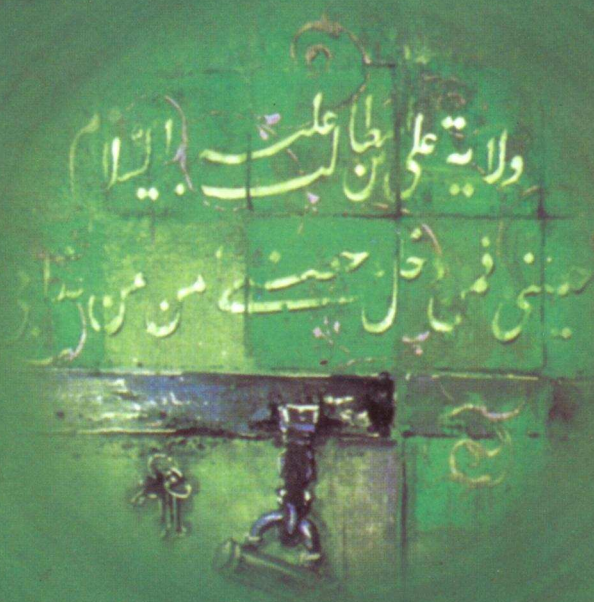


Sayyid Mohammed Hosain Fadlollah

Ghedir An Islamic Perspective

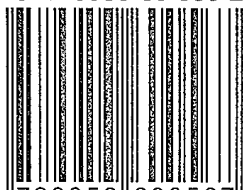
Translation
S. As-Samarra'i



Dar AL- MALAK

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GHEDIR

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Mohammed Hosain Fadlollah

Translation

S. As-Samarra'i

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In the name of God the Gracious the Merciful

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Preface

In the world we live in today, with its understanding of historical issues, many questions are raised that call for answers in a new approach that reflects the different social and political developments. In this regard, we find it important to point to an idea that his eminence Sayyid Mohammed Hosain Fadlollah has been putting forward in response to more than one issue, which is that we have to develop our approach to presenting Islam and to our understanding of its issues. This is a matter that has led many to think, without basis, that he is proposing that we subject Islam to the modernity, when in fact his eminence has been using the concept of *ijtihad* (the formulation of rulings), in all its originality and vitality. This makes it imperative that research is carried out through what the *mojtehid* (Islamic jurist) understands, based on the rules of *ijtihad*, not through misplaced reverence of the thoughts of past scholars, whose views are not sacred; their thoughts should be respected through discussion, not by following it without proof. This is one side of the matter.

On the other, there is the issue of developing the way in which Islamic ideas are presented, on the basis that wisdom entails putting things in their proper place, and that eloquence of the speech should conform to the situation. This is because contemporary people think in a way that is different to how people thought in the past, and they need to understand Islam using their own thinking tools. As his eminence says, mentality is a language, -- and you cannot speak to a person's mentality except with the language that he understands and the particulars that he can imagine.

Also, and according to the scientific approach, you cannot propose any thought unless you agree with it on a firm basis that represents the beginning point of the dialogue; otherwise such dialogue will be fruitless, as the basis of thought that you adopt to build your convictions will not be adopted by the other party.

On this basis, his eminence has been presenting the issues related to Ahlul Bayt (as) using the language that contemporary people understand, so that they feel that Ahlul Bayt (as) are their role models in Islam, morals, politics and in other aspects, something that makes them feel that Islam is providing for their needs in these

aspects, through the pure examples that Ahlul Bayt (as) represent.

Research is part of this approach, and his eminence presents the issue of Imam Ali's *wilayah* (guardianship) in a way that shows how it conforms with the original ideas as they were presented in history, as well as with the contemporary particulars in all their social and political aspects. Readers will notice that a lot of what has happened in history is what is happening now in their contemporary world, and this makes them understand the issues realistically, and answers, through this, many of the questions raised in this field.

We would like to point out that his eminence - through what we have read - has noted that his presentation of the question of *wilayah* is based on narration proof of the Ghadir event, and the discussion on some of its meanings; and while he has emphasised the importance of this approach - since any Islamic issue, including *wilayah*, must be based on the scripture - he has tried to explain that such scripture in which Ali (as) was appointed as the successor of the Prophet (sawa) did not come without basis, but was the natural expected result of the life of Ali (as); indeed, it was his exclusive right among all of the companions of the Prophet (sawa).

