

The Necessity for Islamic Government

A body of laws alone is not sufficient for a society to be reformed. In order for law to ensure the reform and happiness of man, there must be an executive power and an executor. For this reason, God Almighty, in addition to revealing a body of law (i.e., the ordinances of the *sharī‘ah*), has laid down a particular form of government together with executive and administrative institution.

The Most Noble Messenger (s) headed the executive and administrative institutions of Muslim society. In addition to conveying the revelation and expounding and interpreting the articles of faith and the ordinances and institutions of Islam, he undertook the implementation of law and the establishment of the ordinances of Islam, thereby, bringing into being the Islamic state. He did not content himself with the promulgation of law; rather, he implemented it at the same time, cutting off hands and administering lashings, and stonings. After the Most Noble Messenger (s), his successor had the same duty and function. When the Prophet (s) appointed a successor, it was not only for the purpose of expounding articles of faith and law; it was for the implementation of law and the execution of God’s ordinances. It was this function—the execution of law and the establishment of Islamic institutions—that made the appointment of a successor such an important matter that the Prophet (s) would have failed to fulfill his mission if he had neglected it. For after the Prophet (s), the Muslims still needed someone to execute laws and establish the institution of Islam in society, so that they might attain happiness in this world and the hereafter.

By their nature, in fact, laws and social institutions require the existence of an executor. It has always and everywhere been the case that legislation alone has little benefit: legislation by itself cannot assure the well-being of man. After the establishment of legislation, an executive power must come into being, a power that implements the laws and the verdicts given by the courts, thus allowing people to benefit from the laws and the just sentences the courts deliver. Islam has therefore established an executive power in the same way that it has brought laws into being. The person who holds this executive power is known as the *valī-yi amr*.¹

The Sunnah² and path of the Prophet (s) constitute a proof of the necessity for establishing government. First, he himself established a government, as history testifies. He engaged in the implementation of laws, the establishment of the ordinances of Islam, and the administration of society. He sent out governors to different regions; both sat in judgment himself and also appointed judges; dispatched emissaries to foreign states, tribal chieftains, and kings; concluded treaties and pacts; and took command in battle. In short, he fulfilled all the functions of government. Second, he designated a ruler to succeed him, in accordance with divine command. If God Almighty, through the Prophet (s), designated a man who was to rule over Muslim society after him, this is in itself an indication that government remains a necessity after the departure of the Prophet from this world. Again, since the Most Noble Messenger (s) promulgated the divine command through his act of appointing a successor, he also, implicitly stated the necessity for establishing a government.

It is self-evident that the necessity for enactment of the law, which necessitated the formation of a government by the Prophet (s), was confined or restricted to his time, but continues after his departure from this world. According to one of the noble verses of the Qur'an, the ordinances of Islam are not limited with respect to time or place; they are permanent and must be enacted until the end of time.³ They were not revealed merely for the time of the Prophet, only to be abandoned thereafter, with retribution and the penal code no longer be enacted, or the taxes prescribed by Islam no longer collected, and the defense of the lands and people of Islam suspended. The claim that the laws of Islam may remain in abeyance or are restricted to a particular time or place is contrary to the essential creedal bases of Islam. Since enactment of laws, then, is necessary after the departure of the Prophet from this world, and indeed, will remain so until the end of time, the formation of a government and the establishment of executive and administrative organs are also necessary. Without the formation of a government and the establishment of such organs to ensure that through enactment of the law, all activities of the individual take place in the framework of a just system, chaos and anarchy will prevail and social, intellectual and moral corruption will arise. The only way to prevent the emergence of anarchy and disorder and to protect society from corruption is to form a government and thus impart order to all the affairs of the country.

Both reason and divine law, then, demonstrate the necessity in our time for what was necessary during the lifetime of the Prophet (s) and the age of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Tālib ('a)—namely the formation of a government and the establishment of executive and administrative organs.

