

Chapter 1: A Study on the Question of Al-Wilaya

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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon Muhammad and his Family (Ahl al-Bayt).

Some modern scholars view Shi'ism as an accidental manifestation in Islamic society. They see the Shi'a as a part of the main chorus of the Islamic community as a result of the events which took place with the passing of time and of specific social developments, which in turn led to the formation of a special sectarian attitude within this larger body, and then gradually expanded into a sect.

Having assumed this fact, these scholars disagree as to the actual events and developments which led to the growth of this manifestation and to the birth of this sect. Some assume that the supposed political activities of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' formed the basis for the formation of the Shi'a.

Others, however, attribute the appearance of Shi'ism to the khilafah of Imam Ali, prayers and peace be upon him, and to the political and social position which was established during that era, according to the events which took place. While others assume that the appearance of the Shi'a was hidden in events which occurred later than this in the historical process of Islamic society.

What has encouraged many of these scholars to the assumption and the belief that Shi'ism was an accidental manifestation in Islamic society is, in my opinion, the fact that the Shi'a in the early times only constituted a small part of the whole Islamic community. This fact has given them the impression that non-Shi'ism was the original foundation of Islamic society, and that Shi'ism was an accidental and exceptional manifestation, whose causes must lie in the development of the parties opposed to the situation of the day.

However, it is hardly logical to define principles or exceptions, or bases and deviations, according to largeness or comparative fewness of numbers. It is erroneous to consider non-Shi'ism as the basis according to its large numbers, and to consider Shi'ism as a deviant, accidental manifestation because this disagrees with the fundamental nature of doctrinal divisions.

We have often found a particular doctrinal division within the development of a single religion founded upon the basis of some difference in the definition of the tenets of that religion without there being two equal doctrinal divisions according to numbers. Yet they may be equal according to their purity of origin and equally expressive of the religion, while differing as regards to its basic character. Thus it is not in any way permissible for us to construct our conceptions of the internal doctrinal divisions within Islam, of the Shi'a and others, according to numerical strength.

Similarly, it is not permissible for us to link the birth of the Shi'a presentation of Islam in the development of Islam with the birth of the word 'Shi'a' or 'Shi'ism' (*al-Tashayyu'*) as a technical term or a special name for a clearly defined group of Muslims. The birth of technical terms is one matter and the growth of conventions and presentations is quite another.

Even if we did not find the word '*Shi'a'*' in the normal language used during the lifetime of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family and grant him peace, or after his death, this would not mean that the Shi'a presentation of Islam and its attitudes did not exist. It is in this spirit that we must deal with the question of Shi'ism (*al-Tashayyu'*) and the Shi'a, and answer the two following questions: a) how did Shi'ism come into existence, and b) how did the Shi'a appear?

How Shi'ism came into existence

As for the first question, we can regard Shi'ism as a natural consequence of Islam, and as a representation of the presentation of Islam which it was obliged to attain if it was to protect its healthy growth. We can in fact infer a logical inference to this presentation of Islam from the faith which the Prophet commanded, according to the nature of its formation and the conditions which surrounded it.

The Prophet was assuming the leadership of a revolutionary faith, and inducing radical transformations of the customs, structures and concepts of society. The path for such a task of transformation was obviously not a short one, but was rather long and protracted because of the vast spiritual divisions between *jahiliyyah* and Islam. The faith which the Prophet practiced had to begin with the *jahili* man and raise him to new institutions, thus converting him into an Islamic man who could carry the new light, and uproot the trunk and roots of *jahiliyyah* from his heart and mind.

And the Great Leader made astonishing headway in the task of transformation in a very short time, but it was necessary for this task of transformation to continue on its way even after the death of the Prophet, who knew that his death was near sometime before it actually occurred and he disclosed this openly in 'The Pilgrimage of Farewell' (*Hajjat al-Wada*); so his death was not unexpected.

This means that the Prophet had ample time to contemplate the future of the faith after his demise, even if we disregard the factors of contact with the Unseen and the Divine protection for Islam stemming from revelation. In light of this we can see that the Prophet had three possible paths before him to ensure the proper consequences of the future of the faith.

The First Path

The first path would have been to adopt a passive attitude towards the future, and to be content with the part which he had played in leading and directing the da'wah during his lifetime, leaving its future to circumstance and chance. It is of course unthinkable to attribute such passivity to the Prophet because it grows from two different possibilities, neither of which can be levelled against the Prophet.

The first possibility is the belief that such passivity and disregard would have no effect upon the future of the da'wah, and that the Ummah which would follow his da'wah would be capable of acting independently in a manner which would protect the da'wah and ensure it against deviation. But this belief is totally indefensible, and indeed the essential nature of things would seem to indicate the opposite, because the da'wah was by its very nature a radical and transformatory factor, which aimed at building a new community from which all *jahili* principles would be removed.

Dawah was, however, prone to dangerous possibilities when deprived of its leader and of all guidance. And such perils were sure to arise if no allowances were made for the vacuum left by the Prophet's death, which would leave the Ummah without any guidance. These would also arise from the subsequent needs of the Ummah to adopt an extemporaneous attitude in the shadow of the massive difficulties posed by the death of the Prophet.

Had the Prophet left the Ummah without any guidance regarding the development of Islam, it would have had to face the problem of conducting itself without its leader while facing the most dangerous issues ever to confront Islam without possessing any prior experience thereof.

Such a state of affairs would also have required that the Ummah adopt an immediate policy as to how to conduct itself in spite of the danger posed by the problem, because the vacuum could not be allowed to continue. And this speedily-arranged policy would have had to be instituted just when the Ummah was suffering the staggering shock of losing its Great Leader.

This shock must obviously have shaken the foundations of logical thought and exacerbated any disorders, and it was perhaps this shock that forced one of the sahaba to announce that the Prophet had not died and would not die.

These are the dangers which might have arisen from any religious immaturity on the part of the sahaba, who had not yet attained the standard at which the Prophet could feel satisfied, of a reasonable reaction to the khilafah after his death, within the religious framework of Islam, and of their ability to overcome the hidden contradictions which existed, and continued to exist, in the minds of the Muslims, regarding their divisions into the Muhajirun and Ansar, Quraysh and the rest of the Arab tribes of Makkah and Medina.

There are also the dangers which arose from the existence of anonymous factions within the Ummah who acted treacherously from the time of the Prophet onwards. This is the faction which the Qur'an calls

the munafiqun (hypocrites). When we add to them the large numbers who converted to Islam after the conquests, becoming Muslims for material gains and not out of spiritual awakening, we can begin to assess the danger posed by these groups, who would find a chance to grow and expand in the vast vacuum which would result from the absence of the guiding leadership.

Obviously the acceptance of such a perilous position after his death could not be envisaged by any ideological leader, let alone by the Seal of the Prophets. Indeed Abu Bakr was loathing to leave the arena without ensuring a positive future for the government by the appointment of one who could fully comprehend and control its affairs.

Similarly, the people rushed to Umar when he was struck down saying: "O Leader of the Faithful, if you would only set out a covenant" ¹ fearing the vacuum of authority which the khalifah would leave behind him, in spite of the political and social concentration which the da'wah had attained during the ten years following the death of the Prophet. Umar designated six people to calm their fears. Umar recognized the extent of the danger posed by the circumstances of as-Saqifa, and the possible complications which might have arisen from the improvised nature of the khilafah of Abu Bakr, when he said: "The appointment (*ba'yah*) of Abu Bakr would have been a fatal mistake had Allah not protected us from its evil."²

Abu Bakr himself regretted the speed with which he had accepted authority and taken over its difficult problems. He had sensed the danger of the situation and the necessity for a quick solution, when he said, when blamed for accepting the authority: "Indeed the Messenger of Allah had died and the people had only just emerged from *jahiliyyah*. So I feared that they would be subject to temptations, and my associates encouraged me therein."³

If all this is true then it must also be evident that the Pioneer and the Prophet of Islam felt the danger of a negative attitude more acutely, and understood the exact nature of the situation and needs of the task of radical transformation, which he had instigated in the Ummah so newly emerged from jahiliyyah, more profoundly than Abu Bakr.

