as his successor but Abū Bakr and 'Umar were the first people who deprived 'Alī of his right. At the end he mentioned that if Abū Bakr had not committed such a thing he would not have opposed 'Alī and would have handed the authority over to him.⁶⁷

III

Justice and leadership

Justice is one of the grounds for discussing the notion of Imāmate and leadership in Nahj al-balāghah. In general, the notion of justice is so emphasized in Shī'ism that it has become a requisite for a leader. In the Shī'ite-Sunnī polemic the applicability of this qualification to the office of 'Imām' is one of the major issues. While Shī'ites are always

concerned with the moral attributes of the Imām before taking charge of leadership, either in prayer or in government, Sunnīs pay more attention to the Imām's ability to fulfil his duties in power. This difference emerged from two correlated grounds: the early stages of the growth of these two religions⁶⁸ and their theoretical approaches. In Shī'ism, the words and deeds of their twelve Imāms, especially 'Alī, have formed the essence of the political thought.

In this section, the relationship between political and moral concepts in Nahj al-balāghah is approached from this viewpoint. We begin with an explanation of the historical circumstances in which the different perceptions of justice entered into the political affairs of Shī'ite and Sunnī. This exegesis helps us to understand more about the actual meaning of justice and its political and moral implications. Then, we examine the notion of justice and its application to leadership and politics by referring to both conceptual and historical passages of Nahj al-balāghah.

Justice and authority in early Islam

As stated above, different attitudes towards justice have become one of the major points in the Shī'ite-Sunnī polemic since the death of the Prophet. While the Umayyads and Abbassids rejected justice as a condition for leadership, the Shī'ites emphasized it with the justification that it was one of the Prophet's qualities in his political capacity. In general, the latter are sceptical about the political developments carried out by Muslim rulers after the Prophet.⁶⁹ The Sunnīs are more concerned with the type of political power that can safeguard social security. Therefore, the two concepts of power and security are the essence of political leadership in their school of thought. For the Shī'ites, on the contrary, justice and

following the exact way of the Prophet's conduct are more important.

The interpretation of the word 'justice' is not so different between Shī'ites and Sunnīs. However, the issues in which justice is applicable are dissimilar. Imāmate (leading) for *Jum'ah* (Friday) and *Jamā'ah* (congregation) prayers and political leadership are examples of such issues. For the Shī'ites, justice is explicitly one of the prerequisites for the Imām.⁷⁰ Sunnīs, on the other hand, deny this condition for leading the prayer and most of them deny it for a ruler too.⁷¹ The Sunnī scholar, at-Taftāzānī, (1312-1390) although counting 'justice' as one of the qualifications for an Imām, says that an Imām is not to be deposed from the Imāmate on account of immorality or tyranny.⁷²

This different view of leadership which in turn denotes different notions of politics was formed during the early development of the Islamic state. Therefore, it is necessary to have a glance at the specific period in which this difference was formed. To begin with, it should be mentioned that since politics and religion were unified during the Prophetic and the early caliphal community, certain rituals such as *Jum'ah* and *Jamā'ah* prayer had an indispensable position in political affairs. From the political and social point of view, they were signs of the unity, integrity and security of the state. Participating in these prayers meant a kind of recognition of the political authority. They were established by the Prophet in Medina and later became ways of legitimizing the political authority. Muhammad himself led the prayers and, in his absence, he used to appoint somebody to do it. The conducting of these prayers was so politically important that some Sunnī schools hold Abū Bakr's appointment by the Prophet to conduct the prayer as an implication for his political successorship.⁷³

The point is that the Imām in this sense was perceived by the people as a person who possessed certain moral qualities such as honesty, justice, bravery and so on. Prophet Muhammad as the symbol of both religious and temporal authority possessed these qualities. Also the first four caliphs were seen as the most qualified people among Muslims.

In this connection the word 'Just' or 'Justice' as an attribute for a leader became more significant because of its political implication. The Imām or leader in early Islam meant someone who was just and who pursued social justice.

After the Prophet's death the caliphs used to be imams for these prayers too and this helped them to reinforce their position. In other words, for Muslims in those days the religious and political authority were still not separated. On the basis of these facts, the governors automatically were the leaders of prayers during the reign of the first four Caliphs and the beginning of the Umayyad era. It was a source of legitimacy and strength.

However, Imāmate in prayer was not so easy for some Umayyad governors. Goldziher, stating that delivering a sermon was a difficult job for them, believes that they had to do it since they needed a means to exercise their political leadership over the people.⁷⁴ It was difficult for them because the Umayyad governors personally were not so committed to Islamic values in comparison with the first four caliphs and Mu'āwīyah. Their actions were, sometimes, contradictory with their position as prayer leaders. For some critics of the Umayyads this was the turning point in the position of the Muslim political leader.⁷⁵ They solved the problem by denying justice as a qualification for the post of Imāmate. This influenced the political thought of Sunnīs to the extent that many Sunnī scholars inclined to

other qualifications for the Imām. For instance, Ibn Taymīyah, the famous Sunnī scholar, counts 'force' as an ability for acquiring power and says:

'For Sunnīs, the Amīr (prince), Imām or Caliph is the person who has the power to fulfil the purpose of his leadership, just as a prayer-leader is the man who says prayers for others.' ⁷⁶

Shī'ites were not faced with this difficulty. They believed that every government was an usurper and oppressor unless it was ruled by a just imam. The Umayyads, therefore, were illegitimate for them.⁷⁷ The Shī'ite perception of a leader is expressed in the words of the prominent Shī'ite scholar, al-'Allāmah al-Hillī. In his account of an ideal Shī'ite leader he enumerates some qualifications and says:

'The Shī'ites believe that, like the Prophet, an Imām should excel the *Ummah* in all virtues, such as knowledge, bravery, piety and charity, and should possess complete knowledge of the Divine Law. If he does not, and this high post is entrusted to a less perfect person when a more perfect one is available, the inferior will have been given preference over the superior, which is wrong in reason and against Divine Justice.'⁷⁸

Thus, he concludes that a faulty person may not receive the position of Imāmate while there exists a person superior to him.

However, Sunnīs criticise the Shī'ites' view on the subject by arguing that 'Shī'ites confuse the issue of the power to rule with that of the competence to rule'. In this regard Ibn Taymīyah believes that if the Sunnīs pay allegiance to their rulers it simply means that those rulers are capable of managing Muslim affairs by virtue of their power (*Shawkah*). It does not

mean that they denounce 'the competence of other claimants to rulership'.⁷⁹

The consequence of these two different views towards leadership was the formation of two sets of principles for the Sunnīs and the Shī'ites. For the former, the principles of religion are three: monotheism, prophethood and resurrection; while for the latter to those three are added Imāmate and Justice. By Justice the Shī'ites mean that just as Allāh sent down a series of prophets by way of His Justice and Mercy, to guide and direct people to religion, in the same way He laid down the system of the Imāmate to protect religion from alteration and change so that every Imām may in his time save the Divine teachings from the onslaught of personal desires and give directions about the correct precepts of Islam. And just as it is obligatory to know the originator of the religion (i.e. the Prophet), in the same way it is necessary to know the protector of the religion; and he who remains ignorant of him cannot be excused because the issue of Imāmate is supported by so many proofs and testimonies that no intelligent person can find any way to deny it. Therefore, when the Prophet exalts the Imām by saying that: 'whoever dies without knowing the Imām of his time dies a pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyah*) death', he means this kind of Imām. It is also attributed to the Prophet who said that:

"One who dies without (knowing his) Imām and binding himself by an oath of allegiance to him will die the death of one belonging to the day of *Jāhiliyah*, and one who withdraws his hand from obedience (to the Imām) will find no argument (in his defence) when he stands before Allāh on the Day of judgement."⁸⁰

Ibn Abil Hadīd, though a Sunnī Muslim, implies that recognizing 'Alī as Imām is an essential part of the faith. He states that the personality about whom no one's ignorance can

be excused is that of 'Alī. He also acknowledges the obligation to obey him and holds that he who does not believe in the issue of Imāmate will not achieve deliverance. In this connection he writes that he who is ignorant of the position of 'Alī as Imām and denies its veracity or obligatory character would , according to our associates , remain in Hell for ever, his fasting or prayers being of no avail to him because the knowledge of this matter is among the basic principles which constitute the foundations of religion. However, he does not consider one who denies 'Alī's Imāmate to be an unbeliever but only a sinner, a transgressor or a deviator, etc.⁸¹

Nahj al-balāghah is a suitable source to be referred to in order to identify this concept of leader in the Shī'ite school of thought. It contains statements about the meaning of justice, qualifications for the leader and other notions which denote a kind of religious polity.

Justice in Nahj al-balāghah

In examining the perception of justice in Nahj al-balāghah two kinds of passages can be studied. First, the sentences which define the meaning of justice as a social and moral value without any specific reference to their historical relevance and, second, statements which were uttered on particular occasions. While the former are more theoretical, the latter are historical and need more explanation about the conditions at the time of their occurrence.

We begin with the first set here.

The first approach to justice is made in Nahj al-balāghah by comparing it with generosity (*Jūd*). This appears in the form of an inquiry by 'Alī, who is asked: 'Which one of the two is better; justice or generosity?'. He replied:

'Justice puts things in their places while generosity takes them out from their directions; justice is the general caretaker while generosity is a particular benefit. Consequently, justice is superior and more distinguished of the two.'⁸²

In elaborating on this sentence, Motahharī says that although generosity is a valuable deed, it is done when a deficiency exists in society. For example if there is poverty then generosity will be meaningful. However, in performing justice, it is not necessary for there to exist any kind of social inadequacy . He adds that this kind of approach to the personal and social affairs of man is rooted in the special view of Islam about society. For him, this sentence conveys the socialistic nature of Islam. ⁸³

In another sentence justice is recognised as one of the four foundations of faith. The other three are endurance (*Sabr*), conviction (*Yaqīn*) and holy war (*Jihād*). Justice, in turn, has four aspects: 'continuing understanding, deep knowledge, a good power of decision and firm forbearance'. From this point of view, justice is an obtainable quality which could be acquired by understanding and knowledge. Such a person:

'drinks from the spring of judgment; and whoever exercises forbearance never commits evil actions in his affairs and leads a praiseworthy life among the people'.⁸⁴

In a social and political framework, a political leader as a guide for his people is so

important that his behaviour is assessed above other things. This is because his way of conduct may determine people's fate. It is said that the most distinguished person before Allāh among His creatures is the just Imām (leader) who has been guided (by Allāh) and 'guides others'. And the worst man before Allāh is identified as the oppressive Imām who has gone astray and 'through whom others go astray.'⁸⁵ This is detailed further by defining two kinds of rights in man's life by Islam; '*huqūqullāh*' (duties and obligations to God) and '*Huqūqul 'Ibād*' (the social duties of the individuals). The former can only be fulfilled by rightfully observing the latter. If men were found wanting in their duties towards God, in His mercy He may forgive them; but the violation of the rights of individuals involves violating the laws of society and the guilty parties could only be forgiven by those whom they had wronged.⁸⁶

In discussing the qualities of a 'faithful believer', justice is defined as a virtue which should be acquired in the believer's heart. This could be done by rejecting all desires from it.⁸⁷ It is conceivable from these statements that justice is divided into two kinds: individual justice and social justice and that the first one is the basis for the second one.⁸⁸

There are also some accounts of events in Nahj al-balāghah which are interpreted as 'Alī's justice. These descriptions have helped in the constitution of the Shī'ite notion of justice. But an important matter should be mentioned before commencing this discussion.

There are two evaluations of 'Alī's character as a caliph which mainly refer to his interpretation of justice. The pro-Shī'ite groups are of the opinion that 'Alī devoted himself to materializing justice in the community at the cost of losing his power. For them 'Alī

intentionally challenged some of the powerful aristocrats of Quraysh just because they were pursuing their own interests. They believe that 'Alī, by this behaviour, tried to eliminate all the deficiencies which took place in Islamic society.⁸⁹ The Shī'ites use this assumption to present an infallible and just view of 'Alī. In fact this depiction of 'Alī's actions fits other parts of the Shī'ite thought. For example, politics is not a deceitful means but a constructive element in fostering both the spiritual and the material needs of people. This implies that government is a means not an end for a politician.

Another group, on the other hand, sees incompetence in 'Alī's political behaviour and denies the first assumption. A typical example of this hypothesis might be seen in Nicholson's words when he writes that 'Alī 'had no talent for stern realities of statecraft'. For him, when 'Alī left 'Uthmān to his fate without making any effort to save him he had a blameworthy weakness. However, he believes that the suspicion that 'Alī was in league with the murderers of 'Uthmān can be put aside. While Nicholson appreciates 'Alī's virtues such as his energy, decision, and foresight, he criticises him for lacking the values needed for a 'ruler'. 'Alī is described as 'a gallant warrior, a wise counsellor, a true friend, and a generous foe' and is compared with Montrose and Bayard by Nicholson but from the political point of view:

'('Alī) was overmatched by unscrupulous rivals who knew that war is a game of deceit. Thus his career was in one sense a failure: his authority as Caliph was never admitted, while he lived, by the whole community.'⁹⁰

This suspicion about 'Alī's quality for leadership is posed and assessed in Nahj al-balāghah too. When 'Alī was told that Mu'āwīyah was smarter than him ('Alī) in politics he replied that Mu'āwīyah was not more cunning than him ('Alī) on account of their different

views towards evil deeds.

'Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allāh), [...] By Allāh, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy, nor can I be overpowered by hardships.'⁹¹

One of the issues which reveals 'Alī's commitment to moral principles is his statements in the council nominated by 'Umar to choose the third caliph from among themselves. According to the narrations of Tabarī, after a long investigation to choose a caliph out of the six people who had been nominated by 'Umar, 'Alī and 'Uthmān remained as the best choices. Abdur Rahmān 'Awf, who himself was one of the nominees, wished to solve the problem according to 'Umar's will. He asked 'Alī:

'Will you, 'Alī, give me your oath of office based on God's Book, the practice of His Prophet, and the deeds of Abū Bakr and 'Umar?'