In order to clarify the matter further, let us pose the following question. From the time of the Lesser Occultation⁴ down to the present (a period of more than twelve centuries that may continue for hundreds of millennia if it is not appropriate for the Occulted Imām to manifest himself), is it proper that the laws of Islam be cast aside and remain unexecuted, so that everyone acts as he pleases and anarchy prevails? Were the laws that the Prophet of Islam labored so hard for twenty-three years to set forth, promulgate,

and execute valid only for a limited period of time? Was everything pertaining to Islam meant to be abandoned after the Lesser Occultation? Anyone who believes so, or voices such a belief, is worse situated than the person who believes and proclaims that Islam has been superseded or abrogated by another supposed revelation.⁵

No one can say it is no longer necessary to defend the frontiers and the territorial integrity of the Islamic homeland; that taxes such as the *jizyah*, *kharāj*, *khums*, and *zakāt* should no longer be collected; that the penal code of Islam, with its provisions for the payment of blood money and the exacting of requital, should be suspended. Any person who claims that the formation of an Islamic government is not necessary implicitly denies the necessity for the implementation of Islamic law, the universality and comprehensiveness of that law, and the eternal validity of the faith itself.

After the death of the Most Noble Messenger (s), none of the Muslims doubted the necessity for government. No one said: "We no longer need a government". No one was heard to say anything of the kind. There was unanimous agreement concerning the necessity for government. There was disagreement only as to which person should assume responsibility for government and head the state. Government, therefore, was established after the Prophet (s), both in the time of the caliphs and in that of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a); an apparatus of government came into existence with administrative and executive organs.

The nature and character of Islamic law and the divine ordinances of the *shar‘ah* furnish additional proof of the necessity for establishing government, for they indicate that the laws were laid down for the purpose of creating a state and administering the political, economic and cultural affairs of society.

Firstly, the laws of the *shar‘ah* embrace a diverse body of laws and regulation, which amounts to a complete social system. In this system of laws, all the needs of man have been met: his dealings with his neighbors, fellow citizens, and clan, as well as children and relatives; the concerns of private and marital life; regulations concerning war and peace and intercourse with other nations; penal and commercial law; and regulations pertaining to trade, industry and agriculture. Islamic law contains provisions relating to the preliminaries of marriage and the form in which it should be contracted, and others relating to the development of the embryo in the womb, and what food the parents should eat at the time of conception. It further stipulates the duties that are incumbent upon them while the infant is being suckled, and specifies how the child should be reared, and how the husband and the wife should relate to each other and to their children. Islam provides laws and instructions for all of these matters, aiming, as it does, to produce integrated and virtuous human beings who are walking embodiments of the law, or to put it differently, the law's voluntary and instinctive executors. It is obvious, then, how much care Islam devotes to government and the political and economic relations of society, with goal of creating conditions conducive to the production of morally upright and virtuous human beings.

The Glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah contain all the laws and ordinances man needs in order to attain happiness and the perfection of his state. The book *al-Kāfi* has a chapter entitled, "All the Needs of Men Are Set Out in the Book and the Sunnah,"⁸ the "Book" meaning the Qur'an, which is, in its own words, "an exposition of all things."⁹ According to certain traditions, the Imām¹⁰ also swears that the Book and the Sunnah contain without a doubt all that men need.

Second, if we examine closely the nature and character of the provisions of the law, we realize that their execution and implementation depend upon the formation of a government, and that it is impossible to fulfill the duty of executing God's commands without there being established properly comprehensive administrative and executive organs. Let us now mention certain types of provisions in order to illustrate this point; the others you can examine yourselves.

The taxes Islam levies and the form of budget it has established are not merely for the sake of providing subsistence to the poor or feeding the indigent among the descendants of the Prophet (s); they are also intended to make possible, the establishment of a great government and to assure its essential expenditures.

For example, *khums* is a huge source of income that accrues to the treasury and represents one item in the budget. According to our Shāfi school of thought, *khums* is to be levied in an equitable manner on all agricultural and commercial profits and all natural resources whether above or below the ground—in short, on all forms of wealth and income. It applies equally to the greengrocer with his stall outside this mosque, and to the shipping or mining magnate. They must all pay one-fifth of their surplus income, after customary expenses are deducted, to the Islamic ruler, so that it enters the treasury. It is obvious that such a huge income serves the purpose of administering the Islamic state and meeting all its financial needs. If we were to calculate one-fifth of the surplus income of all the Muslim countries (or of the whole world, should it enter the fold of Islam), it would become fully apparent that the purpose for the imposition of such a tax is not merely the upkeep of the *sayyids*¹¹ or the religious scholars, but on the contrary, something far more significant—namely, meeting the financial needs of the great organs and institutions of government. If an Islamic government is achieved, it will have to be administered on the basis of the taxes that Islam has established—*khums*, *zakāt* (this, of course, would not represent an appreciable sum)¹² *jizyah*, and *kharāj*.