The second possibility which could explain the passivity of the Leader towards the future and progress of Islam after his death is that he did not seek to protect Islam from this peril, although aware of the great danger posed by such a stance, because he viewed Islam advantageously and was only interested in protecting it during his lifetime, so that he could receive benefits and gains from it while uninvolved in its future protection after his death.

These explanations are unthinkable in the case of the Prophet, even if we do not regard him as a Prophet closely involved with Allah, may he be praised and exalted in every aspect of Islam, and simply consider him as a leader passionately committed to his cause similar to any other.

We cannot cite any example of a totally devoted leader who sacrificed himself in the interests of Islam as did the Prophet until the last moment of his life. In fact his whole career proves this point, and even when

on his deathbed and suffering greatly from his illness he was deeply concerned with a campaign which he had planned, and the force which he had dispatched under Usama, and ordered them saying: "Stand ready with Usama's forces! Convoke the forces of Usama! Send out Usama's contingents!" He repeated this although losing consciousness from time to time.⁴

For indeed the concern of the Prophet regarding this military campaign alone was so profound that he expended all his efforts upon it even on his death bed, and although he knew that he would die before he could reap the rewards of this campaign, he did not allow this to interfere with his task even until his last breath. So how can we even consider the opinion that the Prophet was neither preoccupied with the future of Islam, nor planning against the expected dangers which would confront its safety after his death?

Finally, during the lifetime of the Prophet there is one act which is itself sufficient to negate the first assumption, while also proving that the Prophet was by no means passive towards the future of Islam, nor unaware of the dangers therein or unconcerned thereby. Furthermore, this act has been related in the authentic works of both the Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.

It is that Umar al-Khattab was amongst a group of men in the house when the Prophet, who was about to die, said: "Bring me parchment and pen so that I may write something for you after which you shall never go astray."⁵ In fact this act of the Prophet, which is generally viewed as authentic, illustrates clearly that he was deeply concerned about the dangers which had to be faced in the future, and recognized the need to plan ahead so as to protect the Ummah from deviation, and save it from inattentiveness and disintegration. It is thus totally impossible to substantiate any claim of passivity levelled against the Prophet.

The Second Path

The second path is that the Prophet adopted a positive policy concerning the future of Islam after his death and planned towards it by advocating the appointment of a *shura* (Advisory Council) which would be responsible for the affairs of Islam and leading the Ummah. This shura would be composed of the first generation of the faithful, the Muhajirun and the Ansar, who would represent the Ummah, while formulating the foundations for the future government and for the leadership of Islam as it evolved further.

It is obvious, however, that the nature of things and the actual events which took place concerning the Prophet, the da'wah and the faithful refute this hypothesis and disprove the claim that the Prophet followed this method and sought to invest the leadership of Islam immediately after his death to the Ummah as represented in a shura composed of the initial generation of the Muhajirun and the Ansar. We shall now examine some of the points which clarify this. Error: Reference source not found

Had the Prophet adopted a positive attitude towards the future of the da'wah and intended that a shura

be set up immediately after his death and that the leadership of the da'wah be handed over to someone elected according to this principle, he would have found it absolutely necessary to educate the Ummah and the faithful concerning the principles of shura with its rules and details, and to give it a form which reflected the divine and holy sanction, while also preparing the Islamic society both mentally and spiritually to accept this system.

This would have been vital because the Islamic society grew from a confederacy of clans which had not functioned according to the political principles of shura before Islam, but had in fact generally functioned according to tribal leadership, in which power, wealth and the principles of inheritance had a large part to play.

We can easily discover that the Prophet did not seek to educate his followers concerning the principles, legal details and theoretical concepts of shura, because such a policy, had it been carried out, would surely have been reflected and embodied in the ahadith transmitted from the Prophet, or in the mentality of the Ummah, at least as far as the earliest generation is concerned – the Muhajirun and the Ansar – who would have been obliged to implement the organization of the shura. We do not, however, find any clearly defined legal evidence from the organization of a shura in the prophetic ahadith.

As for the mentality of the Ummah or of the earliest generation thereof we can find no discernible reflection of any attempt to educate them to accept this. Indeed this generation subscribed to two different trends: the first is led by the Ahl al-Bayt (the People of the House of Prophet), while the other is exemplified by those present at as-Saqifa and the khalifah who only arose after the death of the Prophet. The first trend was composed of those who believed in the *wisaya* and *imama*, and there is no reflection of any belief in the concept of shura amongst them.

As for those who subscribed to the second trend, all the proofs and arguments which occurred during their lifetime and during their careers undoubtedly indicate that they neither believed in shura nor established their careers according to it, and the same is true of the rest of the groups who were alive at the time of the Prophet's death. The following narrative proves this:

When Abu Bakr's illness became acute he appointed Umar ibn al-Khattab and ordered Uthman to write down the pledge. So he wrote: "In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the pledge of Abu Bakr, the khalifah of the Messenger of Allah, to the believers and Muslims. Peace be upon you, and I extol Allah to you. I hereby appoint Umar ibn al-Khattab as your liege. So hear and obey!"

Then 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf came to him and said: "how are you this morning, O khalifah of the Prophet of Allah?" So he replied: "I am dying, and you have aggravated my condition because I appointed one of you and you have all become upset, as you all aspire to this office yourselves!"⁶

It is clear from the appointment of this khalifah and from the disapproval of the opposition that Abu Bakr did not consider the establishment of a shura but believed that he had the right to stipulate the next

khalifah and that this situation obliged obedience on the part of the Muslims. For this reason he ordered them to hear and obey, and did not simply nominate Umar, but obliged them to accept his stipulation.

We should also point out that Umar himself believed that he had the right to appoint a khalifah to rule over the Muslims, and appointed a group of six people and charged them with choosing his successor from amongst themselves, without any reference to the rights of the rest of the Muslims in this election.

Thus the rationale of the function of a shura was not exemplified in Umar's appointment of a khalifah to succeed him, just as it had not been exemplified in the method employed by the first khalifah. Indeed, when the people asked Umar about the appointment of the next khalifah, he said: "If one of two men were still alive I would charge him with the khalifah, and they are Salim the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfa, and Abu Ubaydaal-Jarrah. If Salim was still alive I would not have designated a shura." 7

Also Abu Bakr told 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf, while conversing with him on his deathbed: "I wish I had asked the Prophet of Allah about the appointment of a successor so that nobody could have contested it." 8

Furthermore one of those present when the Ansar assembled at as-Saqifa to appoint Sa'd ibn Ubada, said: "If the Muhajirun from Quraysh disagree they will say, We are the Muhajirun and we are his clan and his partisans." But some of the Ansar said, "So we shall say, We shall have a khalifah and you shall have a khalifah, for we will never be content with anything other than this!"

When Abu Bakr spoke to them he said: "We are the Muslims and the Muhajirun who were the first to adopt Islam, and for this reason the people must follow us, because we are the clan of the Prophet of Allah and of pure Arab lineage."