'Alī replied:

'Indeed not, but [only] based on my own effort in all this and in accordance with my own ability'

Abdur Rahmān turned to 'Uthmān and asked him the exact same question, to which 'Uthmān answered: 'Indeed yes'.⁹² Despite Tabarī's version of the reason of such a statement by 'Alī, this reply which led to 'Uthmān's caliphate and 'Alī's defeat implied many things for the Shī'ites. It was a sign of his true method of dealing with political matters which Prophet Muhammad had already employed. In other words it was moral politics.

Another case is that of Talha and Zubayr, two prominent companions of the Prophet who were killed later by 'Alī in the battle of *al-Jamal*. They came to 'Alī at the beginning of his caliphate and tried to make a deal with him. They told him that they were prepared to swear allegiance to him on the condition that they would become his partners in running the government. But 'Alī replied to them in the negative without any hesitation. G.Jurdaq says that upon hearing this reply they left him and began mobilizing an army to fight against him. Jurdaq justifies 'Alī's action in the following sentences:

'Alī knew very well that Talha and Zubayr were very influential and they had a large number of supporters in Kūfa and Basra. However, it was justice which 'Alī loved most. He said: Do you want me to achieve success by means of oppression.'⁹³

It can be concluded from the matters stated so far that according to Nahj al-balāghah an ideal government should not only be regulative but also reformative in its application. This can be realised only by attributing certain qualities to those who are in charge of political affairs. Justice as one of these traits has both moral and social dimensions. Moral, because it regulates a person's relation with God and His moral obligations; and social, because it directs his attitude towards his community and other people. The difference between Shī'ite and Sunnī on a legitimate government may partly refer to their understanding of these two dimensions of justice.

It can be concluded that the origins of the Shī'ite notion of leadership (Imāmate) can be found in Nahj al-balāghah. Also, it can be observed that, in some passages, the non-Shī'ite sense of leadership is acknowledged. In the theory of the Imām, the basic factor is the personal attributes of the Imām, among which is 'justice'. The two aspects of hereditary

leadership, by means of genealogy and the special transfer of knowledge from the Prophet to the Imām, along with his justice imply that the Shī'ite Imāmate consists of more spiritual capabilities.

Chapter 7

Government

Introduction

The main characteristics of a government from the Qurānic point of view were discussed earlier in this thesis. It was stated that Muhammad himself acted as a statesman and conducted the political affairs of his community. It was also mentioned that the Islamic government became more developed during the first four caliphates. In this period because of the rapid changes in the Islamic state and the need for administrative, financial and judicial organs, the political system grew rapidly and was formed in interaction with those needs. The changing economic and social situation of the Islamic state following the rapid expansion of its territory was among the main reasons for development. But one of the most important points regarding the early caliphate was the extent of the influence of religion on government. It is believed that during the reign of the first caliphs this influence became less important than during the Prophet's time although it still remained close to politics. Some historians are of the opinion that after the Prophet's death religious institutions and the State became separate.¹

In this section we intend to define the main aspects of an Islamic government according to Nahj al-balāghah. In a similar manner as the passages about Imām, government (*Hukm*) is seen from a religious angle. It is attributed to 'Alī that he tried to combine religious principles with the affairs of the State. To study the concept of government in Nahj

al-balāghah we can refer to a document which was apparently prepared by 'Alī when he sent Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar to Egypt as governor in the year 38 A.H. (659 A.D.). This written command has been commented by many scholars over the centuries and has been very important for contemporary Muslim revivalists in theorising their ideal Islamic political system. But it seems that the historical relevance of the text should be explained in order to have a better understanding of it.

There is a great awareness of the importance of the conflict between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah in the early Arabic tradition.² Mu'āwiyah, who had been appointed governor of Shām (Syria) by 'Uthmān, did not take the oath of allegiance to 'Alī after 'Uthmān's murder. H.I.Hassan believes that the family of 'Abd Shams, one of 'Uthmān's ancestors, tried to regain the leadership of the Arabs through Mu'āwiyah's claim to power. For him, Mu'āwiyah took over the caliphate by deceit and force.³ Hassan also narrated from Nicolson that Muslims saw the victory of the Umayyads, led by Mu'āwiyah, as the victory of the infidel aristocrats of Mecca who had fought against the Prophet.⁴

When the people of Shām supported Mu'āwiyah against 'Alī, difference, and enmity arose between the people of Iraq and Syria. Ibn Abil Hadīd in his famous annotation, Sharh Nahj al-balāghah, explained the events in detail. When the conflict between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah intensified, the pro-'Uthmān party tried to weaken 'Alī's position in Egypt and detach the area from 'Alī's control. 'Alī removed Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr from the governorship of Egypt and appointed Mālik, who was the governor of *Kūfah* at that time, in his place. 'Alī gave him a warrant of appointment, which is the mentioned text, together with a written order to the Egyptians to obey him. However, this was not what Mu'āwiyah

expected. He had planned to make 'Amr ibn al-'Ās, one of his best supporters, governor of Egypt and encouraged him to take power by defeating Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr. After the election of Mālik, whose defeat seemed impossible, Mu'āwiyah decided to kill him before taking charge. Consequently, Mālik was poisoned by one of Mu'āwiyah's allies on his way to Egypt.⁵

The above-mentioned document is the longest of the letters in Nahj al-balāghah. It contains various executive, administrative, and moral instructions, but the fundamental point of the document is the way in which moral and temporal affairs are combined. For example, the main sovereign is God and rulers gain their power from Him. The governor should observe moral principles in order to make the community prosper. His main responsibility is to make divine laws the framework of action in society. However, this does not limit the role of the people in political affairs. Specifically, points about toleration, rejecting despotism and dictatorship, legitimizing non-religious governments, and making consultation, are among the most important issues in this regard.

I

General concepts

The first issue in the preamble of the document is Mālik's duties, such as: 'collecting its (Egypt's) revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people and making its cities prosperous'. From this definition of the duties of a governor, it can be assumed that government is a fundamental element in a society. Sentences such as: 'When authority

changes the time changes too'⁶ and 'The ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound'⁷, for instance, denote this importance in Nahj al-balāghah . Generally, government is an instrument to prevent disorder and chaos and to provide social security in a community . This kind of approach can be discerned from several comparisons in the book between the condition before and after the Prophet's proclamation and from the argument that God sent His Prophet in order to restore order and peace in Arabia.⁸

'Allah sent the Prophet when the mission of other Prophets had stopped and the peoples were in slumber a long time. Evils were raising heads, all matters were under disruption and in flames of wars, while the world was devoid of brightness, and full of open deceitfulness.'⁹

In the philosophy of the prophetic mission, it is said in Nahj al-balāghah that sending prophets was a sign of the grace of God upon people, in order to guide them in this world, and that government was one of the instruments for fulfilling this task. For instance it is said that God sent Muhammad to realize His promises¹⁰, fill the gaps between groups of people¹¹, guide people to the right path,¹² and defeat the oppressors.¹³

On the other hand, there are many other statements such as the following, in which government and political authority are discounted:

'.. if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders...'¹⁴

As A.Sharī'atī (d.1977) suggests in his book entitled 'Alī', these kinds of sentences do not denote any separation between spiritual and temporal affairs. On the contrary, they try to eliminate any egoism and individuality from the 'government' as the best instrument in realizing social justice and equality. For Sharī'atī, politicians are prevented from using government as an instrument to favour their own interests.¹⁵

In the preamble, there are also moral recommendations for Mālik to act in the line of religion, such as: 'fear Allah', 'prefer obedience to Him', and 'follow what He has commanded in the Qurān out of His obligatory and elective commands...'. And finally he was ordered 'to break his heart off from passions and to restrain it at the time of their increase'. As may be seen in this brief explanation, so far, we can trace two different sets of duties for Mālik: social ones in regard to community and personal ones in relation to himself. These two lines are developed in parallel to each other throughout the whole document. On the one hand Mālik is ordered to act so as to ensure social prosperity and adjust his relationship with other institutions of society, and on the other hand he is advised to control himself from deviance from the path of Allāh. George Jurdaq, the Christian writer, does not make a separation between those moral obligations and social behaviour. About the meaning of 'fear Allāh' in the similar sentences attributed to 'Alī he says:

'it means a person should not oppress his fellow-beings and should not in any way be unjust to them.'¹⁶

This might be the reflection of the unification between politics and religion which exists in the Qurān in general and also in the political system of the early caliphate.

About the sovereignty of God in the document, Mālik is told:

'... you are over them (people) and your responsible Commander ('Alī) is over you while Allāh is over him who has appointed you. He (Allāh) has sought you to manage their affairs and tried you through them.'¹⁷

What may be concluded from this is that sovereignty comes from God only. This idea is repeated all throughout the book. Whenever there is a rule, the source of it is God. But there is a clarification in Nahj al-balāghah about the meaning of the sentence 'the verdict is only that of Allāh' which may be relevant to our discussion. This is a Qurānic sentence by which the Kharijites tried to reject any form of government. According to the compiler of Nahj al-balāghah, when 'Alī heard the Kharijites' claim, he made a distinction between the theoretical and the functional meaning of the sentence. Although the Kharijites said that the function of governance was only for Allāh, 'Alī contradicted that by saying:

'... there is no escape for men from ruler, good or bad. The faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful enjoys (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, Allāh would carry everything to end.'¹⁸

Then he pointed to specific duties in society such as collecting taxes, fighting enemies, protecting roadways, and upholding the rights of the weak against the strong as the urgent needs of a society, which should be carried out by a political system. For him, the practical dimension of government need not be necessarily divine and even bad rulers could hold it. Therefore, although 'Alī attributed all kinds of rules to the rule of God, he legitimized worldly government with the reason that there are some immediate needs in society which should be provided for by means of government.

II

Democracy

It seems that every discussion on the political role of people in society is studied under this title. The word 'democracy', which is rooted in ancient Greek political philosophy, conveys western political values to the mind and might not be an appropriate title for a subject regarding a different culture in a different time. Nevertheless, the word is used here since it is known as a standard in measuring the limits of people's participation in government.

As a matter of fact, we should not expect this kind of approach to people to have been made in Nahj al-balāghah. What we find in this book are statements attributed to 'Alī during certain historical incidents and among them the Command to Mālik. To specify the role of people in government, we try to identify the related conceptual discussions at first. Then, we have a historical account of the early Islamic government from the point of view of democracy.

A part of the 'Command to Mālik' deals with the qualifications of a governor, the way to deal with people, and observing just policies. In general, people play an important role in government. Although the right to make laws exclusively belongs to Allāh, people are seen as the essential part of a political system. They are advised to participate in their political affairs and even change their oppressive rulers. They also legitimize the government from 'Alī's point of view, since he only accepted the post of caliphate upon the insistence of the community.¹⁹ It is attributed to 'Alī that in a sermon he described the mutual rights of the

ruler and the ruled over each other and concluded by saying that when both people and rulers fulfilled their rights and obligations, the ways of the religion became established and the continuance of the government would be expected.²⁰ The question may be posed that if sovereignty comes from God and He is the law-maker then what kind of right is considered for people? Is it their right to revolt, to advise the ruler, etc? M.Motahharī (d.1979), the Shī'ite thinker, pointed to this matter in his *Seyrī dar Nahj al-balāghah*²¹. He argues that there is no such dichotomy in *Nahj al-balāghah*. He argues that this is a Christian problem that has its own background.

M.T. Ja'farī, in his work, *Hekmat-e Usūl-e Sīyāsī-ye Eslām*, which is devoted to explain the philosophical relevance of 'Alī's command to Mālik, tries to interpret people's role in society according to the concept of democracy. He states that the meaning of democracy in this command is the governance of the best human spirits and thoughts, and not their personal desires and wills.²² Furthermore, it can be said that governance is seen from a moral perspective so that both governors and governed are subjected to the instructions of God. Therefore, both of them are equal in their position before God and have to observe certain obligations. Both of them are advised to limit each other within the boundaries of religion and this is not a unilateral duty.

In the same part of the 'Command' the emphasis is placed on people, by advising Mālik to assess his behaviour by taking into account the people's opinion about former rulers.

'Then, know O'Mālik that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticise you as you criticised them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allāh circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures.'²³

By this, 'Alī advised Mālik to control his passions in his political behaviour by reminding him of the danger of power in forgetting common virtues; implicitly, he is prohibited from applying despotism. Here there seems to be a contradiction between two approaches to the origin of moral principles since in the other parts of the book the moralities originate only from the Qurān and what God has ordered people to do, and not from the people's approval. In other words the judgment of people is not necessarily always correct. 'Alī's grievances about the people of his community are recognised on different occasions in Nahj al-balāghah. He even blamed them for oppressing him. But it seems that a distinction between public opinion of current events and assessment of past events has been made. The origin of this approach might be the verse of the Qurān which implies that whatever is "for the good of mankind remains on the earth."²⁴ For this reason 'Alī emphasizes that Allāh circulates the reputation of virtuous men through the tongues of His creatures. In addition, in another case 'Alī says that in spite of the people of his time, the people of the future will understand his sincerity.

Several paragraphs later, Mālik is recommended not to discontinue the good lives which the people of a community had been enjoying. Considering that Egypt had been conquered recently by Muslims and that they were implementing their rule over it, these recommendations may reflect the matter of toleration during the first caliphs. 'General unity'

and the 'people's prosperity' are expressed as the main purposes of this good practice. As a matter of toleration, the governor should not disturb good habits even if they do not originate from divine laws. As long as they are the source of social order and make social life easier they are useful and should be protected in 'Alī's point of view.

In this part of the document, 'Alī defined the governor's responsibilities and his relation with people. In this regard he advised Mālik to observe toleration in dealing with people, with the logic that 'they (people) are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation' and in both cases they may commit slips and make mistakes. This division of people into two groups from a religious point of view, may convey the toleration of different religions in Muslim society.