How could the *sayyids* ever need so vast a budget? The *khums* of the bazaar of Baghdad would be enough for the needs of the *sayyids* and the upkeep of the religious teaching institution, as well as all the poor of the Islamic world, quite apart from the *khums* of the bazaars of Tehran, Istanbul, Cairo, and other cities. The provision of such a huge budget must obviously be for the purpose of forming a government and administering the Islamic lands. It was established with the aim of providing for the needs of the people, for public services relating to health, education, defense, and economic development. Further, in accordance with the procedures laid down by Islam for the collection, preservation, and expenditure of this income, all forms of usurpation and embezzlement of public wealth have been forbidden; so that the

head of state and all those entrusted with responsibility for conducting public affairs (i.e., members of the government) have no privileges over the ordinary citizen in benefiting from the public income and wealth; all have an equal share.

Now, should we cast this huge treasury into the ocean, or bury it until the Imam returns, or just spend it on fifty *sayyids* a day until they have all eaten their fill? Let us suppose we give all this money to 500,000 *sayyids*; they would not know what to do with it. We all know that the *sayyids* and the poor have a claim on the public treasury only to the extent required for subsistence. The budget of the Islamic state is constructed in such a way that every source of income is allocated to specific types of expenditures. *Zakat*, voluntary contributions and charitable donations, and *khums* are all levied and spent separately. There is a *hadith* to the effect that at the end of the year, *sayyids* must return any surplus from what they have received to the Islamic ruler, just as the ruler must aid them if they are in need.

The *jizyah*, which is imposed on the *ahl adh-dhimmah*,¹³ and the *kharaj*, which is levied on agricultural land, represent two additional sources of considerable income. The establishment of these taxes also proves that the existence of a ruler and a government is necessary. It is the duty of a ruler or governor to assess the poll tax to be levied on the *ahl adh-dhimmah* in accordance with their income and financial capacity, and to fix appropriate taxes on their arable lands and livestock. He must also collect the *kharaj* on those broad lands that are the “property of God” and in the possession of the Islamic state. This task requires the existence of orderly institutions, rules and regulations, and administrative procedures and policies; it cannot be fulfilled in the absence of order. It is the responsibility of those in charge of the Islamic state, first, to assess the taxes in due and appropriate measure and in accordance with the public good; then, to collect them; and finally, to spend them in a manner conducive to the welfare of the Muslims.

Thus, you see that the fiscal provisions of Islam also point to the necessity for establishing a government, for they cannot be fulfilled without the establishment of the appropriate Islamic institutions.

The ordinances pertaining to preservation of the Islamic system and defense of the territorial integrity and independence of the Islamic *ummah*¹⁴ also demanded the formation of a government. An example is the command: “Prepare against them whatever force you can muster and horses tethered” (Qur’an, 8:60), which enjoins the preparation of as much armed defensive force as possible and orders the Muslims to be always on the alert and at the ready, even in time of peace.

If the Muslims had acted in accordance with this command, and after forming a government, made the necessary extensive preparations to be in a state of full readiness for war, a handful of Jews would never have dared to occupy our lands and to burn and destroy the Masjid al-Aqsa¹⁵ without the people’s being capable of making an immediate response. All this has resulted from the failure of the Muslims to fulfill their duty of executing God’s law and setting up a righteous and respectable

government. If the rulers of the Muslim countries truly represented the believers and enacted God's ordinances, they would set aside their petty differences, abandon their subversive and divisive activities, and join together like the fingers of one hand. Then a handful of wretched Jews (the agents of America, Britain and other foreign powers) would never have been able to accomplish what they have, no matter how much support they enjoyed from America and Britain. All this has happened because of the incompetence of those who rule over the Muslims.

The verse: "Prepare against them whatever force you can muster" commands you to be as strong and well-prepared as possible, so that your enemies will be unable to oppress you and transgress against you. It is because we have been lacking in unity, strength, and preparedness that we suffer oppression and are at the mercy of foreign aggressors.

There are numerous provisions of the law that cannot be implemented without the establishment of a government apparatus; for example, blood money, which must be exacted and delivered to those deserving it, or the corporeal penalties imposed by the law, which must be carried out under the supervision of the Islamic ruler. All of these laws refer back to the institutions of government for it is the government power alone that is capable of fulfilling this function.