And when the Ansar suggested that the khalifah should alternate between the Muhajirun and the Ansar, Abu Bakr rejected it, saying: "When the Prophet of Allah came to the Arabs they found it difficult to leave the religion of their forefathers and differed and disagreed with him. Then Allah chose the first Muhajirun to believe in him from his people, and they became the first to worship Allah in this world, and were his partisans and kinsfolk. So it is they who have the most right to rule after him, which would only be disputed by the unjust."

But Al-Habbab ibn al-Mundhir, who encouraged the people in their determination, said: "Stand firmly in support of your claim, for these people are under your care and protection, and if they refuse we shall have a khalifah and they shall have one!" So Umar replied and said: "Impossible! Two swords cannot be sheathed in one scabbard. So only the false claimant, the deviant, or someone willing to risk his own destruction would dispute with us concerning the rule of Muhammad and his legacy, for we are his partisans and his clan." 9

If we wish to scrutinize this point we must take into consideration the method of appointment used by the first and second khulafah, the fact that this method was not rejected, the prevalent atmosphere which

surrounded the opposing factions of the leading personalities of the Muhajirun and the Ansar on the day of as-Saqifa, the obvious inclinations of the Muhajirun in deciding that the authority should rest with them and not with the Ansar, the emphasis which they placed upon the principle of inheritance which gave the clan of the Prophet the most right to succession, the willingness of many of the Ansar to accept the idea of two khulafah – one of whom would be from the Ansar, who won the khilafa on that day, and that he regretted not having asked the Prophet about his successor.

In fact all this proves, without a shade of doubt, that this first generation of the Islamic Ummah, which also included those who came to power after the death of the Prophet, did not give any thought to the concept of shura as regards the appointment of the khilafah nor did they possess a clearly defined understanding of its principles.

So how can we believe that the Prophet had instituted a policy of educating his followers concerning the legal and theoretical concepts of shura, to prepare the Muhajirun and the Ansar to submit the leadership of Islam to one elected according to these principles, when we cannot find any actual implementation of this method, or clear understanding thereof, amongst this generation!

Similarly, we cannot believe that the Prophet set down this method and its details legally and theoretically, but did not attempt to familiarize and educate the Muslims in this respect. This in fact proves the aforementioned theory that the Prophet did not present the principle of shura to the Ummah as an alternative to more traditional methods, because it is improbable that such a principle could have been presented and then disappeared completely from the reports of all sections of this society.

Other obvious points which further illustrate this are as follows:

- a) The principle of shura was a new one for this area, which had not experienced any sort of highly developed government before the time of the Prophet, and thus required extensive education to acquaint its inhabitants as to its exact nature;
- b) The shura as a concept was unclear and could not be presented or put into action without its details, rules, and guidelines for preference in the case of dispute being clarified. Moreover, should these guidelines be based upon numbers and quantities, or upon qualities and experience, or upon other attributes which would facilitate the clarification of the concept and render it immediately functional upon the death of the Prophet?
- c) In fact shura was an expression of the Ummah's implementation of authority according to consultation and the determination of the people concerning their government. The responsibility for this lay with all those who were involved in shura. If this shura was legally acceptable and ready to be put into practice immediately after the death of the Prophet, the majority of the people should have been previously instructed concerning it, so that each could adopt a positive attitude towards shura and bear his share of the responsibility.

All these points prove that the Prophet had he wished that ashura be set up to choose a successor after his death, would have had to disseminate the concept of shura on a wide and profound scale to prepare his followers psychologically and to fill any gaps in their understanding, while also explaining the details which would make it a workable concept. The presentation of this concept on this level and wide scale could not have been carried out by the Prophet and then disappear totally from the minds of all the Muslims who were alive at the time of the Prophet's death.

There is of course the possibility that the Prophet did in fact present the concept of shura to its best advantage and on the scale which circumstances required so that the Muslims understood its nature, but that political motivations led to its suppression so that the Muslims felt forced to hide what the Prophet had already taught them about the rules and details of shura.

This theory is, however, impracticable because whatever may be claimed about them, these motives could not have influenced the ordinary Muslims from among the sahaba who did not participate in the political events which took place immediately after the death of the Prophet, or play an important role in the gathering at as-Saqifa, but were rather onlookers; for such people represent a large percentage of every society irrespective of the political forces therein.

If the concept of shura had been presented by the Prophet according to the requirements of the society this would not have been strictly for the ears of those who had political motives, because many people would have heard about it and it would naturally have been reflected in the actions of the ordinary members of the sahaba, just as the prophetic ahadith concerning the merits of Imam Ali and his designations were actually reflected in the attitude of the sahaba themselves.

Also why did these political motives not prevent the ahadith concerning the merits of Imam Ali, his designation and his rights to the leadership from being handed down to us through the sahaba of the Prophet, in spite of the fact that these contradicted the prevalent attitudes of the time, when we possess no reports concerning the concept of shura?

In fact even those who represented these prevalent attitudes often found themselves in disagreement concerning political affairs, and would have found it advantageous to uphold the idea of a shura in opposition to the other faction. Yet none of these factions used this idea as a precept which they had heard from the Prophet. An example of this can be found in the position adopted by Talha concerning Abu Bakr's appointment of Umar, and in his denial of and obvious anger against this appointment, because, in spite of his rejection, he did not seek to countermand this appointment by calling for a shura, or to condemn Abu Bakr for departing from the teachings of the Prophet concerning shura and the election of a successor. Error: Reference source not found

It is also clear that had the Prophet decided to entrust the first generation of Muslims, which included the Muhajirun and the Ansar who were his contemporaries, with the guarding of Islam after his death and with the responsibility for the continuation of the task of transformation, he would have been obliged to

prepare this generation with an extensive ideological and intellectual project so that they could grasp the concept firmly and practice it according to their awareness thereof, and could find solutions to the problems with which Islam would be continually confronted.

This is especially true when we consider that the Prophet, who foretold the fall of Khusrow and Caesar, knew that Islam was destined to win many victories, and that the Islamic Ummah would, in the near future, include new nations and cover a large area and would thus face the responsibility of proselytizing Islam to these nations and protecting the Ummah from the negative consequences of such expansion, while also applying the legal rules upon the conquered lands and their inhabitants.

In spite of the fact that the first generation of Muslims was the purest ever to embrace Islam and the most prepared to sacrifice for it, we cannot detect any indication of the specialized preparation required to assume the guardianship of the faith, nor of wide and profound instructions concerning its exact nature.

In fact the factors which illustrate this point are so numerous that it is impossible to study them in this particular work. We can, however, point out in relation to this that the number of texts which are reported from the Prophet by the sahaba in the sphere of legislation only amounts to a few hundred ahadith, while there were about 12,000 sahaba according to the history books.

Furthermore, the Prophet lived in a town with thousands of them and prayed with them in the same masjid morning and evening, so why can we not find some indication of specialized preparation amongst these people?