In a sentence of the letter 'Alī orders Mālik to follow the way which is the most equitable for the right, the most universal by way of justice, and the most comprehensive with regard to the agreement among those under him. J.Sobhānī, the Iranian Shī'ite scholar, concludes from this order that the people's consent constitutes the basis of a government according to Nahj al-balāghah. He mentions that 'Alī argued with his opponents on the basis of the people's election of him and not on his conviction of being appointed by the Prophet (and God) as Imām. Therefore, he comes to this conclusion that a government, whether it is ordained by God or not, cannot be implemented in society unless it is based on the will of the people.²⁵ This is similar to the role of people in the system of *Velāyat-e Faqīh* which currently runs Iran.

A similar conclusion is drawn from the contents of the book by S. Najaf Ābādī in his

Velāyat-e Faqīh. He refers to the passages referring to the election of 'Alī by means of the masses' demand as the origin of the superiority of his post.

Rejection of despotism is another point which should be taken into account in studying the role of people in the instruction to Mālik.

'It is the common people of the community who are the pillars of the religion, the power of the Muslims and the defence against the enemies. Your leanings should therefore be towards them and your inclination with them'²⁶

But the stronger command to support people comes a few lines later when 'Alī orders Mālik not to say (as a ruler): 'I have been given authority, I should be obeyed when I order'. In a closer examination of this kind of leadership, words like *Kebr*, which means assuming oneself in a higher position than one's real one, and *Jabr*, which means power, should be taken into consideration. In Nahj al-balāghah a tyrannical regime is essentially wrong because its government is an end while it should be a means. Despots see government as the source of their strength and therefore try to maintain it. On the opposite, the philosophical and theological approach of Nahj al-balāghah to this world is that it is something temporary and all human actions should be adjusted according to this notion. Everybody should try in this world and by means of its opportunities to provide a good (spiritual) life for themselves in the other world. Government is seen as one of those means which should be dealt with and taken over by people but just for establishing justice and equality which in turn cause the improvement of the governors' as well as the governed people's souls. Therefore, holding this responsibility for personal purposes and for stabilizing one's position in this world is

illegitimate. In describing this idea 'Alī first says:

'If there was anyone who could secure a ladder to everlasting life or a way to avoid death it was Solomon who was given ... a great position (before God) ... Certainly, the bygone centuries have a lesson for you.'²⁷

After this advocacy, there are questions about tyrants who tend to be rejected because of their will to remain forever.

'Where are the ... Pharaohs? ... who killed the Prophets, destroyed the traditions of the divine messengers and revived the tradition of the despots? where are those who advanced with armies, defeated thousands mobilized forces and populated cities?'²⁸

Dealing with people in a despotic manner, according to 'Alī, consequently destroys religion, morality, and prosperity, and should be cured by a ruler by looking at 'the greatness of the realm of Allāh and His might' over him. 'Alī delicately relates the concepts of justice and oppression to moral values so that doing justice 'towards people' is 'for Allāh'. He added that when someone oppresses the creatures of Allāh, then Allāh Himself becomes his opponent. These words are attributed to him:

'Oh, People! By Allāh, I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not restrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before you.'²⁹

Apart from the conceptual dimension of democracy and the people's role in government, there are other statements referring to particular occasions that convey a more explicit meaning of democracy. The most significant one of them is the statement attributed

to 'Alī when he was chosen as caliph after the death of 'Uthmān. In that sentence he emphasises that had people not asked him to accept the responsibility, he never would have claimed it.³⁰

This matter is followed by the more fundamental question, which was answered earlier, of knowing what was 'Alī's role during the first caliphates? If he saw himself as the legitimate successor of Prophet Muhammad, what was his reaction towards the appointment of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān as the Prophet's successors? Some historians of early Islam do not concern themselves with this question. For them, whatever 'Alī's attitude was, other people took the power and ruled society. The second group of historians and researchers, especially Shī'ite ones, are very concerned with this question. For this group, 'Alī had his good reasons for his silence during the caliphates of his predecessors. One of these justifications is that 'Alī did not want to take power as long as people wanted someone else. This assumption explicitly takes the matter of democracy into consideration.

'Abdulmaqsūd, the Sunnī Egyptian writer, gives reasons for 'Alī's silence against Abū Bakr and his supporters. Firstly he states that although 'Alī deserved the right to claim the Caliphate for himself, he considered it as a means not an end and he had realized that government without the will of people was not legitimate.³¹ His philosophy was that if power came to him, he would accept it, otherwise he would not challenge any more for it.³² Therefore when he saw people accepting Abū Bakr as their leader, while they knew that the Prophet had chosen him as his successor, he did not try to change the people's choice.

Another historical fact regarding the democratical aspect of government in Nahj al-

balāghah refers to these passages which denote the style of 'Alī's government. Historically, 'Uthmān is considered the founder of the Umayyad dynasty since he belonged to the clan of Quraysh and was the first one who brought a considerable number of them into power. Therefore, his government is regarded as an aristocracy. For M. Shams ad-dīn, the ideal government introduced in Nahj al-balāghah is not based on the interest of a class or particular elite. Rather, it is a government for people.³³ G. Jordac concludes from the 'Command to Mālik' that, for 'Alī, the caliphate was not based on party spirit or family bias but he considered it as consistent with good qualities, pious deeds, meeting out justice to the people and refraining from tyranny and mischief.³⁴

III

Social classes and government

A considerable part of the document deals with the different classes of people so that this passage is called 'the administration of 'Alī'.³⁵ Namely seven classes are enumerated: the army, the chief judge, executive officers, the administration of revenues, the clerical establishment, traders and craftsmen, and the lowest class.

The first important point in respect of these classes is that the progress of each group is seen as dependent on the progress of every other group and that none can afford to be independent of the other. For instance, after stating the mutual relation between army and the civil population it is said that:

'These two classes cannot exist without the third class namely the judges, the executive and the secretariat who pass judgements about contracts, collect revenues and are depended upon in special and general matters.'³⁶

Another point is that the general public is described as a combination of two groups: 'Muslim and *Dhimmi*' and that God has prescribed for them 'several rights, duties and obligations'. It is also emphasized that the rights of *Dhimmīs*, as well as those of Muslims, are defined and preserved in the Qurān and in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

Regarding the army, it is defined as 'the grace of God' that lends dignity to the state and 'upholds the prestige of the faith and maintains the peace of the country'. Without the army, the state cannot stand and in turn, the army cannot exist without the support of the state. It is stated that soldiers have both material and spiritual needs. Their material needs are dependent upon the 'income provided for them from the state revenue'. In this regard it is emphasized that the military and the civil population which pays the revenue , need each other's co-operation.

Mālik is advised to deal with the army in a special manner. He is ordered to put in command of his forces the man who is the 'best well-wisher of Allāh, His Prophet and his Imām'. It is also said that the chastest of the commanders of the army in heart and the highest of them in endurance is he who is slow in getting enraged, accepts excuses, is kind to the weak and is strict with the strong, a person whose temper should not raised by violence and kept sitting by weakness.

In respect to the chief Judge, Mālik is advised to select one who is by far the best

among the people and who is not obsessed with domestic worries. In addition, other conditions are stipulated for the chief judge and among them : disputation should not enrage him, he should not insist on any wrong point, should not be reluctant to accept the truth when he perceives it, should not lean towards greed, should not content himself with a cursory understanding of a matter without going thoroughly into it. But, he should be most ready to stop to ponder on doubtful points, most regardful of arguments and quarrels of litigants, most patient at probing into matters and most fearless at the time of passing judgement. And finally praise should not make him vain and elation should not make him lean to any side. After enumerating these attributes for a chief judge which suggest a religious and self-controlled person it is stated that 'such people are very few'. Mālik is also ordered to pay such a person a high enough salary, to let him live in comfort in keeping with his position. The large salary should keep him above temptation. Such a person should also be given a rank that no one else among Mālik's chiefs aspires to, 'so that he remains safe from the harm of those around you'.³⁷

The third class of people considered in the text are the executive officers. Mālik is ordered to appoint them after 'tests' and not according to partiality or favouritism because 'these two things constitute sources of injustice and unfairness'. These people should be selected from among the experienced and modest ones. Again it is advisable that such people should be given an abundant livelihood because this gives them the strength to maintain themselves in order and not to have an eye upon the funds in their custody.

Another group which is dealt with in 'the Command of Mālik' are the people responsible for the administration of revenues. It is stated that those who are engaged in the

affairs of *Kharāj* or land tax should remain prosperous because 'in their prosperity lies the prosperity of all others'. It is so because all people are dependent on 'revenue and its payers'. In addition to the order for looking after the revenue, the cultivation of the land is expressed and emphasis is placed on keeping an eye on it 'more than on the collection of revenue',

'[...] Because revenue cannot be had without cultivation and whoever asks for revenue without cultivation, ruins the area and brings death to the people. His rule will not last only a moment.'³⁸

Mālik is also ordered to remit the revenue in case of any change in the condition of the land, either due to flood, to drought, or to anything else, because 'it is an investment which they will return to you (Mālik) in the shape of the prosperity of your country and the progress of your domain'.

The clerical establishment is another issue of concern in the letter. The way of selecting people for such a post is again expressed by emphasizing the religiously virtuous. It is stated that such people should be selected for such a post that do not exploit their privileged position to go against their ruler and those who 'in drafting of treaties may not succumb to temptation and harm the interests of *Ummah*'. Mālik is ordered not to select people for such work merely on the strength of his first impression of affection or even 'good faith' because:

'as a matter of fact, the pretensions of a good many who are really devoid of honesty and good breeding, may cheat even the intelligence of the rulers'.³⁹

The sixth group are the people in trade and industry. These people are described as 'the real source of profit to the state and provider of consumer goods'. A distinction also is

made between them and the general public by stating that while the former take the trouble to collect commodities from far and near, from land and from across the sea, and from mountains and forests to derive benefit, the latter do bear the strain. The craftsmen and traders are also described as 'peace-loving' people since their interests depend on order and peace. However, the majority of them are seen as intensely greedy and prone to bad dealings. 'They hoard grain and try to sell it at a high price and this is most harmful to the public'. The leader of government, according to this letter, should not fight 'this evil' but prevent them from hoarding. This may be controlled by observing such advice as this:

'See to it that trade is carried on with the utmost ease, that neither the seller nor the buyer is put to a loss. And if, in spite of your warning, should anyone go against your commands and commit the crime of hoarding, then inflict upon him a severe punishment'.⁴⁰

The poor or the lower class of the society are also enumerated in the classification of social classes. They are called the 'victims of vicissitudes of time', 'helpless and greatly torn in mind'. Mālik is ordered to assign for their uplift a portion of the state exchequer (*Bayt al-māl*). He is also urged to treat them like the other groups of the community so that their rights should not be ignored and neglected by putting more emphasis on other issues. Again an awareness about the religious duty of a governor to satisfy such people is uttered in this part of the letter. Mālik is also advised to meet the oppressed and the lowly periodically in an open conference and to have 'heart-to-heart talks' with them and to let them talk freely without any fear.

In addition to these descriptions of social classes and the advice to Mālik regarding the way of dealing with them, another part of the letter is devoted to the issue of peace and

treaties. It is stated that a ruler should not throw away the offer of peace which his enemy may make. Peace is seen as the 'comfort of the army' and the thing that reduces the worries of a ruler and promotes order in the state. But the viewpoint to peace is not so simple. Mālik is warned that a ruler should be aware that certain types of enemies propose terms of peace just to lull the other party into a false sense of security only to attack them when they are off their guard. It is also stated that after a peace treaty has been accepted, it should be fulfilled completely and never broken for 'breach of promise is an act against God and none except the positively wicked acts against God.'

As a conclusion of what has been stated so far regarding the function of government and its political nature in Nahj al-balāghah, it can be said that the book tries to combine politics affairs with religious principles. Most of the political issues such as social freedom, unity, tolerance and so on are seen as religious fundamentals which should be observed by a Muslim as far as he or she is a committed Muslim. In the first chapters it was explained that social affairs in Islam tended to be religious rather than political matters. Moral virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, sincerity and so on, are regarded as the factors which help a society to enjoy a just government and be treated on the basis of equality and justice. On the contrary, if these values are forgotten in a society, the way for tyranny, oppression and monarchy will be open.

Chapter 8

Political opposition and tolerance

Introduction

The study of the interaction between a government and its opponents is one of the main subjects of any examination of the nature of that government. In a democratic system those who are in the opposition to the political authority are more tolerated than in a tyrannical one. In our approach to Nahj al-balāghah we find statements that deal with opposition groups and may explain more about the extent of the flexibility of the system of government introduced in it.

According to the sermons and letters contained in the book and based on the political circumstances prevailing during the caliphates of 'Uthmān and 'Alī, the opposition was composed of three groups: the *Qāsītīn*, the *Māriqīn* and the *Nākithīn*, whose challenges of 'Alī constitute the most part of Nahj al-balāghah. It is narrated by some historians that the Prophet foretold the appearance of these three groups and commanded 'Alī to fight them. They were defined as the pledge-breakers (*Nākithīn*), the deviators from the truth (*Qāsītīn*), and those who have left the faith (*Māriqīn*).¹ According to Nahj al-balāghah these three groups were 'Alī's main enemies. The *Nākithūn* initially took the oath of allegiance to 'Alī but they broke it later; the *Qāsītīn*, 'deviated', and the *Māriqūn*, committed themselves to the face-value of the verses of the Qurān and 'missed the truth of religion'.² The three major battles of *al-Jamal*, *Siffīn* and *Nahrawān* respectively were fought against these parties by

'Alī. That definition and division was initially made in the famous sermon of *Shiqshiqīyah* in which 'Alī said that when he took up the reins of government three parties began to oppose him.