After the death of the Most Noble Messenger (s), the obstinate enemies of the faith, the Umayyad¹⁶ (God's curses be upon them), did not permit the Islamic state to attain stability with the rule of 'Ali ibn Abi Tālib (a). They did not allow a form of government to exist that was pleasing to God, Exalted and Almighty, and to His Most Noble Messenger (s). They transformed the entire basis of government, and their policies were, for the most part, contradictory to Islam. The form of government of the Umayyads and the Abbasids,¹⁷ and the political and administrative policies they pursued, were anti-Islamic. The form of government was thoroughly perverted by being transformed into a monarchy, like those of the kings of Iran, the emperors of Rome, and the pharaohs of Egypt. For the most part, this non-Islamic form of government has persisted to the present day, as we can see.

Both law and reason require that we not permit governments to retain this non-Islamic or anti-Islamic character. The proofs are clear. First, the existence of a non-Islamic political order necessarily results in the non-implementation of the Islamic political order. Then, all non-Islamic systems of government are the systems of *kufr*¹⁸ since the ruler in each case is an instance of *tāghūt*,¹⁹ and it is our duty to remove from the life of Muslim society all traces of *kufr* and destroy them. It is also our duty to create a favorable social environment for the education of believing and virtuous individuals, an environment that is in total contradiction with that produced by the rule of *tāghūt* and illegitimate power. The social environment created by *tāghūt* and *shirk*²⁰ invariably brings about corruption such as you can observe now in Iran, the same corruption termed "corruption on earth."²¹ This corruption must be swept away, and its instigators should be punished for their deeds. It is the same corruption that the Pharaoh generated in Egypt with his policies, so that the Qur'an says of him, "Truly, he was among the corruptors" (28:4). A

believing, pious, just individual cannot possibly exist in a socio-political environment of this nature, and still maintain his faith and righteous conduct. He is faced with two choices: either he commits acts that amount to *kufr* and contradict righteousness, or in order not to commit such acts and not to submit to the orders and commands of *ẓāghīṭ*, the just individual opposes him and struggles against him in order to destroy the environment of corruption. We have in reality, then, no choice but to destroy those systems of government that are corrupt in themselves and also entail the corruption of others, and to overthrow all treacherous, corrupt, oppressive, and criminal regimes.

This is a duty that all Muslims must fulfill, in every one of the Muslim countries, in order to achieve the triumphant political revolution of Islam.

We see, too, that together, the imperialists and the tyrannical self-seeking rulers have divided the Islamic homeland. They have separated the various segments of the Islamic *ummah* from each other and artificially created separate nations. There once existed the great Ottoman State, and that, too, the imperialists divided. Russia, Britain, Austria, and other imperialist powers united, and through wars against the Ottomans, each came to occupy or absorb into its sphere of influence, part of the Ottoman realm. It is true that most of the Ottoman rulers were incompetent, that some of them were corrupt, and that they followed the monarchical system. Nonetheless, the existence of the Ottoman State represented a threat to the imperialists. It was always possible that righteous individuals *might* rise up among the people and, with their assistance, seize control of the state, thus putting an end to imperialism by mobilizing the unified resources of the nation. Therefore after numerous prior wars, the imperialists at the end of World War I divided the Ottoman State, creating in its territories about ten or fifteen petty states.²² Then each of these was entrusted to one of their servants or a group of their servants, although certain countries were later able to escape the grasp of the agents of imperialism.

In order to assure the unity of the Islamic *ummah*, in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish a government. In order to attain the unity and freedom of the Muslim peoples, we must overthrow the oppressive governments installed by the imperialists and bring into existence an Islamic government of justice that will be in the service of the people. The formation of such a government will serve to preserve the disciplined unity of the Muslims; just as Fatimah az-Zahra²³ (‘a) said in her address: “The Imamate exists for the sake of preserving order among the Muslims and replacing their disunity with unity”.

Through the political agents they have placed in power over the people, the imperialists have imposed on us an unjust economic order, and thereby divided our people into two groups: oppressors and oppressed. Hundreds of millions of Muslims are hungry and deprived of all forms of health care and education, while minorities comprised of the wealthy and powerful live a life of indulgence, licentiousness, and corruption. The hungry and deprived have constantly struggled to free themselves

from the oppression of their plundering overlords, and their struggle continues to this day. But their way is blocked by the ruling minorities and the oppressive governmental structures they head. It is our duty to save the oppressed and deprived. It is our duty to be a helper to the oppressed, and an enemy to the oppressor. This is nothing other than the duty that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) entrusted to his two great offspring²⁴ in his celebrated testament: “Be an enemy to the oppressor and a helper to the oppressed.”²⁵