It is well-known that the sahaba refrained from asking the Prophet questions to the extent that all of them would wait until a bedouin came from outside Medina to ask a question and then listen to the Prophet's reply, because they considered a question unnecessary if it concerned something that had not yet taken place. For this reason Umar once announced from the *minbar*: "By Allah, man is forbidden to ask questions concerning what has never existed, for indeed the Prophet clarified what is in existence." ¹⁰

And he added: "It is not permissible for one to ask questions about what has never existed, for Allah has given His judgement upon all things that exist." Also a man came to Umar's son one day and asked him about something and Umar's son told him: "Do not ask about what has never existed for I have heard Umar cursing one who asks regarding what has never happened." ¹¹

There was also a man who asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b about a problem and he said: "O my son, does this affair which you asked me about exist?" He replied: "No", so the former said: "If that is the case, leave this question until it does exist." ¹²

One day Umar was reading the Qur'an and came to the ayah:

“And We caused to grow therein seeds, vines, herbs, olive trees, palms and gardens (which were) profuse, fruitful and verdant (abban)’ (Qur’an 28:32) 13

So someone said: “ We know all of this, but what is abban?” Then Umar said: “ This, in the name of Allah, is an irrelevant question, and it is not important whether you know the meaning of *abban* or not. Follow what is clear in the Book and practise it, and leave what you do not know to Allah.”

We can thus discern that the sahaba tended to desist from questions other than those concerning clearly defined and existent problems. It was in fact this tendency that led to the scarcity of legislative texts reported on the authority of the Prophet and later necessitated the consultation of sources other than the Qur'an and the Sunnah, such as legal discretion (*istihsan*) and analogy (*qiyas*), and the other features of independent judgement (*ijtihad*) which combine to form the personal interpretation of the mujtahid, which can allow the man's personality, his tastes and his personal understanding to enter into the legislative act.

Such a tendency is, of course, diametrically opposed to the process of personal and ideological preparation which would have required the extensive education of this generation, while also requiring that they be acquainted with the legal stipulations concerning the problems which they would face when involved in the leadership.

Just as the sahaba refrained from asking questions to the Prophet they also chose not to record his ahadith in writing, inspite of the fact that the ahadith constituted the second Islamic source and that this was the only way to preserve it and prevent distortion. Indeed, Al-Hirawi expressed openly his disparagement of the oral tradition on the authority of Yahya ibn Sa'id from 'Abd Allah ibn ad-Dinar, saying that neither the sahaba nor the next generation wrote down the ahadith but transmitted them orally and learnt them by heart, except for the book about the alms tax (*Kitab as-Sadaqat*).

In fact, according to the Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd, the second khalifah thought regarding the best position to adopt concerning the Sunnah of the Prophet for a whole month, but finally announced his prohibition of the documentation thereof. Thus the Sunnah of the Prophet, which was the most important Islamic source after Al-Qur'an al-Karim, was destined to suffer arbitrarily from forgetfulness, distortion and the death of those who had learnt the traditions by heart (*huffaz*) for nearly 150 years.

The only exceptions to this were the Ahl al-Bayt who applied themselves to the documented recording of ahadith from the earliest period, and we know from the numerous ahadith reported on the authority of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt that they possess a weighty book which had been dictated by the Prophet of Allah and written by the hand of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and which included all the Sunnah of the Prophet of Allah.

Do you, by Allah, believe that this naive group of people – if they were in fact naive – who refrained from asking questions about matters which had not yet occurred and forbade the documentation of the Sunnah of the Prophet after he had pronounced it, were capable of guiding the new religion or of leading

it through the most important and difficult stages of its long history? Or do you, by Allah, believe that the Prophet left his Sunnah to posterity without ensuring its organization and documentation, although he had commanded his followers to practice it?

Furthermore, had he really arranged for the concept of a shura, would it not have been necessary to delineate its rules and to organize his Sunnah, so that the shura could progress according to a definite programme in which personal desires would have no part to play? Or is it that the only rational interpretation of this is that the Prophet had prepared Imam Ali to assume the leadership after his death and entrusted him with his complete Sunnah and taught him 1,000 types of knowledge?

In fact, the events which took place after the death of the Prophet proved that the Muhajirun and the Ansar had not received any sort of instruction concerning many of the momentous problems which the da'wah had to face after the time of the Prophet so that neither the khalifah nor the central government who supported him had a clear idea as to how the lands won by the Islamic conquests should be dealt with according to the Shari'ah, whether these lands should be divided amongst the fighting forces or should be regarded as endowments (*auqaf*) for the good of all Muslims.

For it is surely inconceivable that the Prophet assured the Muslims that they would conquer the lands of Khusrow and Caesar and intended that the Muhajirun and the Ansar should lead the da'wah and handle the problems arising from these victories when he did not acquaint them with the legal premises which were necessary to control the large proportion of the world which was to come under Islamic rule.

Indeed we can go even further and illustrate that the generation which was contemporary to the Prophet did not even possess a clearly defined picture of the religious matters which the Prophet had practised hundreds of times within the sight and hearing of the sahaba. A good example of this is the case of the prayers said over a dead man (*salat al-mayyit*), a practice which the Prophet had carried out publicly on hundreds of occasions, performing it as one of the funeral cortege with the funeral escort and those who offered up prayers.

Yet, in spite of this, it appears that the sahaba did not consider it necessary to note the form of this rite carefully as long as the Prophet led the prayer, while they followed him step by step. Because of this they fell into disagreement after the death of the Prophet as to the number of takbir (to say Allahu Akbar) repeated in the *salat al-mayyit*.

At-Tahawi reported from Isma'il saying: "When the Prophet of Allah died, the people differed as to how many takbir should be said over the bier. One man would say, I heard the Prophet of Allah say Allahu Akbar seven times. While another said, I heard the Prophet of Allah say Allahu Akbar five times and a third would say, I heard the Prophet of Allah say Allahu Akbar four times." So they differed openly until the death of Abu Bakr and when Umar became khalifah and perceived their disagreement he became grieved and sent for one of the sahaba of the Prophet of Allah, and said, "You are the sahaba of the Prophet of Allah! When you differ before the people they shall differ after you, and when you agree upon

a matter the people shall agree upon it. So consider what you shall agree upon.” And it was as if he had awakened them. So they replied, “it shall be as you wish, O Leader of the Faithful.” 14

Thus we can see that the sahaba depended on the Prophet during his lifetime and did not feel that it was immediately necessary to study the rules and concepts closely as long as they were under his protection.

You may think that the picture which has been painted of the sahaba and of the points which illustrate their inability to rule contradict our belief that the prophetic programme of instruction achieved a high level of success and produced an awesome and religious generation. In reply to this we must point out that in studying the actual nature of the medial generation who were the Prophet's contemporaries we have not mentioned anything which would clash violently with the positive appraisal of the prophetic instructions which he applied during his noble life.

Because, while we believe that the prophetic instructions were a unique and divine example and an outstanding religious revelation in the history of prophetic acts, we have found that the belief in this and the attainment of a fair appraisal of the outcome of these instructions does not depend upon the observation of results without reference to the circumstances which surrounded these instructions, nor upon observations of quantity separated from those of quality.

In order to clarify this we shall cite the following example. We shall assume that there is a teacher who is teaching a number of students the English language and literature, and that we want to assess his teaching potential. It is not sufficient simply to scrutinize the students' standard of cultural knowledge or their familiarity with the English language and its literature.

We must also take into consideration the time for which the teacher has been teaching these students, their previous experience, their proximity to or distance from the atmosphere of the English language and literature, the size of the difficulties and exceptional problems which confront the teaching process and hinder its natural course, the targets which the teacher aspired to when teaching the literature of this language to his students, and the final outcome of the teaching process when compared to many other types of instruction.

And when assessing the prophetic instructions we must take into consideration the following points:

(1) The short length of time in which the Prophet was actually carrying out this plan of instruction, which did not exceed two decades, as far as his earliest sahaba, who accompanied him at the beginning of his mission were concerned, and did not exceed a single decade for the vast majority of the Ansar, or three or four years for the large number of converts to Islam from the time of the *Truce of al-Hudaybiyya* until the conquest of Makkah.