The first point regarding these groups is that a distinction is made between 'Alī's enemies and 'Uthmān's. The mainstream view in this regard is that the attitudes of the people and the political circumstances had so deteriorated towards the end of 'Uthmān's caliphate that nobody could reform society.³ Consequently, 'Alī, though chosen by 'Uthmān's opponents, was not supported by them when he was faced with Mu'āwiyah's attempt to question the legitimacy of his authority. However, the issue is approached in another way in Nahj al-balāghah. It is recorded that 'Alī, after the increase of tension against him among Muslims, said that:

'People are afraid of the oppression of their rulers while I fear the oppression of my subjects.'⁴

This is a general statement which is referred to on many occasions. By this, a distinction is made between 'Alī's position and that of his predecessors. The Shī'ites and other researchers make a distinction between the motives of 'Alī's enemies and those of the enemies of the first three caliphs. They believe that 'Alī made enemies because of his commitment to Islamic rules and principles. For M.Motahhari, 'Alī had no concern for anyone, being himself in the way of God. Therefore, this resulted in tension between him and others.

'Rather, if he showed interest in someone or was concerned about him, it was because of God.

Naturally, such an attitude makes enemies, and it causes offence to souls full of greed and craving

and brings them pain.’⁵

Motahhari mentions the expedition to Yemen as one of the cases in which ‘Alī made enemies in this way. The Prophet sent ‘Alī as the commander of an army to Yemen where Muslims defeated the enemy. On his way back, ‘Alī appointed a soldier in his place and himself hurried out to present an account of his expedition to the Prophet. The new commander divided garments among the soldiers and they dressed themselves with new clothes. When they entered Mecca, however, ‘Alī opposed this decision and ordered them to take off the clothes and delivered them to the Prophet to make a decision about them. When the army arrived in Mecca some soldiers complained about ‘Alī and criticised his harshness over the garments. The Prophet addressed them:

‘Oh men, do not grumble about ‘Alī. I swear by Allah that he is more intensely in the way of God than that anyone should complain about him.’⁶

For some analysts, this kind of behaviour made ‘Alī’s government impotent and ineffective.⁷ But for the Shī’ites, any evaluation is based on the fact that his government was mainly religious and aimed at the protection of the divine message of God. We have to bear this point in mind in examining the approach to ‘Alī’s opponents in Nahj al-balāghah.

Although the study of ‘Alī’s notion of government cannot be complete without studying other issues such as *Shūrā* (consultation), the right of the newly converted Muslims in the Islamic society, etc, we are confined to observe the issue through the materials of Nahj al-balāghah and approach the matter from this angle.

The advantage of the passages in Nahj al-balāghah is their theoretical presentation

which helps one to understand the wider scope of the Shī'ite ideology. In addition, they present a new challenge in the Islamic state for the political system of the first three caliphs. It is agreed that when 'Alī took charge of the government he tried to substitute a more democratic method of dealing with dissidents in comparison with that of 'Uthmān who had been increasingly inclined to dictatorship. Study of both the theoretical and historical passages of Nahj al-balāghah in regard to political tolerance are the subject of this section.

I

Nākithūn

The *Nākithūn* in Nahj al-balāghah are characterised by their desire to acquire the political and economic posts during the 'Alī's caliphate. The statements about justice and equality in Nahj al-balāghah are generally concerned with the affairs of this group. The most prominent characters of this group were Talha and Zubayr, both of whom had been companions of the Prophet. They were highly respected by Muslims because of their heroic actions in the way of Islam. Both were among those who had embraced Islam before the open pronouncement by Prophet Muhammad. In addition, in the desperate situation of the Muslims in the battle of Uhud, when they were being defeated by the Quraysh, these two men remained with the Prophet and protected him from his enemies. Furthermore, they were among the leaders of dissidents against 'Uthmān and played an important role in encouraging people to revolt.⁸ Zubayr, as one of the six members of the committee appointed by 'Umar, of which Talha also was a member, voted in favour of 'Alī.

However, shortly after 'Alī's election as caliph the pro-'Uthmān party began to resist

'Alī's authority and to hold him responsible for 'Uthmān's death. At the same time, Talha and Zubayr protested against the oath of allegiance which 'Alī had forced upon them. 'Alī, on the other hand, denied such a claim and accused them of treacherously violating the allegiance which they had been the first to swear.

They engaged in a war against 'Alī. When they saw Mu'āwiyah's disobedience and 'Alī's proclamation of war against him, they began to act against 'Alī. They had also observed the weakness of the people of Medina in supporting 'Alī. This happened three months after the murder of 'Uthmān. They left Medina for Mecca on the excuse of performing the lesser pilgrimage. They were met by 'Āishah, who on her way to Medina had heard about 'Alī's election to the caliphate and was returning to Mecca to encourage people to avenge 'Uthmān's blood. When she met Talha and Zubayr, her cousin, she decided to stir up the men of Basrah, who had favoured the claims of Talha. So all of them left Mecca for Basrah. As Sir W.Muir states, when the news of this event reached 'Alī:

"Alī refused to move against the malcontents so long as no overt act of rebellion threatened the unity of Islam'.⁹

But when he was informed of their move to Basrah he changed his plan to fight the Syrians and tried to stop them. But he could not gather a large enough army and failed to arrest them.

Before setting off for Basrah, 'Alī sent a letter to the people of Kūfah. In this letter which is included in Nahj al-balāghah, the Kūfans are invited to resist the enemy. 'Alī called upon the Kūfans as supporters and chiefs of the Arabs and tried to explain his position

concerning the assassination of 'Uthmān.¹⁰ He described himself as a man from among the *Muhājirūn* (immigrants) who asked 'Uthmān to satisfy the Muslims most and to offend them the least. Then, 'Alī accused Talha and Zubayr, as well as 'Āishah, of not being as lenient as him to 'Uthmān and said that he was murdered by the people who had been mobilized mainly by them. He added that the people swore allegiance to him without any force or compulsion after these events.

In Basrah, controversy between 'Āishah, Talha and Zubayr on the one hand and Ibn Hunaif, 'Alī's governor there, on the other hand, continued. For the people, judging between these two groups was really difficult. All of these characters were among the best companions of the Prophet. Eventually, they joined the opponents of 'Alī. After some negotiations which led to violence the government of Basrah passed into the hands of Talha and Zubayr. They executed a great number of people who had engaged in the attack on 'Uthmān.

'Alī strengthened his army and moved to Kūfah, which he later made his seat of government instead of Medina, to be able to confront Mu'āwiyah in Syria. 'Alī also hoped to find more loyal supporters there. Abū Mūsā, the governor of Kūfah, himself doubtful about either side, remained neutral and advised the people to be neutral and stay at home. Despite this disunity among the Kūfans, 'Alī could gain sufficient support for the fight. Finally war broke out. Talha and Zubayr were the commanders of the army of Basrah and 'Āishah seated on a camel was present as well. Because of this camel the war is known as the battle of *al-Jamal*.

According to the historians who narrated the events of this battle, 'Alī tried to reduce

the hostility before and after the battle: once by reminding Zubayr of the Prophet's forbidding him to wage war on 'Alī and also by suggesting to them that they bore more responsibility than him in the murder of 'Uthmān. Muir in his account of 'Alī's behaviour before the war states that "'Alī's thoughts were for peace if possible'.¹¹ According to him, 'Alī was a man of compromise; and here he was ready 'in the interests of Islam' to do so.¹²

'Alī's intention to avoid the war for the sake of Islam is mentioned in several sermons. In one case 'Alī says that the *Nākethūn* are in agreement in disliking his authority. But he goes on by saying that he will carry on since he perceives disunity among the Muslims. 'Alī reasons that:

'Because if, in spite of the unsoundness of their views, they succeed, the whole organization of the Muslims will be shattered'.¹³

To him, the *Nākithūn* were attached to worldly matters and envied him. They intended to revert society to the style it followed in the pre-Islamic period. Then 'Alī defines the duty of his followers as to abide by the book of Allah and revive the *Sunnah*.¹⁴

'Alī talked to Talha and Zubayr and tried to dissuade them from conducting the war. But eventually the war took place and the two men were killed. 'Āishah was sent back in a respectful manner to Medina, where she spent the rest of her life and no longer attempted to interfere the affairs of State. Also, after the battle of *al-Jamal*, 'Alī treated his friends and foes alike, according to Muir.¹⁵

As Petersen states, and according to the version of Caetani, in this civil war which began in the year 656 and ended in 661, the basic elements of Islam had collided in an irreconcilable conflict. For these researchers, 'Alī's defensive war aimed 'at maintenance of the faith' and his obligation to carry the right guidance to victory though his religious prestige was influenced to a marked degree by his attitude to *fitnah* (mischief).¹⁶

In analysing the factors involved in the battle, A.Sharī'atī counts the *Nākithūn* as the most dangerous group during 'Alī's caliphate. He believes that they were an internal enemy who enjoyed a very brilliant background and because of this fact people could not distinguish their claim from that of 'Alī. Their endeavours in the way of Islam had given them a respected and pious image. For Sharī'atī, however, their immorality and psychologically wicked motives such as greed, jealousy, and their shortcomings in analysing the events made them break their allegiance to 'Alī. Sharī'atī also makes also a comparison between the Prophet's and 'Alī's enemies and states that the Prophet's success would not have been achievable if he had faced this kind of enemy in Medina.¹⁷

M. Majlisī, the Shī'ite Safavid theologian, presents a typical Shī'ite account of the affairs of *Nākithūn*. Generally, he describes the 'Imam' as a sun whose light the ordinary people cannot tolerate to look at directly. The implication in this description is that the deterioration of the relations between 'Alī and his opponents was simply because they could not bear his justice. He also takes another example of this kind of relationship between the people and the Imam. He states that, although during the concealment of the Imam the kings and nobles have faith in his coming, when he actually comes and reduces the nobles and the poor to the same level, many will not be able to endure this and will disbelieve. Then he

pointed specifically to 'Alī and Talha and Zubayr and stated that:

'For when 'Alī,[...], was distributing rewards, he treated Talha and Zubayr in the same way as a slave he had freed but the day before, and it was this that caused them to forsake him.'¹⁸

In conformity with this hypothesis and according to Nahj al-balāghah, we observe that 'Alī observed a fixed policy in his government. It might be one of the reasons for his unpopularity during his caliphate. For instance, after taking back the land grants made by 'Uthmān he said:

'By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids have been purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.'¹⁹

It is also included in Nahj al-balāghah that 'Alī refused Talha and Zubayr's suggestion that they were prepared to swear allegiance to him on condition that they had a share with him in the caliphate. 'Alī rejecting their plan, replying: 'but you will have a share in strengthening the caliphate'.²⁰

It can be said that what is stated in Nahj al-balāghah regarding 'Alī's reaction to the *Nākithūn* shows the extent of the toleration of an Islamic government towards its enemies. 'Alī, considering himself very moderate, reasoned that all those who had participated in the battle of *al-Jamal* had offered him their obedience and sworn allegiance to him quite obediently, without any compulsion. He saw himself as the rightful caliph who should be obeyed as a legal right. When, in Basrah, the *Nākithūn* approached 'Alī's governor and other

officials and killed some of his people in captivity, he emphasised his right as caliph and stated that even if they had deliberately killed only one Muslim without any fault, it would have been lawful for him to kill all the *Nākithūn*.²¹

'Alī also wrote a letter to 'Uthmān ibn Hunaif, another governor of Basrah, as soon as he was informed of Talha and Zubayr's arrival there.²² In the first sentence of the letter he tells his governor that if the two men return to the 'umbrella of obedience' he should let them be. But in case of disobedience he should take with him those who obey the legitimate leader. He is told not to worry about those who commit treason and join the enemy because:

'The absence of a half hearted man is better than his presence and his sitting down is better than his rising up.'²³

Another case is about Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbāss, 'Alī's governor in Basrah, and who treated 'Alī's enemies harshly. During the uprising in Basrah which led to the war of *al-Jamal*, the Banū Tamīm, Abū Bakr's tribe, took an active role in the movement to avenge 'Uthmān's blood. However, they were treated unkindly by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbāss, 'Alī's supporter, who had been appointed governor of Basrah. Some of 'Alī's followers in that tribe sent a letter to 'Alī and complained of his governor's harsh treatment. In response, 'Alī wrote a letter to ibn 'Abbāss ordering him not to be harsh with them. In the first sentence he states that:

'You should know that Basrah is the place where Satan descends and mischiefs happen. Keep the people of this place pleased with good treatment and remove the knots of fear from their hearts.'²⁴

Then he praises the Banū Tamīm as those who never committed excesses in war, in pre-Islamic times or after Islam. He also points to their kinship with the Banū Hāshim, 'Alī's tribe.

During 'Alī's argument with Talha and Zubayr about the way he was elected caliph, more matters are attributed to 'Alī regarding political tolerance. In reply to their claim that they took the oath of allegiance to him unwillingly, 'Alī states that common people did not swear allegiance to him under any force or for any money given to them. He also implied in the letter that the two men were among the most respected people in the Islamic society at the time of 'Uthmān's murder. Therefore, with that high position, they could have objected to 'Alī's election as caliph if they had wanted to do so. In regard to the allegation of killing 'Uthmān, 'Alī proposed the following in this letter:

'Let someone from among the people of Medina who supported neither me nor you decide the matter between me and you. Then one of us shall face (the command of law) according to (their) involvement.'²⁵

Upon his arrival in Basrah, 'Alī sent Anas ibn Mālik to Talha and Zubayr to tell them what he had heard from the Prophet concerning them. This was 'Alī's last attempt to change their decision to wage war. However, Anas did not carry out his mission, saying that he had forgotten the matter.²⁶

II

Qāsītīn

According to Shī'ite sources, including Nahj al-balāghah, Mu'āwiyah, an intelligent politician from the clan of the Banū Umayyah of Quraysh, was the head of the *Qāsītīn*. He was appointed by 'Umar as governor of Syria and was confirmed in his post by 'Uthmān. After the murder of 'Uthmān, he was one of the leaders who wanted to avenge his death. On this basis, he refused to swear allegiance to 'Alī and prepared Syria for a fight against him. He took the reins of government after 'Alī's murder and established a dynastic system which was unprecedented in Islam at that time.

The *Qāsītīn* were the second group who confronted 'Alī's government with more or less the same reasons as the *Nākithīn*. From this perspective, these two groups differ from the *Māriqīn*, who were concerned about the *Hakimīyah* (arbitration) and not the blood of 'Uthmān.