The scholars of Islam have a duty to struggle against all attempts by oppressors to establish a monopoly over the sources of wealth or to make illicit use of them. They must not allow the masses to remain hungry and deprived while plundering oppressors usurp the sources of wealth and live in opulence. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) says: “I have accepted the task of government because God, Exalted and Almighty, has exacted from the scholars of Islam a pledge not to sit silent and idle in the face of gluttony and plundering of the oppressors, on the one hand, and the hunger and deprivation of the oppressed, on the other.” Here is the full text of the passage we refer to:

“I swear by Him Who causes the seed to open and creates the souls of all living things that were it not for the presence of those who have come to swear allegiance to me, were it not for the obligation of rulership now imposed upon me by the availability of aid and support, and were it not for the pledge that God has taken from the scholars of Islam not to remain silent in the face of the gluttony and plundering of the oppressors, on the one hand, and the harrowing hunger and deprivation of the oppressed, on the other hand—were it not for all of this, then I would abandon the reins of government and in no way seek it. You would see that this world of yours, with all of its position and rank, is less in my eyes than the moisture that comes from the sneeze of a goat.”²⁶

How can we stay silent and idle today when we see that a band of traitors and usurpers, the agents of foreign powers, have appropriated the wealth and the fruits of labor of hundreds of millions of Muslims—thanks to the support of their masters and through the power of the bayonet—granting the Muslim not the least right to prosperity? It is the duty of Islamic scholars and all Muslims to put an end to this system of oppression and, for the sake of the well-being of hundreds of millions of human beings, to overthrow these oppressive governments and form an Islamic government.

Reason, the laws of Islam, and the practice of the Prophet (s), and that of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), the purport of various Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions—all indicate the necessity of forming a government. As an example of the traditions of the Imams, I now quote the following tradition of Imam Rid²⁷ (‘a):

‘Abd al-Wahid ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abdus an-Neyshaburi al-‘Attar said: “I was told by Ab²⁸ ‘I-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Qutayba an-Neyshaburi that he was told by Ab²⁹ Muhammad al-Fadl ibn Shadhan an-Neyshaburi this tradition. If someone asks, ‘Why has God, the All-Wise, appointed the holders of

authority and commanded us to obey them?’ then we answer, ‘For numerous reasons. One reason is this: Men are commanded to observe certain limits and not to transgress them in order to avoid the corruption that would result. This cannot be attained or established without there being appointed over them a trustee who will ensure that they remain within the limits of the licit and prevent them from casting themselves into the danger of transgression. Were it not for such a trustee, no one would abandon his own pleasure and benefit because of the corruption it might entail for another. Another reason is that we find no group or nation of men that ever existed without a ruler and leader, since it is required by both religion and worldly interest. It would not be compatible with divine wisdom to leave mankind to its own devices, for He, the All-Wise, knows that men need a ruler for their survival. It is through the leadership he provides that men make war against their enemies, divide among themselves the spoils of war, and preserve their communal solidarity, preventing the oppression of the oppressed by the oppressor.

“A further reason is this: were God not to appoint over men a solicitous, trustworthy, protecting, reliable leader, the community would decline, religion would depart, and the norms and ordinances that have been revealed would undergo change. Innovators would increase and deniers would erode religion, inducing doubt in the Muslims. For we see that men are needy and defective, judging by their differences of opinion and inclination and their diversity of state. Were a trustee, then, not appointed to preserve what has been revealed through the Prophet (s), corruption would ensue in the manner we have described. Revealed laws, norms, ordinances, and faith would be altogether changed, and therein would lie the corruption of all mankind.”²⁸

We have omitted the first part of the *hadīth*, which pertains to prophethood, a topic not germane to our present discussion. What interests us at present is the second half, which I will now paraphrase for you.

If someone should ask you, “Why has God, the All-Wise, appointed holders of authority and commanded you to obey them?” you should answer him as follows: “He has done so for various causes and reasons. One is that men have been set upon a certain well-defined path, and commanded not to stray from it, nor to transgress against the established limits and norms, for if they were to stray, they would fall prey to corruption. Now men would not be able to keep to their ordained path and to enact God’s laws unless a trustworthy and protective individual (or power) were appointed over them with responsibility for this matter, to prevent them from stepping outside the sphere of the licit and transgressing against the rights of others. If no such restraining individual or power were appointed, nobody would voluntarily abandon any pleasure or interest of his own that might result in harm or corruption to others; everybody would engage in oppressing and harming others for the sake of his own pleasures and interests.