(2) The previous intellectual spiritual, religious and behavioural environment in which these people lived before the Prophet started his mission, and the empty simplicity and aimlessness which confronted them

in various spheres of their lives. I do not think it necessary to illustrate this point further because it is self-evident. Islam was not a superficial, reformatory process in society, but was rather a radical and revolutionary process aimed at the building of a new society, which implied a total conceptual change in attitudes between the previous and new environment, to which the Prophet directed all his efforts.

(3) The events and political and military confrontations which bedevilled that era on various different fronts and made the relationship between the Prophet and his sahaba distinct from that of a person like Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) and his disciples, for this relationship was not one of a teacher or instructor who could devote his time totally to his students, but was in fact that of a Prophet who was an instructor while also the military leader and head of State.

(4) The social and religious conflict which arose from close contact with the *Ahl al-Kitab* (the People of the Book), and with various different religious cultures, for this contact and the opposition raised by those who opposed the new faith and were educated according to older religious culture proved a source of unrest and continual provocation. Indeed every one of us knows that this resulted in the Jewish intellectual trend which was infiltrated accidentally or purposely into the sphere of speculation, and a close scrutiny of Al- Qur'an al-Karim is enough to illustrate the extent of the danger posed by the counter revolution and the extensive involvement of revelation in observing it and disputing its concepts.

(5) The fact that the target which the Great Teacher was trying to attain generally was, at this stage, the creation of a sound, popular framework which would make it possible for the leadership of the new message to interact with the Ummah and be closely involved in its experiences, both during and after the lifetime of the Prophet.

But the target was not, at this stage, the elevation of the Ummah to the level of leadership itself, as this required complete understanding of Islam, comprehensive knowledge of its rules and total awareness of its concepts. The limitation of his target at this stage to the level which we have mentioned was logical, because the nature of the process of change dictated it. For it would have been illogical to conceive this target other than within the bounds of possibility or within the limitations which we have mentioned, considering the circumstances faced by Islam at this time, and the ideological, spiritual, intellectual and social differences between the new religion and the prevalent corrupt reality of the era, which would have made it impossible for the people to raise themselves to the leadership of this religion after only one or two decades.

This point shall be examined further in the next paragraph, in which we shall give proofs of the continued responsibility involved as regards the new revolutionary experiment, which was illustrated in the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt, so that the khilafah of Imam Ali was actually dictated by the logical process of change throughout the history of Islam.

(6) The fact that a great many of the Ummah which was left by the Prophet were *Muslimat al-Fath* that is Muslims who converted to Islam after the Conquest of Makkah and after the new religion had become

the most powerful political and military force in the Arabian Peninsula. Naturally, the Prophet was only destined to limited contact with them in the short time left to him after the Conquest, and most of this contact was in his capacity as ruler.

Because of the stage through which the Islamic State was passing the concept of *Mu'allifa Qulubuhum* appeared, and in order to win over the hearts of people they were given the right to receive zakat and other measures. Clearly this section of the Ummah was not separated from the other, but was an integral part thereof, influencing and being influenced at the same time.

Thus, in the study of these six points, we have discovered that the prophetic instructions were actually extremely successful and brought about a singular transformation within the society, while also producing a virtuous generation who were capable of realizing the Prophet's aim as regards the creation of a sound, popular foundation who could rally around the guiding leadership of the new experience and support it.

Because of this we also find that this generation was capable of performing its role as the sound, popular foundation as long as mature and guiding leadership was present in the person of the Prophet.

Had this leadership been allowed to take its divine course, this foundation would have continued to play its correct part, although this does not mean that it was actually ready to assume this leadership itself, or to guide the new experience, because this would have required greater spiritual and believing cohesion with Islam, and a stronger and more extensive identification with its rules and concepts and with the various aspects of its attitudes toward life, while also necessitating a more intense elimination of the ranks of the Ummah which included the *munafiqun*, the *mundisun* (infiltrators) and the *Mu'allifa Qulubuhum*, who were still a numerically and historically important part of this generation, whose negative influences are indicated by the number of verses in Al-Qur'an al-Karim in which especially the *munafiqun*, their machinations and their position are mentioned.

There were, of course, some individuals from this generation whose high religious attainments were formed by this instruction, as their personalities fused in its melting pot, like Salman Farsi, Abu Dharr, Ammar and many others. But I would like to point out that the existence of these individuals as part of this large generation does not prove that this generation had, as whole, attained the level at which the control of this momentous experience could be handed over to them, according to the principle of shura.

Indeed, even the majority of these individual elites did not possess the religious qualifications which would have made them capable of leading the experience as regards its intellectual and cultural features, in spite of their staunch loyalty and profound devotion, because Islam is not an ideology made by man whose ideas could be defined as a result of practical experience, or whose concepts could be clarified as a result of devoted experimentation.

It is rather the message of Allah, whose rules and concepts had been ordained and divinely increased with every piece of legislation necessitated by experience, so the leadership needed to fully comprehend

its statutes and details, and study assiduously its rules and concepts, otherwise it would be forced to rely upon previous intellectual ideas and tribal connections, which would lead to a break in the continuity of the experience, especially when we remember that Islam was the last of the religions of the heavens and must continue and surpass all temporal, regional and national laws.

It was thus impermissible that the leadership, which would mould the foundations of this eternal religion, should practise a series of mistakes and correct actions, in which the mistakes would be accumulated over a period of time until they formed a fatal flaw which could threaten the Islamic experience with decline and destruction.

Everything that has gone before proves that the instructions given by the Prophet to the Muhajirun and the Ansar did not reach the level which would have been necessitated by the conscious, intellectual and political preparation required to guide the future path of the da'wah and the process of change which had been instigated by the Prophet. It was, in fact, restricted to that required for a conscious, popular foundation which could rally to the leadership of the da'wah, both in the present and the future.

Each assumption which points to the belief that the Prophet intended that the support of the future experience and guardianship of the da'wah immediately after his death should be vested in the Muhajirun and the Ansar implicitly involves an indictment against the greatest and most discerning religious leader in the history of reformatory movements, because there was no clear distinction between the understanding necessary for the popular foundation of the da'wah and that necessary for the guidance of the da'wah or its intellectual and political leadership. Error: Reference source not found

The da'wah was, of course, a reformatory process and a framework for a new way of life, charged with the task of building a new community and with uprooting all *jahili* principles and all their foundations. The Islamic Ummah did not, as a whole, live in the shadow of this reformatory process for more than a single decade at the most, which is not usually long enough, according to the logic of ideological religions and reformatory beliefs, to raise a generation to the level of awareness and objectivity and freedom from the residue of past ideas, at which they can grasp the ideas of the new da'wah, and be capable of assuming the guardianship of the message, and handling the problems of this da'wah, while also continuing its reformatory process without a leader.

In fact the logic of ideological religions makes it inevitable that the Ummah should continue under ideological trusteeship for a longer period of time, in which it could be raised to the level of guardianship itself. This is not something which we have simply inferred, as it was also a fact substantiated by the events which took place after the death of the Prophet and became clear after half a century or less in the attempts of the Muhajirun and the Ansar to lead and guard the da'wah.

For, after less than a quarter of a century of this 'guardianship,' the khilafah of this generation and the religious experience resulting from its leadership were destroyed under the force of the heavy attacks made upon it by the former enemies of Islam, but this time from within rather than from without the

Islamic experience.