The importance of this approach is that it presents the question of *wilayah* on two levels:

First: the level of scripture, which is the *hadith* of Ghedir;

Second: the level of the realistic study of the elements of Imam Ali's personality and the nature of the successor to the Prophet (sawa) position, which, as his eminence has explained, is different from any other – something which makes it imperative that certain qualities have to be present in any person to be fit for such position.

We leave it to the readers to explore this new presentation, which makes us feel that history is talking to us, and we talking to it, and that each of us can understand it by using our own thinking tools and terminology.

Finally, this is a compilation of two lectures which his eminence gave in his weekly function, arranged so that the ideas are presented in a logical and gradual way.

The publisher

PART B T O N E

Introduction

There is no doubt that the issue of Ghedir, in all its implications and details, has left a deep mark on the whole of Islam, as it has resulted - in its interactions, and in both positive and negative stances towards it - in summarising the whole of the Islamic history in all its diversity, disputes and struggle.

In light of this, we cannot disregard it, as it continues to impose itself on us, exactly as has any historic issue that affects the present and future.

That said, we must distance the matter from partisanship or sectarianism, and study it in a scientific objective way, in terms of both its integral elements and the circumstances that accompanied it, through the whole of Muslim history, and through the fact that it represents a landmark in the history of Islam that must be studied and revealed in all its details.

Regardless of this, the question of Ghedir is one of those important issues that calls for objective, scientific research, since there are a lot of narrations that may reach the level of *tewator*¹; as al-Amini mentions, in a

precise piece of scientific research, one hundred and ten companions narrated the Ghedir *hadith*, and the same goes for the *tabi'in*².

Imam Ahmed bin Hanbel narrated that Zaid bin Arqam said: 'We reached with the Messenger of God (sawa) a valley called "Khommm valley", and he called for prayer and prayed on a hot day. Then he gave us a sermon - and the Messenger of God (sawa) had a robe thrown over a tree as to provide shade for him from the sun - and he said: "Do not you know? Do not you bear witness that I am *awla* (I have more right) over every believer than he does over himself?" They said: yes. He said: "Then, for whomever I am his *mawla* (guardian, leader, master), Ali is his *mawla*. O God, support whomever supports him and be the enemy of whomever becomes his enemy.'"³

Al-Hakim narrated in his Mostedrek (according to Zaid bin Arqam, following two different narrations which, he said, attained the level of *sahih* (correct), according to both Al-Bukhari and Muslim) that the Prophet (sawa) said: 'I have left with you two precious things. One is greater than the other: the book of God and my progeny. See how you behave towards them after me, as they will never separate until they come to me at the *hawd* (pool, in

Paradise).’ Then he said: ‘God the almighty is my *mawla*, and I am the *mawla* of every believer.’ Then he took the hand of Ali and said: ‘For whomever I am his *weliyy* (guardian, leader, master), Ali is his *mawla*. O God, support whomever supports him and be the enemy of whomever becomes his enemy.’⁴

This *hadith* was narrated to the same effect in many books, such as at-Teberani, who narrated it through a correct narration, an-Nesa’i and others.

As far as we (the Shi’ah) are concerned, this *hadith* is *motewatir* (i.e. has attained the degree of *tewator*). Even some of the Sunni scholars have acknowledged its *tewator* status, as Sayyid Abdul Hosain Sherefuddin said in his *Moraje’at*; he said: ‘The author of *al-Fetawa al-Hamidiyyeh* - in spite of his inflexibility - admitted that the *hadith* is *motewatir* in his summarised work entitled *As-Selewat al-Fakhireh fil-Ahadith al-Motewatireh*’; then he said: ‘And as-Siyooti and other such narrators have confirmed this, such as Mohammed bin Jerir, the author of the famous (Qur’an) commentary and history, Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Sa’id bin Oqdeh and Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Othman ath-Thehebi, who studied its narrations, each of whom devoted a special work to it, with Ibn Jerir mentioning seventy-five narrations and Ibn

Oqdeh mentioning one hundred and five narrations; and ath-Thehebi - in spite of his strictness - acknowledged the correctness of many of its narrations...'⁵

This is why we have said that many of our Sunni brothers argue about the meanings of the *hadith* of Ghedir, but not about its narration chain (*sened*), which is because this *hadith* is one of the *hadiths* that were narrated by both the Sunnah and Shi'ah.