“Another reason and cause is this: we do not see a single group, nation, or religious community that has ever been able to exist without an individual entrusted with the maintenance of its laws and

institutions—in short, a head or a leader; for such a person is essential for fulfilling the affairs of religion and the world. It is not permissible, therefore, according to divine wisdom that God should leave men, His creatures, without a leader and guide, for He knows well that they depend on the existence of such a person for their own survival and perpetuation. It is under his leadership that they fight against their enemies, divide the public income among themselves, perform Friday and other congregational prayers and foreshorten the arms of the transgressors who would encroach on the rights of the oppressed.

“Another proof and cause is this: were God not to appoint an Imām over men to maintain law and order, to serve the people faithfully as a vigilant trustee, religion would fall victim to obsolescence and decay. Its rites and institutions would vanish; the customs and ordinances of Islam would be transformed or even deformed. Heretical innovators would add things to religion and atheists and unbelievers would subtract things from it, presenting it to the Muslims in an inaccurate manner. For we see that men are prey to defects; they are not perfect, and must need to strive for perfection. Moreover, they disagree with each other, having varying inclinations and discordant states. If God, therefore, had not appointed over men one who would maintain order and law and protect the revelation brought by the Prophet (s), in the manner we have described, men would have fallen prey to corruption; the institutions, laws, customs, and ordinances of Islam would be transformed; and faith and its content would be completely changed, resulting in the corruption of all humanity.”

As you can deduce from the words of the Imām (‘a), there are numerous proofs and causes that necessitate formation of a government, and establishment of an authority. These proofs, causes, and arguments are not temporary in their validity or limited to a particular time, and the necessity for the formation of a government, therefore, is perpetual. For example, it will always happen that men overstep the limits laid down by Islam and transgress against the rights of others for the sake of their personal pleasure and benefit. It cannot be asserted that such was the case only in the time of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), and that afterwards, men became angels. The wisdom of the Creator has decreed that men should live in accordance with justice and act within the limits set by divine law. This wisdom is eternal and immutable, and constitutes one of the norms of God Almighty. Today and always, therefore, the existence of a holder of authority, a ruler who acts as trustee and maintains the institutions and laws of Islam, is a necessity—a ruler who prevents cruelty, oppression, and violation of the rights of others; who is a trustworthy and vigilant guardian of God’s creatures; who guides men to the teachings, doctrines, laws, and institutions of Islam; and who prevents the undesirable changes that atheists and the enemies of religion wish to introduce in the laws and institutions of Islam. Did not the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) serve this purpose? The same factors of necessity that led him to become the Imām still exist; the only difference is that no single individual has been designated for the task.²⁹ The principle of the necessity of government has been made a general one, so that it will always remain in effect.

If the ordinances of Islam are to remain in effect, then, if encroachment by oppressive ruling classes on

the rights of the weak is to be prevented, if ruling minorities are not to be permitted to plunder and corrupt the people for the sake of pleasure and material interest, if the Islamic order is to be preserved and all individuals are to pursue the just path of Islam without any deviation, if innovations and the approval of anti-Islamic laws by sham parliaments³⁰ are to be prevented, if the influence of foreign powers in the Islamic lands is to be destroyed—government is necessary. None of these aims can be achieved without government and the organs of the state. It is a righteous government, of course, that is needed; one presided over by a ruler who will be a trustworthy and righteous trustee. Those who presently govern us are of no use at all for they are tyrannical, corrupt, and highly incompetent.

In the past, we did not act in concert and unanimity in order to establish proper government and overthrow treacherous and corrupt rulers. Some people were apathetic and reluctant even to discuss the theory of Islamic government, and some went so far as to praise oppressive rulers. It is for this reason that we find ourselves in the present state. The influence and sovereignty of Islam in society have declined; the nation of Islam has fallen victim to division and weakness; the laws of Islam have remained in abeyance and been subjected to change and modification; and the imperialists have propagated foreign laws and alien culture among the Muslims through their agents for the sake of their evil purposes, causing people to be infatuated with the West. It was our lack of a leader, a guardian, and our lack of institutions of leadership that made all this possible. We need righteous and proper organs of government; that much is self-evident.