These enemies were able to infiltrate by degrees the weak points of this experience and take advantage of the inattentive leadership. Then they usurped this leadership insolently and violently and forced the Ummah and its original, pioneering generation to renounce its identity and its leadership, while the leadership itself turned into a line of hereditary kings, infatuated with prestige, who murdered the innocent, squandered wealth, neglected the rules of Islam, caused its laws to ossify, and fraudulently used the resources of the people. Thus the lands conquered by the Muslims became the gardens of Quraysh and the khilafah a toy of Banu Umayya.

So the true facts of the experience after the death of the Prophet and the results of this quarter century support the previous inference, which emphasized the support for guidance, and the intellectual and political leadership of the Muhajirun and Ansari immediately after the death of the Prophet was a premature step which was taken before its natural time. It is, however, illogical that the Prophet should have taken a step of this kind.

The Third Path

The third path is the only remaining possibility which is consistent with the nature of the facts and logical in light of the circumstances surrounding the da'wah and the faithful, and the attitude of the Prophet, namely that the Prophet adopted a positive stance towards the future of Islam after his death and at the orders of Allah, May He be Praised and Exalted, chose someone whose deep involvement in the formation of the da'wah made him an obvious nominee, and specifically prepared him religiously and in the art of leadership so that he could exemplify the intellectual authority and political leadership of the experience, and maintain the leadership of the Ummah and its ideological structure after the Prophet's death, with the support of the conscious, popular foundation of the Muhajirun and the Ansar, and strengthen it towards the level at which it could handle the problems of leadership.

This, we find, is the only way in which the Prophet could ensure the future security of the da'wah and protect the experience from deviation in the course of its development.

And thus it was. There are not any signs in the texts which have been transmitted on the authority of the Prophet to prove that he privately prepared any of the other Muslims religiously, culturally or ideologically so as to qualify them to assume either intellectual or political authority.

Nor is there any proof therein that he entrusted any of the other Muslims with the future of the da'wah and with the intellectual and political leadership of the Ummah after his death. But these facts only serve to explicate the Prophet's attitude towards the third possibility facing him, and to prove that the nature of the affair was in fact as we have surmised.

The person designated to receive this training in the religion and leadership and chosen as the one to

whom the future of the da'wah and its intellectual and political leadership would be surrendered was none other than Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, whose deep involvement in the formation of the da'wah made him an obvious nominee.

He was the first Muslim and the first to fight in the path of Islam (*mujahid*) during its bitter battle against all its enemies, and was deeply involved in the life of the Prophet, and was his foster-son whose eyes opened on the Prophet's lap and who grew up under his protection, and who had more opportunity to collaborate with him and take part in his plans than any other man alive. In fact the evidence from the lives of the Prophet and the Imam which indicate that the Prophet prepared the Imam especially in religious matters is indeed substantial.

The Prophet chose to explain the concept of da'wah and its truths to him, and gave him intellectual answers and sought to cultivate the Imam's awareness when he asked numerous questions while also spending long hours with him during both the night and the day, opening his eyes to the concepts of Islam and to the problems to be faced during its progress, and to the management of the task until the last day of his noble life.

Al-Hakim reports in Al-Mustadrak on the authority of Ibn Ishaq: "I asked Al-Qasim ibn al-Abbas – How did Ali become the heir of the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Because he was the first among us to embrace Islam and the most faithful in his adherence thereto". And in the *Hulyat al-Awliya* it is reported from Ibn Abbas that he said: "We used to say that the Prophet entrusted Ali with 70 pledges which he did not entrust to anyone else."

Also An-Nisa'i reported on the authority of Ibn Abbas that Ali used to say: "I had a privileged relationship with the Messenger of Allah which was not granted to any other mortal, as I used to visit the Prophet of Allah every night. If he was praying I would wait until he said the tasbeeh and then enter, and if he wasn't praying he would permit me and I would enter." It is also related from the Imam that he said: "I had two meetings with the Prophet – the night meeting and the day meeting." While An-Nisa'i also relates that the Imam used to say: "Whenever I asked the Messenger of Allah a question he replied and when I was silent he would speak to me."

Al-Hakim also relates this in Al-Mustadrak and says that it is sound according to the two shaikhs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). An-Nisa'i relates from Umm Salama that she used to say: "By the One by Whom Umm Salama swears, the closest person to the Messenger of Allah at his death was Ali. On the morning that the Messenger of Allah died the Messenger of Allah sent for Ali, and I thought that he had been sent on an errand because the Prophet said, 'Has Ali come?' three times. He came before sunrise, and when he came we recognized that the Prophet wished to talk with him. So we left the house (we were at that time with the Messenger of Allah in 'Aisha's house), and as I was the last to leave the house, I sat just outside the door and was closest to it. And Ali leant over him and was the last person to converse with him as the Prophet whispered and talked with him."

Amir al-Mu'minin (leader of the Faithful) Imam Ali in his famous rigorous speech, in which he described his unique relationship with the Messenger and the Prophet's care regarding his training and education, said: "You know of my connection with the Messenger of Allah, my close kinship to him and my intimate position. He put me on his lap when I was a child, hugged me to his breast, embraced me in his bed, so that his body touched mine and so I smelled his scent, and would also chew things and then give them to me to eat. But he did not find me lying in my speech or pompous in my act. I used to follow him as the small camel follows its mother and every day he showed me part of his moral acts and ordered me to do likewise. Every year he used to take me to Hira and only I could see him, for at that period of time of Islam there was only the Messenger of Allah, Khadijah and myself as the third, as nobody else lived in the house. So I saw the light of revelation and the message and smelled the fragrance of prophecy." These testimonies and plenty of other evidence gives us a picture of the training which the Prophet gave to Imam Ali in order to raise him to the level at which he could lead the da'wah successfully.

Similarly, there are a great many indications from the lifetime of Imam Ali after the death of the Prophet which reveal the Prophet's private ideological training of Imam Ali and reflect the effects and results of this private instruction. The Imam was the man to whom the ruling leadership resorted for consultation and authority when they wished to solve some difficult problem which they could not solve themselves. But we cannot find a single instance in the history of the Islamic experience during the time of the four khulafah in which the Imam turned to someone else for an opinion as to the way in which a problem should be dealt with according to Islam, whereas there were tens of instances in which the ruling Islamic leadership felt it necessary to consult the Imam, in spite of their reservations in this matter.

If the evidence for the claim that the Prophet prepared the Imam privately to assume the leadership of the da'wah after his death are numerous, those which prove that the Prophet revealed this plan and officially entrusted the intellectual and political leadership of the da'wah to Imam Ali are hardly less numerous; a fact which we can discern from the *Hadith al-Dar*; *Hadith ath-Thaqalayn*, *Hadith al-Manzila*, *Hadith al-Ghadir* and from many other prophetic texts.

So Shi'ism was established within the Islamic da'wah and was exemplified in the prophetic presentation thereof, which was implemented by the Prophet at the orders of Allah so that the future safety of the da'wah could be ensured. This Shi'ism did not appear as a superficial phenomenon in the theatre of events, but was rather a necessary result of the needs and original circumstances of the da'wah, which made it necessary for Islam to produce Shi'ism.

In other words, it was incumbent upon the first leader of the experience to instruct a second leader under whose leadership, and under that of his successors, the experience could continue its revolutionary development, and attain the total success of its radical reformatory aims by eliminating all the remains of the fundamental ideas of *jahiliyyah* and establishing an Ummah which had reached the level necessary to handle the tasks and problems faced by the da'wah.

How the Shi'a came into existence

We now know how Shi'ism came into existence, but how did the Shi'a emerge and how did the schism of the Ummah develop from this? This is a question which we shall now answer.