When 'Alī returned to Kūfah after the battle of *al-Jamal* he hoped to regain Mu'āwiyah's allegiance by opening negotiations with him. He sent Jarīr ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bajālī with a letter to him. He wrote in it that the *Muhājirūn* and the *Ansār* had sworn allegiance to him and that Mu'āwiyah should do the same thing.²⁷ He was also ordered to place the case of 'Uthmān's killing before 'Alī so that he could pass verdict therein according to the Qurān and the *Sunnah*. But Mu'āwiyah detained Jarīr on several pretexts and began to revolt against 'Alī on the excuse of 'Uthmān's killing. He convinced the Syrians, with the help of prominent people in Syria, that 'Alī was liable for 'Uthmān's life. 'Alī was accused

of misconduct during the siege of 'Uthmān and of encouraging the besiegers and giving them protection. Mu'āwiyah also hung 'Uthmān's blood-stained shirt and the amputated fingers of his wife on the pulpit of the Central Mosque of Damascus, around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and pledged to avenge 'Uthmān's blood.

Mu'āwiyah, furthermore, tried to show how different 'Alī was from the first caliphs in order to justify his actions. This matter is reflected in a letter sent to 'Alī in which Mu'āwiyah called Abū Bakr the most distinguished among the Companions and the most high ranking in the Muslims's view. He was praised as one who gathered all the Muslims under one umbrella, removed their disunity and fought those who were forsaking Islam. Then, 'Umar was mentioned as one who won victories, founded cities and humiliated unbelievers. And finally 'Uthmān, the third Caliph, who was called the victim of oppression, was praised as the propagator of religion and expander of the word of Allah far and wide.²⁸ When Mu'āwiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, to avenge 'Uthmān's blood, he secured their allegiance and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarīr and sent him back to 'Alī.

Nasr ibn Muzahim, a Muslim historian of the 9th century (A.D.), believes that the murderers of 'Uthmān were people who had been greatly offended by his arbitrary actions. Therefore, they should not be held responsible for it. In his opinion, the struggle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah had much deeper causes. The pre-eminence of Syria or of al-Iraq, as well as the possibility of two different conceptions of the policy to be followed in the government of the Muslim State were the main issues under consideration.²⁹ Donaldson believes that as

Syrians marched towards *Siffīn*, it was virtually to challenge 'Alī's right to the Caliphate, not to avenge 'Uthmān.³⁰

When 'Alī heard of these matters through Jarīr he rose against Mu'āwiyah and began to mobilize forces for war. He gathered more than eighty thousand men. But Mu'āwiyah and his army had reached the valley of *Siffīn* before him and was encamped in the ruins of the city (of *Siffīn*) which dated from the Roman period. They also held the road to the river. 'Alī attacked them and succeeded in gaining access to the river but generously allowed the Syrians to draw water from it. For some time there were no major clashes between the two armies especially when the sacred month of Muharram arrived. The real war began after that month at *Siffīn*.

After the fighting, which took about two weeks in July 657, an agreement was reached to abide by the decision of two arbitrators. For most of the Shī'ites the signs of defeat had appeared for the Syrians before the agreement but at this stage 'Amr ibn al-Ās suggested that some of Mu'āwiyah's men fasten Qurāns on their spears and march forward demanding a decision according to the book of God. This initiative changed the face of the battle. The swords stopped and another face of politics appeared. This face was negotiation that changed the result of the war in favour of Mu'āwiyah in the long term.

Two men were appointed as arbitrators. Abū Mūsā was chosen by 'Alī and 'Amr ibn al-Ās by Mu'āwiyah. According to L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Alī was forced by his partisans to submit to arbitration and also to choose the arbitrator for his side from among neutral people. 'Alī's followers were sure that they were in the right. In these decisions the *Qurrā*, who

participated in both armies, played a large part.³¹

What is known about that arbitration is that arbitrators were supposed to consult the Qurān and in default of clear indications in it, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, excluding what might give rise to conflict. Veglieri again believes that their task was to determine whether the acts of which 'Uthmān was accused were or were not at odds with the divine Laws (*Ahdāth*). As he states, if the caliph were guilty, his murder could be regarded as an act of justice. But if he had been killed unjustly (*mazlūm*), Mu'āwiyah would have been justified in claiming the right of vengeance. A decision in favour of Mu'āwiyah could mean, for 'Alī, the loss of the caliphate.³²

They wrote an agreement that they would decide on the matter of a new leader at a particular date and place³³. 'Alī's camp was, however, no longer in unison concerning this decision. One group, who were originally Bedouin, and became later known as the Kharijites, seceded because they considered the agreement incompatible with the Caliph's religious office. They had made sacrifices in the fight against Mu'āwiyah's unlawful rebellion and would recognize only a military decision, God's judgment in the conflict.³⁴ Therefore, after the battle, Mu'āwiyah relied on the friendship of the people of Syria and 'Alī returned to Kūfah on account of difference of opinion and suspicion.

Eight months after the battle of *Siffīn*, the two arbitrators, along with several of the companions of the Prophet, met in Adhruh. Mu'āwiyah was the first to arrive at the meeting-place. But 'Alī, busy with the troubles caused by dissidents, only sent Abū Mūsā with his cousin Ibn 'Abbāss as his representatives. At this conference Ibn 'Abbāss urged Abū Mūsā

to beware of 'Amr ibn al-Ās and keep in mind that 'Alī had no blemish to render him incapable of the government, nor Mu'āwiyah any virtue to qualify him for it. When Abū Mūsā met 'Amr ibn al-Ās, he was received by his counterpart with great respect till he became completely influenced by him. In a private conference between the two alone, 'Amr ibn al-'Ās managed to make him believe that it was quite impracticable to attempt to accommodate matters, without deposing both the present competitors, and leaving the choice of a third to the people.

Following this decision , a tribune was erected between the two armies, from which each of the arbitrators was publicly to declare his opinion. Abū Mūsā wished Amr to go up first, but the latter insisted on yielding to 'Alī's arbitrator. Accordingly Abū Mūsā ascended and told the people that he and Amr had given full consideration to the matter and had come to the conclusion that both 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah should be deposed from the caliphate (or government) to which they pretended in the same manner, and he took his ring off his finger.

Having made this declaration, he immediately came down and 'Amr ibn al-'Ās went up. He said the people had heard how Abū Mūsā has for his part deposed 'Alī. For his part, he deposed him too but gave the caliphate to Mu'āwiyah. He also put the ring upon his finger as a symbol of investing Mu'āwiyah with the caliphate. Then he justified his action by the claim that Mu'āwiyah was the best choice for the caliphate since he was 'Uthmān's heir and avenger and the worthiest of all men to succeed him. As S.Ockly states, from this time Mu'āwiyah's interests prospered daily, while 'Alī's began to decline.³⁵

In the year 38 A.H. Mu'āwiyah sent 'Amr ibn al-'Ās to Egypt with a large force. He

brought 'Uthmān's supporters together and waged a war against Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, who was 'Alī's stepson and the governor of Egypt. He was beheaded and burnt. It is reported that when the news of this tragedy reached 'Āishah, his paternal sister, she cursed Mu'āwiyah and those who committed that crime after every prayer.³⁶ After this brief account of the *Qāsitīn*, we now shift to examine the approach made in Nahj al-balāghah to them.

As it is shown in different occasions, 'Alī dealt inflexibly with the Banī Umayyah who had been appointed by 'Uthmān as governors and were still in position. It is narrated that some of 'Alī's companions advised him to come to a compromise with them but he did not accept. As soon as 'Alī was sworn in as caliph he wrote a letter to Mu'āwiyah who had been governor of Syria since the Caliphate of 'Umar. In this letter he did not confirm Mu'āwiyah's position and asked him to return to Medina:

'Now, you are aware of my excuse before you and my shunning you till that happened which was inevitable and which could not be prevented. The story is long and much is to be said. What was to pass has passed and what was to come has come. Therefore, secure (my) allegiance from those who are with you and come in a deputation of your people to me.'³⁷

However, it can be conceived from the book that 'Alī's concern regarding the *Qāsitīn* was the prevention of war and giving the Syrians the opportunity to join him as the legitimate Caliph.

For instance, when 'Alī showed impatience on his delay in giving them permission to fight in *Siffīn* he made it clear that his delay was not due to his unwillingness for death nor to his misgivings about the people of Syria (ash-Sham). Then he added that he had doubts

about the corruption of the Syrians and still hoped that:

'some group may join me, find guidance through me and see my light with their weak eyes. This is dearer to me than to kill them in the state of their misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins.'³⁸

Also, when 'Alī sent Jarīr ibn 'Abdullāh as his messenger to Mu'āwiyah for securing his allegiance, some of 'Alī's friends suggested that he ought to be prepared for fight. He refused the idea and said that as long as his messenger was in Syria his preparation for war would make a negative impression on the Syrians and may decide them to fight.³⁹ Observing morality in politics is expressed on an occasion when some people said that Mu'āwiyah was a better politician than him ('Alī). He replied that Mu'āwiyah was not more cunning than him, but 'he deceives and commits evil deeds'. 'Alī described himself as 'hateful of deceit', which was sin and disobedience of Allah. He also made it clear that if he was not hateful of deceit, he would be the most cunning of all men.⁴⁰

Another point which seems important in Nahj al-balāghah regarding 'Alī's stance towards the governor of Syria is Mu'āwiyah's intention in disobeying 'Alī's authority. As a general background it is said that Mu'āwiyah's motives behind the murder of 'Uthmān were nothing but securing his authority by not swearing allegiance to 'Alī. Mu'āwiyah and his party were introduced as followers of the material interests of the world while 'Alī's purpose was the defence of Islam.⁴¹ By blaming Mu'āwiyah in this way, his behaviour during the events which led to the murder of 'Uthmān was questioned and the responsibility of 'Uthmān's murder was reverted to him and others such as Talha and Zubayr.⁴²

'Alī initially tried to reason with Mu'āwiyah by explaining how he had been elected as caliph. Had Mu'āwiyah accepted the way of the election of the first caliphs, he would have had to accept 'Alī's too. This point is mentioned in a letter which was written after Mu'āwiyah's refusal to swear allegiance to 'Alī and his proposal of another general election. 'Alī included in his letter that those who swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān had sworn allegiance to him on the same basis on which they had sworn allegiance to them. Then he explained the position of opponents to this kind of election, according to the process which had been recognized as the way of election of a caliph since *Saqīfa*.

For those who were present at the election there was no choice to reconsider the matter, and those who were absent had no right to reject it. The third way, consultation, was confined to the *Muhājirūn* and the *Ansār*. Their position is defined in the letter as:

'If they agree on an individual and take him to be Caliph it will be deemed to mean Allah's pleasure. If any one keeps away by way of objection or innovation they will return him to the position from where he kept away. If he refuses they will fight him for following a course other than that of the believers and Allah will put him back from where he had run away.'⁴³

At the end of the letter, Mu'āwiyah is accused of seeing the matter through his passion without his brain. Then he added that he was in seclusion from 'Uthmān, and Mu'āwiyah knew it. In another letter those who wanted to reconsider the election and proposed for a fresh proceeding of it were called 'critical of Islam'.⁴⁴

Mu'āwiyah's 'mischief' is explained in a letter which was written before the battle of *Siffīn* and after that of *al-Jamal*. This letter was written in reply to another letter which Mu'āwiyah had sent to 'Alī. Mu'āwiyah had reminded 'Alī of mutual unity and affability. He

also laid on 'Alī the blame of killing Talha and Zubayr and of ousting 'Āishah from her house, and opposed his adopting Kūfah as his seat of government in place of Medina. In addition, he threatened 'Alī with war and said that he was about to come out with a force of *Muhājirūn* and *Ansār* to fight with him.

There are several interesting implications in 'Alī's reply to Mu'āwiyah's call for unity. 'Alī referred to the historical background of early Islam and stated that there might have been unity between them, but with the advent of Islam such a gulf had developed between the two that it had become impossible to bridge it, and such a separation had occurred which could not be removed:

'Now then, certainly , we and you were on amiable terms as you say but difference arose between us and you the other day, when we accepted belief (*īmān*) and you rejected it.'⁴⁵

To 'Alī, the main reason which separated him from Mu'āwiyah was their different attitudes towards Islam which was reflected in their behaviour during the past events. He mentions that the Banī Umayyah accepted Islam reluctantly after it had secured stability and the Arab chiefs entered its fold. In 'Alī's view, since they had not accepted Islam from their heart they continued secretly to fan mischief which intended to shatter the foundations of Islam. However, 'Alī recognized himself as one who had accepted Islam of his own free will and pleasure and who, therefore, adhered to the right path and at no stage did any faltering occur in his steadfastness.

This difference is mentioned once again when Mu'āwiyah threatened 'Alī with war. 'Alī referred to the battle of Uhud in which he had killed Mu'āwiyah's grandfather, brother

and uncle. He stated that the same sword was with him and returned the threat to meet any adversary with 'the same heart'. Expressing their different views towards Islam and their commitment to it, he continued the letter by saying that he had not altered the religion nor put up any new prophet.