Why the Ghedir?

The question here is: why did Mohammed (sawa) deliver/pronounce the Ghedir? And why Ali, not anyone else?

God says: 'O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people' 5:67, which we believe was revealed with regard to Ali (as), something which the tone of the verses, and context of this verse, confirms. This is in addition to the reason for the revelation: it can be deduced that the Prophet (sawa) had already conveyed a lot of the message, or all its details. What some scholars have said in their commentaries is that the verse should

be understood as follows: that ‘God the almighty gave him security from the scheming of the Jews and Christians and commanded him to come out with the revelation in disregard to them’⁶; otherwise, most of it does not conform with the tone of the verses, so one can conclude from this there was an important matter that relates to the safety of the message, so that abstaining from proclaiming it (the matter) equals abstention from proclaiming the whole of the message. This is in addition to the fact that fearing the Jews, Christians and Quraysh contradicts his firm stance in conveying the message, from the start of the revelations and through the emigration stage, in the final days of which this verse was revealed.

On the basis of this, it becomes clear that the verse was revealed with regard to the *wilayah* of Ali (as), since the nearness of Ali (as) to the Prophet (sawa), being his cousin and son-in-law, would open the door to a lot of criticism that would link the position (of the Prophet) with emotions – something that required Divine defence, which was represented by God’s protection from all that.

In light of all this, we understand that, without doubt, the meaning of the word ‘*mawla*’ in the *hadith* of Ghedir is the *wilayah* (guardianship) in the realm of leadership. This

is supported by the Prophet's words: 'Am I not awla (have more right) over the believers than them over themselves', which means that he (sawa) wanted to make to Ali (as) what was to himself, which (first) he obtained their admission to, something which means leadership, not simply love and support as some commentators say; this is the first point.

The second is this: we note that the proclamation of the love for Ali (as) and the support of people for him would - according to such commentaries - deny any basis for criticism or dismissive comment from people, so it became a basis for God's protection.⁷

To answer the questions why the Ghedir, and why Ali, not anyone else, we say:

This matter requires looking first into the nature of the position, i.e. what is the role that the person who would succeed the Prophet (sawa) would play, and what are the qualities that he should have? After that, we should search to see who among the Muslims had the qualities that would enable him to undertake the mission.

The role of the Messenger

The role of the Messenger is not merely the delivery of the message of God to the people, like a postman who delivers a message without having any interactive relation between him and the people. This is what we understand from the verse: 'He it is who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca (the unlettered, i.e. illiterate, in other translations) a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, as they were before certainly in clear error' 62:2. The role of the messenger is to facilitate Islamic concepts in the process of changing the internal situation of the general psychology of the nation, which the word 'purifies' implies. This is in addition to his role in teaching the nation Islamic theory, on the levels of approach and content, and the practical implementation of the theory in reality, which would link knowledge to man's reality and that reality to the Book through the Qur'anic concepts, which enter the spirit through its materialistic content, so that it 'spiritualises' him, and enters the senses through its spiritual content. Thus it does not stay

in an abstract world away from reality and the world of the senses.

On this basis, we understand that the prophet's personality does not come from representing the message as a word only, but that the messenger manifests his message in reality, and in practical reality, so that people can see the image of the Islamic value in reality, just as they hear it in words.

Therefore, the Messenger of God (sawa) was Islam walking on earth, with the Muslims understanding his call through his behaviour after they hear it from his speech. This implies to them that it is not an idealistic thought that lurks in the realms of the unattainable and on the far horizons of imagination, rather it is thought that is manifest in practical reality through the personality of the caller.

From this we find that the Holy Qur'an presents the Messenger to us as a role model: **'Certainly you have in the Messenger of God a good exemplar for those who hope in God and the Final Day and who remember God much'** 33:21. This speech draws their attention to the Prophet's image, which represents the highest example for the message-bound Muslim, so that they behave accordingly.