When we follow the first stage of the life of the Muslim Ummah during the lifetime of the Prophet, we find that there were two different principal trends accompanying the development of the Ummah and the beginning of the Islamic experience from the earliest years, which co-existed within the embryonic Ummah established by the guiding Prophet.

This difference between the two trends led to an ideological schism immediately after the death of the Prophet which divided the Ummah into two sections, one of which was destined to rule and extend its influence so as to include the majority of the Muslims, while the other section was forced further from power and was destined to exist as an opposing minority within the framework of the greater Muslim Ummah. This minority was in fact the Shi'a.

The two principal trends which accompanied the development of the Ummah during the lifetime of the Prophet from the beginning were:

- 1) the trend which believed in devotion to Islam and its arbitration, and in total submission to the religious texts in every sphere of life,
- 2) The trend which believed that belief in Islam did not necessitate devotion except in the special scope of religious observances and metaphysics, and believed in the possibility of *ijtihad* (independent judgement), and the permissibility of making judgements on this basis with changes and modifications in the religious texts according to their interests in matters other than the above in the sphere of life.

Although the sahaba, as the believing and enlightened vanguard of Islam, were the most perfect and most important seeds for its religious development to the extent that there has never in the course of history been an ideological generation more magnificent, purer or more nobler than that established by the Prophet, we find that it is necessary to accept the existence of a large trend, from the very lifetime of the Prophet who inclined towards proposing the use of *ijtihad* and circumstantial considerations in determining their interests, above strict adherence to the religious texts.

Similarly, there was another trend which believed in religious arbitration and in submission and devotion thereto concerning all religious texts and all areas of life. One of the factors contributing to the spread of the second trend (*al-ijtihad*) amongst the Muslim ranks was its coherence with man's natural tendency towards making judgements and according to its interests, as he understands them, rather than according to a decision whose significance he does not understand.

This trend was represented by a daring group of important sahaba like, Umar ibn al-Khattab, who disputed with the Messenger and made judgements contradicting the texts in many subjects, believing

that they had the right to do so. In this respect we can cite Umar's attitude towards the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya and his objection thereto, his attitude towards the *adhan*: (call to prayer) and his decision to exclude, '*Hayy 'alakhayr al-'amal*,' his attitude towards the Prophet regarding the *Mutia'a l-Hajj*, and other examples of his attitude towards the use of *ijtihad*.

Both these trends were reflected in the presence of the Messenger during the last days of his life. In his *Sahih*, Al-Bukhari quotes on the authority of Ibn Abbas: "When the Messenger of Allah was about to die there were men gathered in the house, amongst whom was Umar ibn al-Khattab. The Prophet said, 'Come I shall give you a document after which none shall go astray'.

But Umar said, 'The Prophet has been overcome by pain and he has already given us the Qur'an, and the Book of Allah is sufficient for us.' Whereupon the people gathered together in the house disagreed, and one of them argued, saying, 'Come near! The Prophet is going to give us a document after which none shall go astray,' while another said the same as Umar. And when the nonsensical speech and disagreement became too much for the Prophet he told them, Depart!" This incident alone serves to prove the deep-seated attitudes of the two trends, and the extent of the disagreement and struggle between them.

In order to illustrate the deep-seated attitudes of the trend who believed in such judgement, we can add an account of the controversy and disagreement between the *sahaba* which surrounded the appointment of Usama ibn Zayd over the army, in spite of the fact that there was a clear prophetic designation to that effect. This controversy continued until the Messenger of Allah, who was ill, came out to the people and spoke to them saying: "O people, what is this that I have heard concerning the attitude of some of you to the appointment of Usama? If you oppose the appointment of Usama you should have opposed the appointment of his father before him. I swear by Allah that he was worthy of the appointment and that his son is worthy of it after him!"

The struggle between these two trends, which was visible during the lifetime of the Prophet, was also reflected in the attitude of the Muslims to Imam Ali's designation as leader of the *da'wah* after the death of the Prophet. Those who represented the devotional trend (*Al-Ittijad at-Ta'abbudi*) found it necessary to accept this designation without hesitation or modification, whereas the second trend thought that they could reject this designation of the Prophet when their independent judgement led them to one which was more in keeping with their understanding of the circumstances.

Thus we can see that the Shi'a appeared immediately after the death of the Prophet and was represented by those Muslims who actually accepted his designation of Imam Ali as the leader, whose leadership had been stipulated by the Prophet which should have been realized immediately upon the Prophet's death.

So the Shi'i trend took form in the first instance because of the prevention of Imam Ali's assumption of the leadership at as-Saqifa and the entrusting of the authority to someone else. In *Al-Ittijad At-Tabarsi*

says, on the authority of Iban ibn Taghlib: "I told Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq, peace be upon him, 'May I be your ransom. Did any of the sahaba of the Messenger of Allah deny the appointment of Abu Bakr?' He said, 'Yes. Twelve of the Muhajirun denied it: Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn Abi'l-As, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad, Ammar ibn Yasir, and Barida 'l-Aslami; as did the following Ansar: Abu 'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayhan, Uthman ibn Hunayf, Khuzayma ibn Thabit Dhu sh-Shihadatayn, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari'."

You may say that if the Shi'i trend represented close adherence to the text while the other trend represented independent judgement this implies that the Shi'a refuted the concept of *ijtihad* and did not permit themselves to apply it, whereas we know that the Shi'a have always practised the use of *ijtihad* in matters concerning Islamic law (*ash-Shari'ah*).

The answer to this is that the *ijtihad* employed by the Shi'a is the derivation of a ruling from the legal texts, which they believe not only to be permissible, but obligatory for a section of the Ummah, not the *ijtihad* which is to reject the legal texts or to subject the legal text to the personal view of the mujtahid, or to some resultant benefit, for this is impermissible and the Shi'a trend refutes any such use of *ijtihad*. When we talk of the development of these two trends from the origins of Islam onwards, one of which followed the texts closely while the other employed *ijtihad*, we mean by *ijtihad* the making of judgements in contradiction to the text or the acceptance of such a judgement.

The appearance of these two trends would have been natural in the case of any radical and reformatory religion which attempted to change a corrupt reality from its very roots upwards, although the extent of their influence would have differed according to the strength of the residue of previous ideas, the extent of the individual's identification with the principles of the new religion, and of his devotion thereto. We of course know that the trend which represented the close adherence to the texts identified with Islam and devoted them totally to it; and did not reject the use of *ijtihad* within the framework of the religious texts and in extracting legal rulings from these texts.

It is also important that we should point out that this adherence to the texts does not imply ossification and rigidity, which would be incompatible with the problems imposed by progress and by the many different modernizing factors which are part of man's life. As we understand it, adherence to the text is adherence to Islam and the total acceptance thereof, for Islam carries within itself all the flexibility and capacity necessary to adapt to the needs of any particular time and all the elements of modernization and progress included therein.

Thus, adherence to Islam and its texts is also adherence to all these elements, and to their capacity for original creation and modernization. This is a general sketch to explain Shi'ism as a natural phenomenon within the framework of Islam and the appearance of the Shi'a as an answer to this natural phenomenon.

Before ending, I would like to mention a point which I believe to be very important. Some scholars have tried to distinguish between two different aspects of Shi'ism: the first is spiritual Shi'ism and the second is

political Shi'ism. Moreover, they believed that spiritual Shi'ism is older than its political counterpart, and that the Imami Imams from the lineage of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, retired from the political scene after the massacre at Karbala, moved their attention to spiritual guidance and ritual acts, and withdrew from the world.

