

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَ نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ وَ
لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and Prophet Muhammad, and his pure progeny, and may the curse of Allah be upon all their enemies.

One of the most fundamental and essential questions in political philosophy is the question of exigency of government and state. The existence of an established government has been considered to be among the initial stages of departure of human life from its primitive and nomadic form, formation of human societies, and structural transformation in human life. Only a small group in the past and in the 19th century—such as Claude Henri de Rouvroy Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809–65)—believed in the abolition of government from society.

According to Saint-Simon, the human mind and intellect has the capability to relieve society from peril and organize it. In the opinion of the anarchists and those who oppose government, man has a pure nature that urges him to accept good desires and pleasant demands. This group also believed that a government is not in harmony with human freedom, and the preservation of human dignity and freedom requires the uprooting of government from man's life.

Sociological studies show that man has always, and under all circumstances, regarded the formation of state and government as indispensable and based on his natural disposition [*fitrah*] and intellect [*'aql*],

because of man's basic need of company and an innate inclination toward collective living. It is only under the aegis of social life and a cohesive organization, in which the rights of all are respected, that man can subsist. Otherwise, humanity will plunge into chaos, barbarity, savagery, injustice, jungle-like inequality, and lawlessness.

The forms of government and the existence of fundamental differences in the structure and approach of grand administrative systems of societies are based on different epistemological systems, various worldviews and their concept of human beings. If a human being is considered as a mere physical body, the ultimate aspirations for him would be to be well provided materially and his welfare, comfort and happiness be ensured. From this perspective, all efforts would be directed toward animal needs and pleasure. However, if we treat man as superior to materiality, and lay the foundation of a political system based on the multi-faceted material and spiritual dimensions of human existence, a government would pursue man's material welfare and spiritual ascension. It is through this criterion and outlook on man and the choice of ideals that we shall examine the political thoughts as well as the performance of governments; because the origin of political thoughts is the very insight and ideal and without them political thoughts have no essence.

Nowadays, in the realm of political discussions, only a few pay attention to the fundamental perspective on man and his sublime aspirations. The sociological approach focuses mainly on the material benefits totally sidetracking human aspiration and insight. Yet, it must be noted that in the school [*maktab*] of the prophets ('a),¹ who were the true custodians of the establishment of exalted humane systems, optimism and idealism have been the foundation of movement and transformation. It is for this reason that through a comprehensive perspective consistent with the Qur'an, we realize that the creation of man, life and death, the sending down of the prophets ('a), and socio-religious systems are all based on a purpose, and the axis of all activities and programs, including the setting up of government, is guidance [*hidayah*] toward that basic purpose.

As such, governments must be set up not only for the physical administration of societies but for their spiritual growth as well. One-dimensional governments strive only for the material welfare and comfort of people. If, however, they are in pursuit of man's material comfort and spiritual ascension, they will also engage in guiding him. Man possesses God's spirit, and the essence of his existence consists of spiritual and celestial dimensions beyond the base material ones. To confine him to physical administration without spiritual guidance is tantamount to belittling him.

If the ultimate goal of government is the good and of man (in this world) and attainment of divine proximity [*qurb-e ilahi*] and the axis of government is revolved around the guidance of mankind, undoubtedly the one most worthy to govern people is he who is the most aware of the real concerns and interests of man and perfectly cognizant of the dimensions and aspects of his existence, and that is nobody but God. The corollary of rational proof [*burhan-e 'aqli*] which is also confirmed by verses of the Qur'an is that the perfection of man lies in obedience to the One who is fully aware and omniscient of the

truth behind him, this world and the hereafter, and the mutual link between him, this world and the hereafter, is nobody but God. So, worship and guardianship inevitably belong to Allah alone.

That is, the Sole Master of man is God, and sovereignty of other than God, only if it is anchored in His will and permission, will be legitimate. As such, the theory of the guardianship of the jurist [*wilayah al-faqih*], which is the axis of the Islamic government, needs to be established during the period of occultation [*ghaybah*] of the infallible Imam (‘a). It is a theory which in recent centuries has drawn the close attention of Islamic scholars and jurists [*fuqaha*], and has reached its apex during recent decades. In comparison to the negation of religious authority, it turned out to be a useful, dynamic and socially transforming theory in the scene of the world of politics.

The Muslim world, during this contemporary era, has witnessed two truly momentous phenomena. One is the negative view on politics and religious authority. This perennial view, which permeates all religions particularly Islam and leads to the political isolation of religious thought and the decrease of religious movement, is a meta-religious onslaught that requires the scholars and intellectuals in the Muslim world to engage in elucidating and fortifying the pristine religious beliefs through profound and serious studies in order to be equipped with rational defense against it.

The second phenomenon is the presence of political thought based on *wilayah al-faqih*. Though, theoretically, this phenomenon has many precedents and different variations, its actual and concrete practice is traceable to the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran—after a long and persistent struggle—attained victory under the wise and ingenious leadership of Imam Khomeini (q)², and through the overwhelming vote (98.22 %) of the Muslim people of Iran, the Islamic Republic was established. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, a constitution based on Qur’anic verses and luminous laws of Islam was codified by a group of *mujtahids*,³ Islamic scholars and experts of the nation which, as acknowledged by legal authorities and experts, is regarded as one of the most advanced constitutions in the world.

Up to this stage, the legal standing of the Islamic Republic was specified and fixed, and *wilayah al-faqih* stipulated in the constitution as the symbol of Islam, the truthfulness of the system, the guarantor of its survival and immunity from possible danger, and, the main pillar of the Islamic Republic. However, the events after the Revolution, the entanglement of the intellectual revolutionary forces with current problems, and the emotional, exaggerated and superficial presentation of *wilayah al-faqih* resulted in an improper scientific study, examination and elucidation of this issue.

Nevertheless, the Islamic system successfully handled the problems and society moved toward peace and stability. Due to the critical inquiries of theoretical rivals, more attention was paid to it and its various angles were elucidated by intelligent and wary scholars who were well aware of the conditions of the time.

In view of the exigency to explain: (i) the Islamic political theory and present its position in political

systems; (ii) to deal with the existence of doubts, concerns and intellectual challenges behind this theory; and, (iii) to confront the pervasive efforts of the external and internal enemies in opposing this *wilayah al-faqih* system; the wise, vigilant scholar struggling to defend and guard the sanctity of religion and revealed teachings, His Eminence Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi (may Allah prolong his sublime presence), presented a series of discussions on Islamic political theory before sermons [kutbahs] of the Friday congregational Prayer of Tehran.

The present volume is the transcript of the said discussions compiled and edited by Mr. Karim Subhani and presented to you, dear readers, in two volumes (legislation and statecraft). It is hoped that this book is accepted by the concerned authorities and approved by *Hadhrat Wali al-‘Asr* [His Holiness, the Master of the Age] (may Allah the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent).

Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute

Tir 26, 1378 AHS (July 17, 1999)

-
1. The abbreviation, “a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhi’s-salam, ‘alayhim’us-salam, or ‘alayha’s-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is used after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). [Trans.]
 2. The abbreviation, “q” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, quddisa sirruh [may his soul be sanctified], which is used after the names of pious people. [Trans.]
 3. Mujtahid: an authority on the divine law who practices ijtihad, i.e. “the search for a correct opinion in the deduction of the specific provisions of the law from its principles and ordinances.” [Trans.]

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-political-theory-ayatullah-misbah-yazdi-vol2/introduction>