Therefore, Islam did not proceed through the words of the message that the Messenger (sawa) conveyed to people, but through the practical manifestation of the message in reality in what the Messenger (sawa) represented. Islam proceeded, thus, through his mind, heart, approach, method, morals and calling, with him becoming the element that integrates with the Holy Qur'an, since the Messenger (sawa) was the speaking Qur'an, the Qur'an that is in practice in reality, where Muslims would witness – when a Qur'anic verse is revealed – the practical manifestation of the verse in the Prophet (sawa).

Therefore, we say: if God the almighty had revealed the Book to people without the presence of a person that would manifest the content of the Book, no one would have been attracted to it, because people have no use for the silent book, they need a speaking, practical, dynamic book. This is the meaning of the 'exemplar' that the Prophet (sawa) represented.

The nature of the Prophet's succession (*khilafeh*, caliphate)

In light of the above, we say: the succession of the Prophet (sawa) had a meaning that is different to any

other, since the matter of succession here is not a person that is needed to lead a tribe, or to be a governor like nowadays; rather, it needs a person that continues the role of the Prophet (sawa). If God had sent His Messenger with this religion so that Islam enters into the hearts and minds of people and brings them from darkness to light, his successor must fulfil the same role, having in his mind the mind of the Messenger, in his heart the heart of the Messenger, and his conduct the conduct of the Messenger, in both content and approach.

Here you may wonder if the Messenger of God (sawa) was needed to complete the Message, since God says: **‘This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion’** 5:3, or in the Prophet’s words: **‘There is nothing that brings you near to Paradise and distances you from Hell but I did command you to do, and nothing that brings you near to Hell and distances you from Paradise but I did forbid you to do’**⁸. If that is the case, what is the need for a person that has the qualities of the Prophet’s personality in this regard?

The Islamic plan in the start of the Message was to guide people away from polytheism, so that they are entered in the Muslim society to breathe Islam within it,

to start the process of strengthening its roots in them - so the slogan was: 'Whoever says "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah" will have his possessions, blood and honour protected', and the Qur'an pointed to this: **'The dwellers of the desert say: We believe. Say: You do not believe, but say, We submit; for faith has not yet entered into your hearts' 49:14.** However, the battles and internal problems that the newly born Islamic state in Medina faced, through the hypocrites and Jews, prevented its programme of deepening Islam in Muslims and manifesting this in reality.

Also, Islam proceeded after the Prophet (sawa) through what those who succeeded him before Ali (as) failed to complete in the mission: it succeeded in taking Islam to the world, but this was on the surface only, while in reality it needed to stretch in profundity. This need could be felt through the intellectual challenges that faced Islamic reality then, whether internally in what related to jurisprudence, or externally in what related to the questions that the disbelievers raised, and which called for answers.

Therefore, we say that the Prophet (sawa) could convey the Message to the people, but could not complete his

practical programme in facilitating the Message in reality, so the matter called for someone to complete the mission after him.

True allegiance

We mention all that Ali (as) manifested in his life so that we could learn from it, because we think that some of those who claim to observe Ali's *wilayah* have not learned from him and have not come near to his mind and spirit; rather, you see them look unto him from afar, and this is why backwardness has found a home within them even if they proclaim his name day and night. They have not learned from his heart, which embraced the whole of humanity, and this is why their hearts stayed shut in the face of love. They have not learned from his conduct in his knowledge and wide horizons, and this is why they have continued holding onto worthless things, and living in narrow world. Some may even transpose their backwardness on Ali (as) to give him their image; some even transpose their backwardness on the whole of Islam!

Our problem in the present is not limited to those who fight Islam, but it is the problem of those who follow the backwardness that they bring to Islam; those who talk about Islam from mythical position are in fact talking about a minor area instead of opening up to the wide arena and horizon.

From this we say: we have to start pursuing cultural means and to know how to formulate our concepts according to Islam, and how to open up to life in its entirety through Islam, in the image that Ali (as) presented to us. This is not a matter of visiting Ali (as) in history, but rather we have to invite him to visit us, not physically, but so that Ali (as) enters in our thought, politics, economics, management, relationships and all affairs with all the legacy of his thought, spirit and conduct in life which he left to us, so that we elevate to his high position, a position which is like 'the axis in relation to the hand-mill; the flood water flows down from him and the bird cannot fly up to him'⁹.