However, the truth is that Shi'ism has never been solely a purely spiritual trend from its earliest beginnings, and indeed originated at the very heart of Islam as a movement dedicated to assisting Imam Ali to achieve his rightful position as the sole ideological leader of Islam after the death of the Prophet as we previously explained in our examination of the circumstances which led to the birth of Shi'ism. It is not in fact possible, in view of the circumstances which we have examined, to divorce the spiritual side from the social in any representation of Shi'ism, just as it is impossible to divorce one from the other in Islam itself.

Thus Shi'ism can only be divided when it loses its significance as an attempt to safeguard the future of the da'wah after the death of the Prophet, a future which required a combination of both ideological authority and social leadership.

There was a great deal of support for Imam Ali among the Muslim ranks who believed that he was the person capable of maintaining the type of leadership initiated by the three khulafah, and it was this which brought him to power after the murder of Uthman. But this mere support is not Shi'ism, neither spiritual nor political, because the Shi'a believe Imam Ali should have ruled instead of these three khulafah, and should have assumed the khilafah immediately after the Prophet. Thus the wide support for Imam Ali amongst the Muslim ranks extended beyond the scope of true Shi'ism so that the supposed spiritual and political wings of Shi'ism were actually an element within this greater support and we can hardly claim this case as an example of divided Shi'ism.

Similarly, the spiritual and ideological support which the Imam enjoyed from some of the important sahaba during the reigns of Abu Bakr and Umar (such as Salman, Abu Dharr, Ammar and others) does not indicate a spiritual Shi'ism divorced from its political side. On the contrary, it expresses the fact that these sahaba believed ideologically and politically in the rights of Imam Ali to the leadership of the da'wah after the death of the Prophet and that their ideological belief in his leadership was reflected in their previous spiritual support, while their political belief in his leadership was reflected in their opposition to the khilafah of Abu Bakr and to the trend which turned the authority from the Imam in favour of another.

In fact, there was never any such division between spiritual Shi'ism and social Shi'ism, and such an idea only presented itself to the Shi'i believer after he succumbed to the reality of the situation, and after the fire of Shi'ism in its limited meaning as a movement towards truly Islamic leadership within the Ummah and the accomplishment of the radical, reformatory task undertaken by the Great Messenger had been extinguished in his heart, and had turned into a purely religious belief which the individual bore within his heart, or from which he derived his conduct and aspirations.

We now come to the claim that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt from the progeny of Imam Husayn withdrew from politics and cut themselves off from the world. In fact it is worth noting that Shi'ism, as we understand it, was a means towards the continuation of truly Islamic leadership. Islamic leadership, however, simply means the continuation of the type of leadership initiated by the Noble Messenger towards the total establishment of an Ummah on the basis of Islam, and it is thus impossible to imagine a way in which the Imams could have withdrawn from social affairs without withdrawing also from Shi'ism.

However, the Imams' decision not to take up arms against the contemporary governments helped to spread the belief that they had in fact abdicated their social interest in the leadership. Yet we possess many texts transmitted on the authority of the Imams which show that each Imam was always ready to undertake military action if he was sure that he had the necessary followers and strength to achieve the Islamic aims.

If we follow the path of the Shi'i movement we find that the Shi'i leadership, which was represented by the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, believed that the achievement of authority was not in itself sufficient for the fulfillment of the Islamic reformatory process, unless this authority was supported by ideological, popular bases which were aware of the aims of this government, strove to guard it and explain its attitudes to the populace, and stood firm in times of hardship.

In the middle of the first century after the death of the Prophet the Shi'i leadership was still continually trying to regain control of the Ummah by means which they believed in, in spite of the distance between them and the government, because they believed that they had strong, popular support from the *Muhajirun*, *Ansar*, and *Tabi'un* (next generation) who were aware, or semi-aware, of their rights to authority.

However, half a century later, after all noticeable signs of this popular support had vanished and new generations had grown up under insidious influences, it became clear that any achievement of this control by the Shi'i movement would not lead to its lofty goal, because the popular support, which would have assisted them and sacrificed themselves for them because of their awareness of their rights to power, no longer existed.

In view of this there were only two possible courses of action: firstly, an attempt to re-establish these conscious popular bases, which could prepare the ground for the eventual achievement of power; and secondly, to shake the consciousness of the Muslim Ummah, so as to maintain the life and vigour of the Islamic consciousness and the Ummah, and protect the Ummah against the total abdication of its identity and nobility to deviant rulers.

The first course of action was actually adopted by the Imams themselves, while the second was adopted by the *'Alid* revolutionaries who tried to protect the conscience and free will of the Muslim Ummah by their courageous self-sacrifice. Those of the revolutionaries who were sincere enjoyed the support of the

Imams.

Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha, peace be upon him, told Al-Ma'mun, when he discussed the martyred Zayd ibn Ali: "He was one of the scholars (*ulama*) of the Ahl al-Bayt who became angry on Allah's behalf and fought His enemies until he was killed fighting in His path. My father, Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be upon him, told me that he used to hear his father, Ja'far, say, 'May Allah have mercy on my Uncle Zayd, who encouraged the people to support the most suitable leader from the Al-Muhammad; for had he been victorious, he would have fulfilled his promise to Allah, because he used to say, 'I am calling you to support the most suitable leader from the family of Muhammad'."

Thus the fact that the Imams abandoned the idea of direct military action against deviant rulers does not mean that they set aside the political aspect of their leadership and turned all their attention to prayers only. On the contrary, it demonstrates how their different forms of political policy were shaped by contemporary circumstances and by their profound awareness of the exact nature of their radical policy and of the best means to its fulfillment. And Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

About the Author

Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was a well-known and widely respected figure throughout the Muslim world. His twin books *Falsafatuna* (Our Philosophy) and *Iqtasaduna* (Our Economics) have been widely acclaimed as masterpieces in bridging the gap between Islamic tradition and contemporary Muslim intellectuals. He also wrote on '*Al-Usul al-Mantiqiyahli-I Istiqra*' (The Logical Foundations of Induction), '*Al-Bankal-Laribawi*' (Towards a Non-Usurious Islamic Bank), '*Al-insanal-Mu'asir wa-al Mushkilah al-Ijtima'iyah*' (Contemporary Man and Social Problems) and many other original works.

Ayatullah's popularity was obviously unpalatable to the satanic Takriti clique in Iraq and both he and his numerous followers were continually harassed. He had been under intermittent house arrest since he declared his open support for the Islamic Movement in Iran and expressed the hope of bringing about a similar change in Iraq.

Many of his close followers have been executed. Ayatullah al-Sadr, who was martyred in April 1980 with his sister Bint al-Ruda by the tyrant Saddam Takriti, raised the banner of opposition to the regime in the glorious tradition of his predecessors going back to Imam Husayn, upon whom be peace, and took up the struggle in the Name of Allah, the Annihilator of Tyrants.

1. Tarikh al-Tabari, 5/26

2. Sharh al-Nahj of Ibn Hadid, 6/46

3. Tarikh al-Tabari, 3/20

4. Tarikh al-Kamil of Ibn Athir and others

5. Musnad Ahmad, 1/300; Sahih Muslim, vol 2, at the end of Al-Wasaya;and Sahih Al-Bokhari, vol 1, Kitab as-Salh

6. Tarikh al-Yaqubi, 2/126-127

7. Tabaqat ibn Sa'd, 3/248
8. Tarikh al-Tabari, 4/52
9. See the texts concerning as-saqifa an-Nahj, 6/6-9
10. Sunan ad-Darimi, 1/50
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Surat al-'Abasa, 28-32
14. 'Umdatul Qari'

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