1. Valī-yī Amr: “the one who holds authority,” a term derived from Qur’an, 4:59: “O you who believe! Obey God, and obey the Messenger and the holders of authority (عليّ ’l-amr) from among you.” For commentary of this verse, see Mūr Ahmad ‘Ali, *The Holy Qur’an* (NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, 1988), <http://www.al-islam.org/quran> [1] (Pub.)

2. Sunnah: the practice of the Prophet, accepted by Muslims as the norm and ideal for all human behavior.

3. See, for example, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14:52), Sūrah Yūnus (10:2), Sūrah al-Hūj (22:49), Sūrah al-Ahzāb (33:40), and Sūrah Yū-Sūn (36:70). (Pub.)

4. Lesser Occultation: ghaybat-i sughrah, the period of about 70 years (260/872–329/939) when, according to Shī‘ī belief, Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imām, absented himself from the physical plane but remained in communication with his followers through a succession of four appointed deputies, viz., ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘ād, Muhammad ibn ‘Uthmān, Husayn ibn Rūh, and ‘Ali ibn Muhammad. At the death of the fourth deputies no successor was named, and the Greater Occultation (ghaybat-i kubrah) began, and continues to this day. See Muhammad Bāqir as-Sadr and Murtadā Mutahhari, *Awaited Saviour* (Karachi: Islamic Seminary Publications), <http://www.islam.org/saviour/index.htm>; [2] Muhammad Bāqir as-Sadr, *An Inquiry Concerning Al-Mahdi* (Qum: Ansariyan Publications); Jassim M. Husain, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imām: A Historical Background* (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1982); Ibrāhīm Amīni, *Al-Imām Al-Mahdī: The Just Leader of Humanity*, trans. ‘Abdul ‘Azīz Sachedina (Qum: Ansariyan Publications), <http://www.al-islam.org/mahdi/nontl/index.htm> [3]. (Pub.)

5. The allusion is probably to the Bahā‘īs, who claim to have received a succession of post-Qur’anic revelations.

6. Jizyah: a tax levied on non-Muslim citizens of the Muslim state in exchange for the protection they receive and in lieu of the taxes, such as zakāt, that only Muslims pay. Kharaj: a tax levied on certain categories of land. Khums: a tax consisting of one-fifth of agricultural and commercial profits (see p. 24 and Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Khums*, <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html> [4]). Zakāt: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on

the purposes specified in Qur'an, 9:60. (Pub.)

7. Al-Kāfi: more fully, Al-Kāfi fī 'l Hadīth, one of the most important Shī'ī collections of hadīth, compiled by Shaykh Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulayni (d. 329/941). This treatise consists of 34 books, 326 sections, and over 16,000 ahādīth. Two fascicules of this work have been translated into English by Sayyid Muhammad Hasan Rizvi and published by the Tehran-based World Organization for Islamic Services (WOFIS), <http://www.wofis.com> [5], e-mail: wofis@wofis.com [6]. (Pub.)

8. Usūl al-Kāfi, Book of "Virtues of Knowledge," vol. 1, pp. 76–80. (Pub.)

9. Qur'an, 16:89.

10. The reference is probably to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq, whose sayings on this subject are quoted by 'Allamah Tabatabā'i in al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Beirut, 1390/1979), XII, 327–328. First eight volumes of 'Allamah Tabatabā'i's Al-Mizān has been translated into English by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi and published by the WOFIS. (Pub.)

11. Sayyids: the descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fātimah and son-in-law 'Ali, the first of the Twelve Imams.

12. Zakāt would not represent an appreciable sum presumably because it is levied on surplus wealth, the accumulation of which is inhibited by the economic system of Islam.

13. Ahl adh-Dhimmah: non-Muslim citizens of the Muslim state, whose rights and obligations are contractually determined.

14. Ummah: the entire Islamic community, without territorial or ethnic distinction.

15. Masjid al-Aqsā: the site in Jerusalem where the Prophet ascended to heaven in the eleventh year of his mission (Qur'an, 17:1); also the complex of mosques and buildings erected on the site. The chief of these was extensively damaged by arson in 1969, two years after the Zionist usurpation of Jerusalem.

16. Umayyads: descendants of 'Umayyah ibn 'Abdu Shams ibn 'Abdu Man'af from the Quraysh tribe, and members of the dynasty that ruled at Damascus from 41/632 until 132/750 and transformed the caliphate into a hereditary institution. Mu'awiyah, ibn Abū Sufyān frequently mentioned in these pages, was the first of the Umayyad line. This kingdom ended with the murder of Marwān II, the last Umayyad caliph. (Pub.)