Following Ali (as) entails a high cost and a lot of trouble, because really following him is not a label, or a banner that you raise, but it is a course that you pursue, a conduct that you observe with all what truth means. Through this, we find Ali (as) explains the value in Islam: 'The nearest people to (the truest followers of) the prophets amongst people are the most knowledgeable of what they came with'¹⁰. Then he recited: 'Most surely the nearest of people to Abraham are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe, and God is the guardian of the believers' 3:68.

So following is not a question of kinship, but it is related to the Message, belief and its course. Then he said: 'The *welyy* (follower, supporter) of Mohammed is he who, though not related (in kinship) to him, obeys God, and the enemy of Mohammed is he who, though related (in kinship) to him, disobeys God.'¹¹ Kinship is redefined as a relationship to the Message, its deeds and course, which is what we find in the Holy Qur'an in the dialogue between Noah (as) and his Lord: 'And Noah called upon his Lord and said: My Lord! Surely my son is of my family, and your promise is surely true, and You are the most just of the judges. He said: O Noah! Surely he is not of your family; surely he is (the doer of) other than good deeds' 11:45-46. This is something which the poet employed to portray the relation between the Message with Ahlul Bayt (as):

The love of Selman¹² to them was (regarded as) kinship,
While between Noah and his son was no kinship.

True allegiance

We would like to discuss the question of allegiance, and following Ali (as), so as to confirm the balanced approach as far as the truth and Islam are concerned.

Ali (as) saw a troubled and imbalanced reality in the question of allegiance as there were and still are those who love him, and there were also those who hated him; some deviated from the area of love into the trap of exaggeration (*ghuluw*), thinking that this is how to observe the allegiance of Ahlul Bayt (as).

Ali (as) said: 'If I struck the top of the nose of the believer with my sword so that he would hate me, he would not hate me; and if I poured all the wealth of the world onto the hypocrite so that he would love me, he would not love me - for this is a resolved matter, as expressed by the Prophet (sawa) when he said: "O Ali, a believer will not hate you and a hypocrite will not love you"'¹³.

Why did the Prophet (sawa) say that? Why, when the question of love and hate is related to the heart beats, which are not a subject of straight or balanced lines – as the heart does not have a rational basis, but goes about the matter of love and hate with disregard to ideology? Your heart may be beating with love for someone who is at odds with you, while it may be beating with hatred for someone who agrees with you in your principles?

If we study the matter in its depth as far as Ali (as) is concerned, we find that Ali (as) had a lot of human

qualities that can make a hypocrite love him, as he was the brave hero and the just man of wisdom. However, the depth of the matter that the Prophet (sawa) wanted to highlight and emphasise does not relate to this level, even though it is realistic, but it was related to the mind in its depth of awareness. Ali (as) embodied a belief in his whole being, so that nothing was left in his personality for a personal matter, since as he had 'sold' the whole of himself to God, as the Qur'an says: **'And among men is he who sells himself to seek the satisfaction of God; and God is Affectionate to the servants/' 2:207**; his mind was a mind of belief, his heart a heart of belief, his course is a course of belief; his courage, asceticism, justice and knowledge, all these stood within the circle of belief. Therefore, the believer who lives within his self in the full depth of belief must feel love and allegiance to anyone who manifests belief, and Ali (as) was the living and deep manifestation of the whole of belief.

The hypocrite, however, whose heart is full of atheism and who has no attachment to belief – as it is a word on his tongue and just a means to cover his scheming to destroy belief in the faith, Shari'ah and life – how could he love Ali who stands at the heart of the opposing side?!

The exaggeration (*ghuluw*) problem

Then Ali (as) said: 'Two (kinds of) people will be damned on my account: an exaggeratedly loving person and a forsaking, hating person'¹⁴. Ali (as) loved God and His Messenger (sawa) and was humble to God and His Messenger (sawa), and did not want anyone to take him near the position of God the almighty in any way, nor to take him near the position of the Prophet (sawa). He used to emphasise his humbleness towards God as he expressed it in the supplication of Kumail: 'I, a weak, insignificant, humble, poor and destitute creature of You', showing how dear was his devotion to God, and seeing that the greatness of a human being lies in his pure devotion to God in mind, heart and conduct. The more devoted a person is, the nearer to God he will be, and the more he will feel the greatness of God in his life.