'I am surely (treading) on that very highway which you had willingly forsaken (in the beginning) and then adopted per force.'⁴⁶

At the end of this letter there is a statement predicting what would happen between him and Mu'āwiyah. 'Alī says that he sees Mu'āwiyah's party engaging in a war in which they will be bewildered by 'the constant striking of swords', and the 'occurrence of death'. In that situation 'the deniers of truth' or 'breakers of allegiance' would call 'Alī to the Qurān.⁴⁷ Ibn abil Hadīd sees this prediction as 'Alī's prophecy about the battle of *Siffīn*. He believes that whether it is an ordinary prediction through 'Alī's sharp insight or an information through knowledge of the unknown, 'it is wonderful'.⁴⁸

The majority of 'Alī's army readily adopted the proposal for arbitration, either because they were tired of fighting or because the '*Qurān* readers' (*Qurrā*) hoped there would emerge from this Qurānic judgement a justification of the furious campaign they had conducted against 'Uthmān and which had ended in the latter's assassination.⁴⁹ But Ibn abi al-hadid considered Mu'āwiyah's stand against 'Alī unlawful. As a general point, revolt against Muslim authority, even if he does not act according to Islam, is not recommended. It is believed in Sunnī school of thought that:

'Do not fight against those in authority in matters of governance, nor raise objections against them

except when you observe them committing things which you know are definitely against Islam. If you see them doing such things regard it bad for them and speak the truth wherever you may be, but rising against them or fighting is prohibited by the consensus of Muslims.'⁵⁰

In the same manner, it is believed that:

'Whoever rises against the true Imam, by the unanimity of opinion of the (Muslim) community, is known as a Kharijite, a deviator. The same is the case of rising, during the days of the companions, against the rightful Imams, or even after them against those who followed them in virtue'.⁵¹

Regarding Abū Mūsā and his opinion of deposing both 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah and then leaving the people free to choose the Caliph they wanted, Muir says that 'Alī would have rather left the choice to a *Shūrā* or Council such as had elected 'Uthmān. Mu'āwiyah could afford to agree to this since he was not proclaimed caliph till the year 40 (A.H.). His refusal to submit to the decision of a council was a breach of faith, and Wellhausen thinks that the story in the last paragraph was an invention of his party to hide his breach of faith and lay the blame on the arbiters.⁵²

III

Māriqīn or Khawārij

After the battle of *Siffīn* and the decision to resort to arbitration, 'Alī returned to Kūfah and waited for the verdict. But already at *Siffīn* certain individuals had protested against the appeal to arbitration with the motto of *lā hukm illā lillāh* meaning that the decision is God's alone. They also persuaded many other partisans of 'Alī that the arbitration was a sin against God. They meant that all matters were to be decided by reference to the word of God, about

which they seemed to think there would be no difficulty. In their view, it was absolutely improper to rely on men for a decision. This part of 'Alī's army proclaimed their repentance and stopped near Kūfah.⁵³ 'Alī, on a personal visit to their camp, had succeeded in reconciling the dissidents by making concessions to them. According to Nahj al-balāghah, 'Alī regarded them as those who had initially put him under pressure to accept the Arbitration with the excuse that the army of Syria were their brothers and comrades in accepting Islam and they asked for protection through the Book of Allah. 'Alī criticised them for being so simple that they were easily deceived. Then he reminded them of the Syrians' actions of putting the Qurān on their lances.

'I said to you: "In this affair the outer side is Faith but the inner side is enmity. Its beginning is pity and the end is repentance. Consequently you should stick to your position, and remain steadfast on your path.'⁵⁴

After this utterance, 'Alī commented that after the arbitration had been done he found that they agreed to it. On this point he explained his right as caliph saying that if he had refused it, there would not have been any obligation on him to change his mind. Then, he sadly concluded that they had to fight their brethren in Islam because of 'entry into Islam of misguidance, crookedness, doubts and (wrong) interpretation'. At the end he suggested that if they found any way by which they may come together in their disorder and come to a common idea he would be prepared to accept it and would give up everything else.⁵⁵

After this reconciliation, the news began to spread that 'Alī had broken the agreement of Arbitration and that he was again ready to fight against the Syrians. But 'Alī denied breaking the convention of *Siffīn* and sent Abū Mūsā to the meeting with 'Amr ibn al-'Ās.

Hearing of this, a group of dissidents secretly left Kūfah, and hundreds more left Basrah. This group, who eventually gathered at *Nahrawān*⁵⁶, was known as the first of the *Khawārij* and generally called the *Muhakkimah* or *Harūriyah*.

After hearing the verdict of the Arbitration, 'Alī rose to fight the army of Syria.⁵⁷ He wrote a letter to the Kharijites saying that the verdict passed by the two arbitrators was not acceptable to him on the grounds that it was in pursuance of their heart's wishes instead of the Qurān and *Sunnah*. Therefore, he declared war to them and asked the Kharijites to help him to crush the enemy.

'Alī argued with them that the arbitration had been forced upon him by them. But the Kharijites gave him the reply that they had repented of that mistake and he must repent of it too. For them, once 'Alī agreed to the Arbitration, he had become apostate. Therefore, if he admitted his heresy and offered repentance they would think the matter over and make a different decision. 'Alī understood from their reply that their disobedience and misguidance had become very serious, and he had to ignore them for his move against Syria. Consequently, he camped in the valley of *Nukhaylah* with the intention to march towards Syria.

It is narrated that there existed disagreements regarding the fight against the Syrians. After setting up the army, the men in 'Alī's army showed their desire to deal with the people of *Nahrawān* first, and to move towards Syria afterwards. 'Alī, however, said that they should first move towards Syria while the people of *Nahrawān* could be dealt with afterwards. Eventually, the army decided to march towards Syria first, ignoring the Kharijites. But the

Khawārij took the initiative and shortly before the army had moved, news about their rebellion began to spread among 'Alī's army. The dissidents had killed the governor of *Nahrawān* and some innocent women. 'Alī sent one of his companions to investigate but he too was killed by them. At this stage, consequently, the army turned towards *Nahrawān*.

When he reached *Nahrawān*, 'Alī asked them to hand over those who had killed the governor and the innocent women. Considering their act as lawful, they refused to do so and replied that they had killed them jointly. Again, 'Alī sent one of his companions⁵⁸ with a message of peace. 'Alī's messenger suggested that the Kharijites ought to separate themselves from that party and go to Kūfah or Madāin to seek amnesty and be discharged from questioning. As a result of this many of them separated from the army of *Khawārij*. Those who remained numbered four thousand eight hundred.

According to Nahj al-balāghah at this stage of the hostilities between 'Alī and the Kharijites and shortly before the battle of *Nahrawān* started, 'Alī warned them of the dreadful consequences of war. He said that he had advised them against the arbitration but they rejected his advice like adversaries and opponents, unless he turned his ideas in the direction of their wishes. He continued that:

'You are a group whose heads are devoid of wit and intelligence. [...] I have not put you in any calamity nor wish you harm.'⁵⁹

However, the Kharijites wished to go on with the battle. 'Alī's army so defeated the Kharijites that only nine men escaped alive. The damage to 'Alī's army was minimal. The

battle took place in the year 38 A.H.

As W.M.Watt explains, the Kharijites had a special interpretation of the Qurān and enjoyed a spirit of fanaticism.⁶⁰ For a description of this fanaticism, we should refer to the administrative situation after the Prophet. As mentioned in this thesis, after the death of the Prophet, Muslims had to derive principles for governing the Islamic state and in unprecedented matters on their own from the Qurān and the *Sunnah*. There were no more revelations to solve their problems for them. But because of the expansion of the Islamic state and the need to a new administrative and governmental system, unprecedented issues increasingly emerged during the early caliphal system. The Kharijites, who were connected to Qurān reciters (*Qurrā*) and were mainly concerned with the Qurān, strictly insisted on following the verses of the Qurān as their guide in the new circumstances.

To illustrate this fanaticism, L.V. Vaglieri explains that 'Alī, in a fight against opponents, had appealed to that verse of the Qurān which deals with hostility among Muslims. According to it, if two parties of Believers fought with one another, the Prophet should make peace between them, but if one rebelled against the other, then they should fight against the rebellious one, until it returned to obedience to God.⁶¹ In fighting against his opponents, 'Alī saw himself in the position of the Prophet, and 'Āishah, Talha, al-Zubayr and now Mu'āwiyah as the rebellious party. Although 'Alī had accepted the arbitration for several reasons, for the Kharijites 'Alī's decision was a sin because no new fact had intervened to alter the situation and it was 'Alī's duty to continue to fight against Mu'āwiyah.⁶²

This difference between 'Alī and the Kharijites on the interpretation of the Qurān is

reflected in a passage of Nahj al-balāghah. In an instruction given to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās when he was deputed to confront the Kharijites, 'Alī ordered him not to argue with them by the Qurān with the excuse that the Qurān had many faces. Consequently, 'you would say your own and they (Kharijites) would say their own.'⁶³ In the end, ibn 'Abbās was ordered to argue with them by the *Sunnah*, because they would not be able to find escape from it. In another passage, this ambiguity of the Qurān as a direct reference appears. The Qurān, in this regard, is described as a book which is covered between 'two flaps' and that 'does not speak', so that it should necessarily be interpreted. 'Men alone can be such interpreters'.⁶⁴ This sentence might sum up the core of the difference between the Kharijites and 'Alī.

The Kharijites' view of the Qurān is also mentioned in the tradition about the Prophet's prophecy of the appearance of three groups against 'Alī. As it is said earlier, some historians believe that the Prophet predicted the appearance of 'Alī's three opposition parties during his lifetime. He described the Kharijites as those who had left the faith. Commenting on this sentence, ibn abil Hadīd examined many traditions in which the Prophet Muhammad predicted the fate of *Dhul Khuwaysirah*, who became the chief of the Kharijites during 'Alī's government. Abil Hadīd regarded this as a sign of the Prophet's prophethood and his prophecy of matters of secret knowledge.⁶⁵ The Prophet, according to those traditions, said:

'From this very posterity there will arise people who will recite the Qurān, but it will not go beyond their throat; they will kill their followers of Islam and will spare the idol-worshippers. They will glance through the teaching of Islam as hurriedly as the arrow passes through its prey. If I were to ever find them I would kill them like Ad.'⁶⁶

The point is that the Kharijites are criticised for not concentrating on the Qurān, which is the

main difference between 'Alī's and the Kharijites' approach to the Qurān.

The *Khawārij* who were one of the religio-political opposition parties under the Umayyads, originally dwell mainly in Iraq. They were very individualistic and found almost any governmental restraint irksome. But, as Watt believes, the *Khawārij* were profoundly important for the whole development of the Islamic thought since the concept of a righteous God Who demands righteousness from His subjects was at the centre of their theological teaching.

'Even the Imam was subject to the Divine law and liable to deposition if he disobeyed it- indeed it was a duty to thrust him out.'⁶⁷

By this description, they recognised the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar to be rightful, because they believed that these two caliphs had been rightfully elected and that they had not deviated from the way of the best interest, nor perpetrated anything against this best interest. They also recognised the elections of 'Uthmān and 'Alī to be rightful; however they said that towards the end of the sixth year of his caliphate, 'Uthmān changed his direction and ignored the best interest of the Muslims. So he should have been deposed from the caliphate, but since he continued in office he was killed as an unbeliever and his killing was a religious duty. As for 'Alī, since he accepted the arbitration, but did not subsequently repent, he was killed as an unbeliever and his killing was a religious duty. Thus they denounced the caliphate of 'Uthmān after its seventh year, and that of 'Alī after the arbitration.⁶⁸ They also abhorred the rest of the caliphs , and were always at war with them.

In addition to their ideas regarding the first caliphs, they also regarded as infidels those who did not believe in the heresy of 'Alī, 'Uthmān, Mu'āwiyah, the fighters at the battle of *al-Jamal*, and those who accepted the arbitration. Although their thought was formed in later centuries, it can be said that even from the first stages of growth they had a special interpretation of faith and belief. To them, faith was not just a sincere belief, but it also included putting commands into action and refraining from committing prohibited acts. Faith was a compound notion made up of belief and action. In addition, there was an unconditional necessity to revolt against an unjust governor or leader. They believed that 'bidding to the good' and 'forbidding evil' were not conditional on anything, and that in all circumstances this divine command must be carried out. In the matter of the caliphate, they were opposed to both the Shī'ites, who said that it was a divine office and that the caliph could only be someone who was nominated by God, and the Sunnīs, who say that caliphate belonged to the Quraysh.⁶⁹

Watt, in regard to their belief in the Qurān and its potentiality as an arbitrator or standard in Muslim political affairs, believes that the practical effect of making the Qurān by itself the ultimate standard is to make each strong leader a law unto himself. He concludes that this view is idealism,

'but idealism that could easily degenerate into fanaticism, and idealism that opened the way to disruptive tendencies.'⁷⁰

The same idea is attributed to 'Alī, that when he heard the cry of the Kharijites that 'Verdict is only that of Allah' which implied rejection of Arbitration, he uttered sentences denoting

that he admitted the idea of Arbitration. However, he denied the Kharijites' interpretation of it. He stated that it was true that the verdict lies with Allah, but those people were trying to say that the function of governance was only for Allah. Then he said:

'There is no escape for men from ruler good or bad. [...] During the rule , Allah would carry everything to end. Through the rule tax is collected , enemy is fought , roadways are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoys peace and the oppressed is allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.'⁷¹

In regard to what has been stated so far, it can be concluded that for 'Alī, the Kharijites were not similar to the *Nākithīn* or the *Qāsītīn*. He did not see them as greedily looking for political authority or posts in the government. He made it clear that the misguidance of the Kharijites was not wilful but was instead under Satan's influence. He ordered his companions not to fight the Kharijites after his death, because they were those who 'seek right but do not find it', unlike the other group who 'seeks wrong and finds it'⁷² Seyed al-Radī believes that the second group referred to was Mu'āwiyah and his men.⁷³ This position towards the Kharijites can also be inferred from a saying about the mid-night prayers of a Kharijite and his reciting of the Qurān. 'Alī said that 'sleeping in a state of firm belief is better than praying in a state of doubtfulness'.⁷⁴ By this he meant that they were not the same as those who basically opposed the Islamic principles.

It is also narrated that when 'Alī passed by the dead bodies of the Kharijites on the day of the battle of *Nahrawān*, he said that they had been harmed by the one who had deceived them. Then he specified that:

'Satan, the deceiver, and the inner spirit that leads one to evil deceived them through passions, made it easy for them to get into sins , promised them victory and eventually threw them into Fire.'⁷⁵

In a will made shortly before his death, after he was wounded by ibn Muljam, 'Alī wrote that if he survived he should be 'the master of (his) blood (to avenge or not to avenge it), and if he died then death was a promised event. He also added that if he forgave his murderer, it was for him a means of nearness (to Allah) and for his companions a good act. Therefore, 'Alī advised them to forgive ibn Muljam even though he was his murderer.⁷⁶ Then he recited the verse of the Qurān that says: 'What! Love you not that Allah should forgive you?' ⁷⁷

In conclusion, according to Nahj al-balāghah, people must not be ruled in a tyrannic manner. They should be told about their rights, duties and obligations in order to be prepared for involvement in political affairs. This matter is made explicit in the way that 'Alī dealt with his enemies. In addition, deceit as a means of governing people, even for their own interests, is condemned. Again, moral obligations are involved in this regard. In other words, the political tolerance and openness of a society originate from the moral virtues of that society, which are displayed in the manner of its leader.