17. Abbasids: offspring of 'Abbās ibn 'Abdul Muttalib, uncle of the Holy Prophet (s), and the dynasty that replaced the Umayyads and established a new caliphal capital in Baghdad. This dynastic rule began in 132/750 with the caliphate of 'Abdullāh as-Saffāh. With the rise of various local rulers, generally of military origin, the power of the Abbasids began to decline from the fourth/tenth century and it was brought to an end by the Mongol conquest in 656/1258. (Pub.)

18. Kufr: the rejection of divine guidance; the antithesis of Islam.

19. Taghūt: one who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself, whether explicitly or implicitly. See also p. 78–79.

20. Shirk: the assignment of partners to God, either by believing in a multiplicity of gods, or by assigning divine attributes and prerogatives to other-than-God.

21. "Corruption on earth": a broad term including not only moral corruption, but also subversion of the public good, embezzlement and usurpation of public wealth, conspiring with the enemies of the community against its security, and working in general for the overthrow of the Islamic order. See the commentary on Qur'an, 5:33 in Tabatabā'i's, al-Mizān, V, 330–332.

22. It may be apposite to quote here the following passage from a secret report drawn up in January 1916 by Thomas E. Lawrence, the British organizer of the so-called Arab revolt led by Sharīf Husayn of Mecca: "Husayn's activity seems beneficial to us, because it matches with our immediate aims, the breakup of the Islamic bloc and the defeat and disruption of the Ottoman Empire.... The Arabs are even less stable than the Turks. If properly handled they would remain in a state of political mosaic, a tissue of small jealous principalities incapable of political cohesion." See Philip Knightley and Colin Simpson, The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia (New York, 1971), p. 55.

23. Fātimah az-Zahrā: Fātimah, the daughter of the Prophet and wife of Imām 'Ali. For her biography, see Fātimah the Gracious (Qum: Ansariyan Publications). (Pub.)

24. I.e., Hasan and Husayn.

25. Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 47. See English translation of Nahj al-Balāghah, Peak of Eloquence with commentary and its original Arabic text (Qum: Ansariyan Publications), <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul/index.htm> [7]. (Pub.)

26. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 3 (The famous Shaqshaqiyyah Sermon). See Nahj al-Balaghah, ed. Subhi as-Salih. (Pub.)
27. Imam Ridā: eighth of the Twelve Imams, born in 148/765 and died in 203/817 in Tūs (Mashhad). He was poisoned by the Abbasid caliph Ma'mūn, who had appointed him as his successor at first, but then grew fearful of the wide following he commanded (see p. 137). His shrine in Mashhad is one of the principal centers of pilgrimage and religious learning in Iran. See Bāqir Sharaf al-Qarashi, *The Life of Imam 'Ali bin Mūsā al-Ridā*, trans. Jāsim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications); Muhammad Jawād Fadlallāh, *Imam al-Ridā: A Historical and Biographical Research*, trans. Yūsuf T. al-Jibouri, <http://www.al-islam.org/al-rida/index.html>; [8] Muhammad Mahdi Shams ad-Dīn, "Al-Imam ar-Ridā ('a) and the Heir Apparency," *At-Tawhīd Journal*, <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/heir.htm> [9]. (Pub.)
28. The text of this tradition can be found in Shaykh Sadūq, 'Ilal ash-Sharī' (Qum, 1378/1958), I, sec. 182, hadīth 9, p. 251. (Pub.)
29. That is, in the absence of the Imam or an individual deputy named by him (as was the case during the Lesser Occultation), the task devolves upon the fuqahā as a class. See argument on pp. 44–112.
30. Here the allusion may be in particular to the so-called Family Protection Law of 1967, which Imam Khomeini denounced as contrary to Islam in an important ruling. See Imam Khomeini, *Tauzih al-Mas'āl*, n.p., n.d., pp. 462–463, par. 2836, and p. 441.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-government-governance-of-jurist-imam-khomeini/necessity-islamic-government>

Links

- [1] <http://www.al-islam.org/quran>
- [2] <http://www.islam.org/saviour/index.htm>;
- [3] <http://www.al-islam.org/mahdi/nontl/index.htm>
- [4] <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html>
- [5] <http://www.wofis.com>
- [6] <mailto:wofis@wofis.com>
- [7] <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul/index.htm>
- [8] <http://www.al-islam.org/al-rida/index.html>;
- [9] <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/heir.htm>