Therefore, Ali (as) wanted from such words that those loving him should stay balanced in what Islam wants, just as he wanted from those hating him to study the matter on the basis of the truth that Ali (as) represented. Those who exaggerate in the love for Ali (as) and his sons the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as) should not be fooled that they are living in true loyalty and allegiance to Ali and his sons, for the test of loyalty to them is to be loyal to their

message, as they did not have anything other than Islam. Thus they said: 'He who is a *welyy* (obedient) of God is a (true) *welyy* of us, and he who is an enemy of God is an enemy of us, and by God our *wilayah* (following, allegiance) cannot be attained except through piety.'¹⁵ So, when we want to love them, we have to follow the course they showed us, as in the words of Imam Ali bin al-Hosain Zain al-Abidin: 'Love us the love of Islam'¹⁶, meaning that this love is within the Islamic circle, and does not deviate away from the faith, as portrayed in the Book and Sunnah.

This matter makes it obligatory on us to look closely into the *hadiths* narrated from the Prophet (sawa) and Ahlul Bayt (as), to look into the narration chain (*sened*) in addition to studying the content; we should bring a scientific alertness to the *hadiths* in their fundamental principles and in their historical context, exactly as we have been doing with the *hadiths* related to the Shari'ah. This is because there are people who lied and ascribed these lies to the Imams (as) not only in the negative way, but also through exaggeration, so as to establish for the Imams (as) a negative image in the eyes of people through the social reality of Muslims, who used to be excessively troubled with any kind of exaggeration, especially if related to Ahlul Bayt (as).

This is what was narrated in the *hadith* of Imam Ali bin Musa ar-Rida (as) by Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmoud, who said: I asked ar-Rida (as): We have *hadiths* in the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful (i.e. Ali) and the virtues of you, Ahlul Bayt, and it is narrated by individuals who are not your followers. When we do not know such *hadiths* narrated from you, shall we accept (and adopt) them? He said: ‘O Ibn Abi Mahmoud, my father told me as he narrated from his father from his grandfather that the Messenger of God (sawa) said: “Whoever listens to a speaker is worshipping him, so if his speech is from God, then he is worshipping God, but if his speech is from Satan, then he is worshipping Satan”’. Then he said: ‘O Ibn Abi Mahmoud, those who do not follow us fabricated *hadiths* about our virtues and made them into three categories: one is exaggeration, the second is under-estimating our position, and the third is spelling out the shortcomings of our enemies. If the people hear exaggerations about us, they accuse our Shi’ah (followers) of atheism and accuse them of claiming our divinity; and if they hear (how) they underestimate us, they will believe it; and if they hear about the shortcomings of our enemies, using their names, they will do so with us’. The Imam (as) continued: ‘O Ibn Abi Mahmoud, if people go left and right, hold onto our

way' - which is the balanced one - 'for those who hold onto us, we hold onto them, and those who go away from us, we go away from them – because at the very least a man will corrupt his belief if he calls a marble a fruit stone then abides by it, and forsakes those who do not go along with it!'¹⁷

In this *hadith*, the Imam (as) gives clear confirmation that the exaggeration *hadiths* that elevate Ahlul Bayt (as) from their human nature to somewhere near to divinity did not come from them.

Who is qualified?

On the basis of what we have said above, the search must be carried out to see who was among the Muslims who could fill the vacuum after the Messenger of God (sawa), and who could proceed with Islam into profundity. We cannot find anyone qualified for this unique role except Ali (as).

This is because when we look into Ali (as) as a whole, in all the elements of his personality and in his conduct, we find that he is the only one who is qualified to succeed the Prophet (sawa) and take up his role. We can discuss this in terms of the following points.

A- The Islamic environment

All Muslims who embraced Islam at the time of the Prophet (sawa) had previously lived in a polytheistic environment, one way on another, and had been affected by many of its concepts – so much so that these concepts formed some concealed residues within their souls, something which, although it would not prevent them from being loyal to Islam, would prevent their

personalities from manifesting Islam in all its dimensions and particulars.

Ali, on the other hand, never lived in any other the Islamic environment than that which the Prophet (sawa) provided for him when he took over raising him, after he chose him from amongst his brothers from his uncle Abu Talib, taking him with him – and giving him his spirituality and morals – before he was sent a Messenger from God,. Ali (as) is perhaps the best one to describe that stage of his life, as narrated in Nahj al-Balaghah: ‘Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of God. He took charge of me when I was only a child, pressing me to his breast and putting me beside him in his bed, bringing his body close to mine and making me smell his smell; when he used to chew something, he would feed me with it. He found no lie in (my) speech, nor weakness in (my) act.