Conclusion

It is commonly believed that the appearance of the unifying ideology of Islam, coupled with the skilful use of traditional and novel means of political consolidation under Muhammad and his first successor, resulted in a new state that was able to organize and dominate more effectively than ever before. During 'Umar's caliphate, this new state reached its utmost expansion and under the next caliph, 'Uthmān, the external growth was delayed by internal discontent. Power struggles occupied the whole period of 'Alī's government which is characterised by the first internal wars in the Islamic state in 656-661 A.D.

In this thesis we observed the appearance of the Islamic political philosophy and its development in parallel to this rise and collapse. We saw how economy, social structure and even geography influenced the appearance of Islam, and as a consequence Islamic polity, in the Arab peninsula. Although that had its own origins in the pre-Islamic society and was established on the social and administrative structure of the past, it still had many unprecedented principles. We tried to observe these aspects of Islamic politics in order to concentrate our study on the factor which very soon after the Prophet's death became a source of controversy among Muslims.

In our attempt to observe the interaction of the politics of early Islam with new challenges and its resulting outcome, we had a glance at the main developments which occurred during the first four caliphates including the challenges they faced, the new circumstances that arose and the new factors that intervened in dealing with them.

From this stage we shifted to reconsider everything from the angle provided by Nahj al-balāghah. That is because the book has become so popular among Muslims, and especially Shī'ites, and also because it contains many political issues. Therefore questions such as what was the essence of the early Islamic political principles, how they were dealt with under the first caliphs and what should the solution be if anything went wrong guided the study of Nahj al-balāghah.

As we have seen, from the passages of Nahj al-balāghah, a clear image be formed, around the figure of 'Alī, of a link between religion and politics in early Islam, which faded in later Muslim history. Nahj al-balāghah contains this important implication that Islamic politics during the caliphates of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān experienced a change in its fundamentals. This change was not made completely intentionally by them though they are held responsible for usurping the post of caliphate. This change is the keystone of all the discussions in Nahj al-balāghah and it opens up a new perspective for the discussion of the caliphate of Rāshidūn.

The essential factor of this change in Islamic politics is the shift in the relationship between religion and politics (Church and State). The book implies that while the two issues were completely unified under the Prophet, they gradually became separate under the three caliphs. Although there are not many discussions directly related to that unification in the Prophet's time and it had to be established by using other resources and even by explaining the different approaches to Islam, the separation of religion and politics during the first caliphs are more directly mentioned in the book.

This political change seems not to have been totally due to the rapid evolution of the Islamic community. Although the vast conquests during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar brought along many problems in the form of economic and social confusion, this change had its origins in the personal capabilities of caliphs rather than in social and political factors according to Nahj al-balāghah.

It is implied that it was his lack of religious commitment that made the third caliph the most hated man of his time. His lack of care for people, his negligence about his governors, disrespect for Islamic principles and his tribal priorities are all seen as reflection of his immorality in dealing with Muslims. The first two caliphs were less blameworthy since they had observed the basic Islamic moral obligations. Likewise, the cause of inequality, injustice and therefore revolt under 'Uthmān's government was his deviation from Islam marked by his abandoning these moral obligations. Nahj al-balāghah depicts a completely different picture of 'Alī and his government. He is shown as a man who tries to fill the gap between politics and religion, although he failed due to the bad circumstances created by 'Uthmān during his caliphate.

This moralistic approach to the change in Islamic politics is clearly distinguished between 'Alī and his three predecessors. 'Alī's moral approach to politics is presented on several occasions in the book. 'Alī repeatedly made it clear that he observed moral obligations in his political decision-making and that he applied politics as a means and not as an aim. While the first three caliphs were concerned with the strength of the Islamic state and its protection from external threats, 'Alī devoted himself in increasing faith among the Muslims, most of whom had converted to Islam after the Prophet's death and saw only the administrative

aspect of the religion. 'Alī is regarded as a 'fundamentalist' who endeavoured to return to Islamic principles and revive what was ignored and distorted after the Prophet's death. 'Alī confronted the internal threat which was created by the change in attitudes towards basic Islamic teachings. Recommendations to desist from egoism, a luxurious style of life, disunity, ignoring of the moral instructions of Islam and to return to what had been enjoined by the Prophet are the most repeated issues of the book. In Nahj al-balāghah, 'Alī is not just a caliph. He is a guardian of Islamic principles who endeavoured to revive what had been ignored and distorted after the Prophet's death. He is shown as a reformist who was very committed to the principles of religion and minded only the maintenance of Islam as a whole, and who was ready to sacrifice his right to that cause.

However, religion is not only a set of moral obligations. It also includes a theoretical and ideological dimension. In this respect as well, Nahj al-balāghah makes a distinction between 'Alī and the first three caliphs. In this aspect of Nahj al-balāghah, we find more discussions which also belong to the Shī'ite ideology. Various topics for discussion such as *Ghadīr Khumm*, *Saqīfa*, the political capacity of the Prophet's successor, his responsibility and conditions and so on are all broached in the book. In view of those passages, the first three caliphs were not the most qualified people for the caliphate. The depiction of 'Alī is completely different. 'Alī, himself one of the Rāshidūn caliphs, is seen as a noble creature with many qualifications. His sound background in assisting Muhammad, his religious knowledge, his wisdom and commitment to Islam are indisputable according to the book. They show that 'Alī as a statesman was as qualified as the Prophet, his attributes and superiority in knowledge are enumerated. In Nahj al-balāghah, 'Alī's sharing in the qualifications of the Prophet's family, their nobility and extraordinary ability in understanding the creed of Islam

and their background in religion all suggest a kind of man who was different from ordinary men. This idea might have been rooted in pre-Islamic Arabia. It is also similar to what is expressed in the Qurān regarding the Prophet and the noble lineage of his offspring. 'Alī's concern regarding Islamic principles and his abilities as an infallible Imām in protecting Islam constitute an important element of the Shī'ite doctrine. According to the history of Shī'ism, 'Alī's approach to political activities was implemented by the other Shī'ite Imāms. Political participation, to them, depended on the establishment of Islamic foundations. If those principles could be protected without their political interference then they did not interfere. Otherwise they involved themselves with the affairs of the state, either because of the deviations of rulers who were not able to fulfil their Islamic obligations or any other factor which threatened Islam. For many Shī'ite political theoreticians, the quietism of the Shī'ite Imāms, whether as infallible Imāms or just as religious authorities, does not mean that they illegitimise the dominant political authorities, nor that they separate politics and religion. However, their approval of the dominant authorities is not similar to the passive acceptance of any leader who acquires the position by means of power as in Sunnīsm.

But we see that elaborations of the Shī'ites' beliefs on the ideological aspects of leadership and the events of *Ghadīr* and *Saqīfa* are made in very rare occasions. This may be because the compiler of the book, if we consider him to be different from the author, intended to include only the sentences which were more interesting from the point of view of eloquentness and not from the theoretical aspect. Nonetheless, discussions on philosophy, theology and so on are included in the book. It can also be said that the Shī'ite terminology to expressing their ideas was created much later than the appearance of Nahj al-balāghah. The other possibility is that the compiler did not want to enter into difficult and unpleasant

controversial discussions. But it can also be conceived that a very delicate attempt is made by its author or compiler to refrain from entering any discussion which might divide Muslims into groups. This hypothesis fits what we have observed regarding 'Alī's silence under the first caliphs and his reason which was mainly to protect Islamic unity. Unlike in radical Shī'ism, 'Alī's dispute with his predecessors is not expressed only in the form of criticism of the decision made at the meeting of *Saqīfa* and of the ignorance of his right to the caliphate which is believed to have been bestowed upon him by the Prophet in *Ghadīr Khumm*. On the contrary, his close relation with those caliphs and his giving them advice in governmental affairs implies that he legitimized their authority.

The most important part of the book, which makes it relevant in our time, is its silence on political controversies and its contents regarding the philosophical and theological interpretation of Islam and its politics. Discussions regarding society and social classes, leadership and its nature, God, man, human freedom and responsibility, the world, the nature of political activity and many other issues which in some cases are expressed in philosophical form are all part of contemporary Muslim intellectual attempts. Due to this background, Nahj al-balāghah was initially paid attention to by socialist and communist groups in the 1950s and 1960s in some Muslim countries (mainly Egypt and Iran) who were seeking a theoretical explanation of socialism in Islamic sources.

But for many reasons they failed to harness it for their purpose. One of the reasons was that Muslims, under the pressure of Western values, had to redefine their own politics. They also had to assess the new phenomena such as nationalism, socialism and democracy by their own sources of religion and politics. These Muslims justified the legitimacy of their

government by referring to the sentences of Nahj al-balāghah which states that 'every people need a leader, either good or bad, to protect the social order and economic growth for them. They could also justify the duality between belief in God and active involvement in social affairs by referring to those passages which describe the status of man on the earth and his responsibilities in front of God, as well as issues such as predestination, freedom, and the justice of God. More importantly they found in Nahj al-balāghah the fundamental economic system which is based on Qur'ānic verses and has practical and functional characteristics. Nahj al-balāghah even covers a type of philosophy of history, the cause of change in societies, and recognition of existing different social classes. These discussions may render Muslims independent from values which are imposed on them externally.

Obviously the Qurān was considered first, and then the early Islamic tradition. Nahj al-balāghah as an interesting book of literature with many political issues, came next. It should be mentioned that there is a difference between Nahj al-balāghah and the Qurān in referring to political matters which makes Nahj al-balāghah more relevant to our time: it is the specificity of Nahj al-balāghah in comparison with the Qurān. While the latter contains doctrinal injunctions which are interpreted differently by various people, the Nahj al-balāghah deals more with special cases and can be regarded as an interpretation of the Qurān.

I think the importance of Nahj al-balāghah will become more obvious in the next decade if the current wave of Islamic resurgence continues. That is due to the fact that this movement has become more institutionalized since its first appearance in the late 1970s. To be more specific in a system, every revolutionary movement needs philosophical and theoretical justifications of its values, approaches, ideals and goals. As a Shī'ite, I personally

have come to the conclusion that Nahj al-balāghah is a good common ground for both Shī'ite and Sunnī followers of Islam to base the current Islamic movement on a more theoretical foundation, an aim which is very much needed in the contemporary Islamic resurgence.

Notes

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Chapter 3

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4. Qurān, op.cit, 49:14

5. Ibid, 9:97

6. Ja'fariyān, opcit, vol 2, p.280

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8. 'Abdurrazāq, al-Musannaf, India: al-Majlis al-'Elmī, 1390 A.H. vol. 6, p.51 and vol. 10, p 172-3

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- 11.Ja'farīyān, op.cit, pp. 283-4
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36. Ibn Ishāq, op.cit, P.493
37. Balādhurī, op.cit, Vol. 5, p.33
38. See Yar Shater, (The History of Tabari), op.cit, Vol XV, p.24 & 156-158 & p.182 & p.227
39. Balādhurī, Vol 5, p.28
40. Ibid, p. 30
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42. Husayn, T. *al-Fatnah al-Kubrā*, (second edition) Cairo: 1959, p.66
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45. Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imamah vas-Sīyāsah*, Cairo: *Maktabah wa Matba'ah Mustafā al-bābī*, 1388 A.H. (1969), Vol. 1, pp. 29-35
46. Al-Mas'ūdī, op.cit, Vol. 2, pp. 341-2
47. Yar Shater, (The History of Tabari), op.cit, Vol XV, pp.149-150
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49. Ibid, p 631
50. Ibid, p. 564
51. For instance see Hysan, T. (*al-Fatnah...*), op.cit.
52. N.B. op.cit, pp.290-2
53. Ibid, p. 152

54.Ibid, p. 105

55.Ibid, p.309-314

56.Ibid, p. 120

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58.See Sharī'atī, ('Alī), op.cit.

59.Lewis, (The Arabs...), op.cit, p.60

60.N.B. op.cit, pp. 488

61.Ibid, p.487

62.Ibid, p.509

63.Motahhari, (*Seyrī dar ...*), op.cit, p.166

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66.Lewis, (the Arabs...), op.cit, p. 61

Chapter 4

(The nature of ...)

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2.Ibid, p.1

3.Arnold, (Caliphate), op.cit, pp. 19-22

4.Lewis, (The Political ...), op.cit, p.46

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6.Watt, (Islamic ...), op.cit, p.35

7.Husayn, (al-Fatnah ...), op.cit, pp. 32-49

8.Ibid, p.49

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10. Jafri, H.M. The origins and Early Development of Shī'ah Islam, London: New York: Longman, 1979, p.11
11. Gabrieli, (Muhammad and...), op.cit, p.94
12. Yar Shater, (History of Tabari), op.cit, Vol XV, pp. 134-137
13. This is El-Awā's assumption that this group initially appeared in that time. Most believe that they came only after the battle of Siffin.
14. El-Awā, op.cit, pp.39-41
15. Yar Shater, (The History ...), vol XIV, pp. 143- 160
16. This group of *Muhājirīn* who mostly were of the *Hāshimite* clan of Quraysh, later were named Shī'ites which mean the followers of Ali.
17. The event of *Ghadīr* is explained under the title of 'Leadership'.
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Chapter 5

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50.N.B. op.cit, p.354

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60.N.B. op.cit, pp. 164-5

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66. *Heiat tahrīriyeh Bonyād-e Nahj al-balāghah, Masāel-e jāme'eh shenāsī az dīdgāh-e imām 'Alī*, Tehran: *Madrese-ye Mokātebātī-ye Nahj al-balāghah*, 1373 (1994), pp. 57-79
67. N.B. op.cit, p. 149
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70. N.B. op.cit, p.128
71. Ibid, p. 220
72. Ibid, p.150
73. Shams ad-Dīn, op.cit, pp.26-44
74. N.B. op.cit, pp. 499-500
75. Ibid, (letter 53), pp.534-547
76. Ibid, p. 535
77. Ibid, p.175
78. Ibn Khaldun, op.cit, pp. 305-450
79. For a brief introduction to the ideas in this regard see F. M. Donner, op.cit, pp. 3-9
80. al- Mas'ūdī, op.cit, Vol. IV, pp. 253-55, 133 and 409
81. Masjid Jāme'eī, op.cit, p.93
82. Yar Shater, (History of Tabari), op.cit, Vol XV, 1993 , pp. 134-143
83. See Gabrieli, (Muhammad and ...), op.cit, p.94 and Kennedy, (The Prophet ...), op.cit, p.75
84. *Qāsetīn* or the Mu'āwiyah party
Māreqīn or the Kharijites party
Nākethīn or Talha and Zubayr party
85. El.Awā, op.cit, pp.39-41
86. Kennedy, H. op.cit, pp. 50-57

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- 89.Ibid, p. 353
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- 91.Nasr, A. Arzesh-e Tārīkh dar Nahj al-balāghah, Qom (Iran): *Esmā'iliān*, 1370 (1991), p.13
- 92.Soroosh, A. op.cit, pp. 56-61
- 93.N.B. opcit, p. 329
- 94.ibid
- 95.Ibid, p. 92
- 96.Ibid, p.600
- 97.Ibid, p. 534
- 98.Ibid, p. 236
- 99.Ibid, p. 504
- 100.Ibid, p. 563
- 101.Ibid, p.243
- 102.Ibid, p. 147
- 103.Ibid, p. 243
- 104.Ibid, p. 135
- 105.Ibid, p. 353
- 106.ibid, p. 391
- 107.Ibid, p.222
- 108.Ibid, p. 300
- 109.Ibid, p. 220
- 110.Ibid, p. 354
- 111.See Lewis, B, (The Arabs...), op.cit, pp. 61-63 and Hourani, A. A History of the Arab Peoples, Faber and Faber, 1991, p.24

112.N.B. op.cit, pp.164-5

113.Ibid, p 250

114.Ibid, p. 337

115.Ibid, p. 631

116.Ibid.

117.Ibid, p. 236

118.Ibid, p.674

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120.N.B. op.cit, p.390

Chapter 6

(Leadership and ...)

1.Name of a pool (or a marsh) situated in an area called Khumm, between Mecca and Medina, about 3 miles from *al-Djuhfa*. It is famous in the history of Islam because of the Prophet's sayings in favour of Ali in that place in front of those who participated in Hajj in 632.

2.The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol 3, op.cit, pp. 993-4

3.Crone,P. and Hinds,M. (God's...), op.cit, p. 1

4.Crone,P. and Cook,M. (Hagarism), op.cit, p.26

5.Qurān, op.cit, 4:54

6.ibid, 19:58

7.N.B. op.cit, p. 246

8.Ibid, p. 220

9.Ibid

10.Ibid, p. 330

- 11.Ibid, p.487
- 12.Ibid, p. 249
- 13.Ibid, p.386
- 14.Ibid, p.343
- 15.Ibid, p.464
- 16.Ibid, p. 432
- 17.Ibid, p.612
- 18.Ibid, p.343
- 19.Ibid, p. 167
- 20.Ibid, p. 432
- 21.Ibid, p. 240 and p. 418
- 22.Ibid, p. 434
- 23.Ibid, p.167
- 24.Ibid, p. 343
- 25.Sharīa'tī, M.T. *Imāmat dar Nahj al-balāghah* Tehran: Muassesseh-ye Enteshārat-e Be'that, 1357 (1978), p. 37
- 26.*Emāmat wa Rahbarī*, Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Sadrā, 1372 (1993), pp. 45-63
- 27.Most of the pro-Sunni thinkers follow this line in analysing the failure of Ali in Saqifa and even in his own caliphate.
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- 29.Kulaynī, M.Y. *al-Kāfī*, (8 vol), Tehran, p. 223
- 30.Watt,W.M. (Islamic ...),op.cit, p.44
- 31.*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol 3, op.cit, p. 544
- 32.Motahharī, (Emāmat ...), opcit, p. 56
- 33.Ibid
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- 35.N.B. op.cit, p.238
- 36.Ibid
- 37.Ibid, p. 301
- 38.Ibid, p. 343
- 39.Ibid
- 40.Ibid, p. 534
- 41.Ibid, p. 585
- 42.Ibid, p. 515
- 43.Ibn Khaldun, op.cit, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 70-2
- 44.Jurdaq, G. The Voice of Human Justice, translated from Arabic to English by Fazlul Haq, second edition, Qom (Iran): *Ansārīyān* publications, 1990, p. 75
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- 46.al-Bahrānī, Ibn Maytham, Sharh Nahj al-balāghah, Qom: *Esmā'īlīān*, (no date), Vol 4, pp. 200-1
- 47.Ibn Abil Hadīd, opcit, Vol 13, p. 106
- 48.N.B. op.cit, p. 393
- 49.Ibid, p. 346
- 50.Ibid, p. 359
- 51.Sharī'atī, M.T. op.cit, p. 61
- 52.N.B. op.cit, p. 95
- 53.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol 1, p. 115
- 54.Rāwandī, op.cit, Vol 1, pp. 83-4
- 55.Al-Bukhārī, op.cit, Vol.6, p.23
- 56.al-Baladhurī, op.cit
- 57.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, vol 1, pp.205-6
- 58.al-Khatīb, op.cit, Vol 1, pp. 20-37

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60. N.B. op.cit, p. 105
61. Ibid, p. 106
62. Ibid, p. 106
63. Sālehī Najaf Ābādī, N. *Velāyat-e faqīh: Hokūmat-e Sālihān*, Tehran: Muasseseh Khadamāt-e farhangī-ye Rasā, 1363 (1984), pp. 70-72
64. N.B. op.cit, p. 104
65. Rāwandī, op.cit, Vol 1, p. 114
66. Ibid, p. 278
67. Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol. 1, P. 284
68. I do not mean that Shī'ism and Sunnīm are two different religions since their fundamentals are the same.
69. Masjed Jāme'eī, op.cit, pp. 229- 251
70. al-Hurr al-Āmilī, M. *Vasāel ash-Shī'ah elā Tahsīl al-Masāil al-Sharī'yah*, 1404 A.H, Vol 5, pp. 392-5
71. Ibn Rushd al-Ghartabi, M. *Bedaya al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyah al-Muqtasid*, (Vol I), Qom: Manshūrāt ash-Sharīf al-Radī, 1406 A.H. pp. 147-148
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- 79.Ibn Taymīyah, op.cit. p.384
80. Moslim, op.cit, Vol 6, p. 22
- 81.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol. 18, p. 373
- 82.N.B. op.cit, p. 668
- 83.Motahharī, (Seyri...), op.cit, p. 113
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- 85.Ibid, p. 330
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- 88.Radavī, T. Duroos Siyāsīyah Min Nahj al-balāghah, Tehran: *Sepehr*, 1986, p. 186
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- 91.N.B. op.cit, p. 411
- 92.Yar Shater, (History of Tabari), op.cit, Vol XIV, pp .160-1
- 93.Jurdaq, op.cit, p.424

Chapter 7

(Government)

- 1.Arnold, T.W. (The Caliphate...), op.cit, p.14
- 2.Petersen, op.cit, pp.1-10
- 3.Hassan, H.I. op.cit, pp. 334-5
- 4.Ibid
- 5.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, pp. 74-77
- 6.N.B. op.cit, p. 504
- 7.Ibid, p. 433
- 8.Ibid, p. 239

- 9.Ibid, p. 220
- 10.Ibid, p. 91
- 11.Faydul Eslām, op.cit, p. 727
- 12.N.B. op.cit, p. 733
- 13.Ibid, pp. 673-4
- 14.Ibid, p.106
- 15.Sharīa'tī,A. (Ali), op.cit, p.586

- 16.Jurdaq, G. op.cit, p.185
- 17.N.B., op.cit, p.535
- 18.Ibid, p.175
- 19.Ibid.
- 20.Ibid, p. 433
- 21.Motahharī,M. (Seyri.), pp. 118-135
- 22.Ja'farī, M.T. *Hekmat-e Usūl-e Sīyāsī-ye Eslām*; (Translation and annotation of 'Alī's command to Mālik), Tehran: *Bonyād-e Nahj al-balāghah*, , 1369 (1990), p. 304

- 23.N.B. op.cit, p. 534
- 24.Qurān, op.cit, 13:17
- 25.See '*Hokūmat az Dīdgāh-e Nahj al-balāghah*', by J.Sobhānī in *Hokūmat-e Eslāmī dar Nahj al-balāghah*, Tehran: *Bonyād-e Nahj al-balāghah*, 1368 (1989), pp. 136-147
- 26.N.B. op.cit, p.536
- 27.Ibid, p. 358
- 28.Ibid.
- 29.Ibid, p.346
- 30.Ibid, p.106
- 31.Abdulmaqsūd, A. op.cit, p,p. 301,235
- 32.Ibid, p.307

33.Shams ad-Dīn, op.cit, pp.127-136

34.Jurdaq, op.cit, p.129

35.Ibid, p.212

36.N.B. p.538

37.Ibid, pp.539-540

38.Ibid, pp. 540-1

39.Ibid, pp. 541-2

40.Ibid, 542

Chapter 8

(Political Opposition ...)

1.Ibn Kathīr, op.cit, Vol 7, pp. 304-6

2.N.B., p 106

3.Masjid Jāme'eī, op.cit, pp.90-1

4.N.B. op.cit, p 240

5.Motahhari, Mortadā,-Polarization around the Character of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Tehran: Published and Translated from the Persian by World Organization for Islamic Services, (first English Edition), 1981, p. 81

6.Ibn Ishāq, op.cit, p.650

7.Both Muir, (Caliphate.) and Nicholson (A Literary History.) imply this.

8.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol 2, p.404

9.Muir, op.cit, p.242

10.N.B. op.cit, pp. 459-60

11.Muir, op.cit, p.247

12.Ibid.

13.N.B. op.cit, p. 339

14.Ibid.

15.Muir, op.cit, p. 250

- 16.Petersen, op.cit, p.11
- 17.Sharī'atī, A, (Ali), op.cit, pp. 297-346
- 18.Donaldson, D.M. The Shi'ite Religion, London: Ams Press, 1933, p. 311
- 19.N.B. op.cit, p. 135
- 20.Ibid, p. 612
- 21.Ibid, pp. 341-2
- 22.Ibid, p. 463
- 23.Ibid
- 24.Ibid, p. 479
- 25.Ibid, p. 549
- 26.Ibid, p. 644
- 27.For a detailed account of the opposition between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah see at-Tabarī, Tārīkh ar-Rusul wal Mulūk, leiden, 1980, Vol 1, pp. 3256-3349
- 28.Ibn Muzāhim, Nasr, Waq'ah Siffīn, ed. Abd as-Salām Muhammad Hārūn, Cairo, 1365 A.H. pp. 86-7 , Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol 15, p.186
- 29.Ibn Muzāhim, op.cit, p.570
- 30.Donoldson, op.cit, p.34
- 31.Encyclopaedia of Islam, op.cit, Vol.1, p.384
- 32.Ibid.
- 33.It happened in Adhruh in the year 658 A.D.
- 34.petersen, op.cit, pp. 10-11
- 35.Ockly,S. The History of the Saracens, the sixth edition, London: 1857, p.319
- 36.at-Tabari, (leiden), op.cit, Vol. 1, pp. 3400-3414, Ibn Abil Hadid, op.cit, Vol 6, pp. 82-100
- 37.N.B. op.cit, pp. 566-7
- 38.Ibid, p.184
- 39.Ibid, p. 177

- 40.Ibid, p.411
- 41.Ibid, p.p 466-7
- 42.Ibid, pp.487-90 and p.509. This matter is discussed in the third chapter regarding 'Alī's role during the revolt against Uthman.
- 43.Ibid, pp. 464-5
- 44.Ibid, p. 466
- 45.Ibid, pp. 558-60
- 46.Ibid, pp.469-470
- 47.Ibid, p.469
- 48.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol. 15, pp. 83-5
- 49.Bosworth, C.E. van Donzel, E. Lewis, B. ed. The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol 4, p 1074
- 50.Moslim, op.cit, Vol 2, p 125
- 51.ash-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wan-Nihal, Cairo, 1961, Vol 1, p.114
- 52.Muir, op.cit, p.270
- 53.Harūra
- 54.N.B. op.cit, p. 270
- 55.Ibid.
- 56.The canal near the Tigris.
- 57.In the year 658 A.D. (37 A.H).
- 58.Abu Ayūb al-Ansārī.
- 59.N.B. op.cit, p.171
- 60.Watt, W.M. (Free Will.), op.cit, pp. 34-5
- 61.Qurān, op.cit,49:8-9
- 62.Encyclopaedia of Islam, op.cit, Vol 1, p. 357
- 63.N.B. op.cit, p. 567
- 64.Ibid, pp.96,305

65.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol 13, p.183

66.al-Bukhārī, op.cit, Vol 4, pp. 166-167 and 243, Moslim, op.cit, Vol 3, pp. 109-117

67.Watt, (Predestination.), op.cit, pp. 34-5

68.See the discussion about the Kharijites in ash-Shahrastānī, op.cit.

69.Ibn Abil Hadīd, op.cit, Vol 2, p. 308

70.Ibid.

71.N.B. op.cit, p. 175

72.Ibid, p.190

73.Ibid.

74.Ibid, p.591

75.Ibid, p.648

76.Ibid, p. 482

77.Qurān, op.cit, 3:198

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