‘From the time of his (the Prophet’s (sawa)) weaning, God had placed a mighty angel in charge of him to lead him along the path of high character and good behaviour, by day and by night, and I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother; every day he would show me one of his fine qualities and command me to pay heed to it.

‘And every year he used to go into seclusion at the (cave of) Hira’, where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of God and Khadijah, me being the third with them; I used to see the light of the revelation and message, and breathe the scent of Prophethood.

‘When the revelation descended upon the Prophet of God, I heard the moan of Satan; I said: “O Prophet of God, what is this moan?” and he replied: “This is Satan, losing all hope of being worshipped. O Ali, you see what I see, and you hear what I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent, and you are surely on (the path of) virtue.”’¹⁸

Ali’s personality manifested the Messenger of God’s personality and this is why Ali’s main virtues were truthfulness and trustworthiness, as they were the Messenger’s. This is explained in a *hadith* narrated about the time when Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (as) was asked by one of his companions: ‘Teach me something that would give me a special position to you’. He said: ‘Look into the special position that Ali has attained with the Messenger of God and do the same - he did not attain it except through truthfulness and trustworthiness.’ Ali used to

learn from the Messenger of God (sawa) to meditate as he used to meditate, to worship as he used to worship, and Ali (as) was clearly a wonderful student. He said: 'I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother', for the young camel does not go far from its mother, but walks in her footsteps; likewise, Ali (as) used to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet (sawa) in thought, meditation, spirit, morals, habits and behaviour.

B- A childhood of awareness

We can say that Ali's childhood was an aware one, shaped by the Prophet (sawa). Therefore he did not respond to the call of the Prophet (sawa) to Islam like a child, as some historians try to suggest when they say that the first child to embrace Islam was Ali (as), for a child's childishness is not defined by its age but by its awareness - some children are like grown-ups in their minds and awareness, while some old men are like children in their minds and awareness, so physical childhood does not necessarily mean mental childhood. Therefore, Ali's childhood was an aware, rational and youthful childhood, because the teacher was the Messenger of God (sawa), and what a great teacher he was!

Thus we find that some historians narrate that Ali (as) was asked about his response to the Prophet's call to Islam - and Ali (as) was never far from Islam, as it had in his mind even before it became a religion, because Islam was in the Prophet's mind, spirit and feelings before he was sent a Messenger. They narrate that Ali (as) was asked: Did you consult your father when you embraced Islam? He replied: **'God did not consult my father when He created me!'** This narration - assuming its authenticity - stands as a witness to Ali's awareness of the question of the faith in its full dimensions of thought and spirit.

Ali (as) stayed by the Prophet's side, as he described when talking about the beginnings of Islam: **'In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of God and Khadijah, me being the third with them'**, with the relationship between the members of that house being not familial kinship, but the duties of Islam. This is why he went on to describe it as follows: **'...me being the third with them, I used to see the light of the revelation and message, and breathe the scent of Prophethood'**. All of these three shouldered the responsibilities towards Islam: the Messenger of God (sawa) with his call, Khadijah (ra) with her money and care for the Prophet (sawa) and Ali (as) with his strength

and sword in defence of Islam, his mind in defence of the truth and his acts in the footsteps of his master (sawa).

This first message-focused house continued in the second house, that of Ali (as) and Fatimah (as), a house that was (in effect) the Prophet's house, as he used to come to it when he returned from any travel before the houses of his wives, because this house was filled with a message-focused atmosphere of belief and morals.

C- The dynamic *jihad* (striving and struggle)

The first of Ali's main *jihad* stances for Islam occurred when he stayed the night in the Prophet's bed on the night of *hijrah* (emigration); this was clear proof that the Prophet (sawa), the Message and his affiliation, were his main concerns. This is why when the Prophet (sawa) ordered him to do this, Ali (as) did not ask, as any young man might, about his own safety, but he asked: 'And are you going to be safe, O Messenger of God?' He said: 'Yes', so Ali said: 'Go ahead, rightly guided.' This was immortalized in the Qur'an: 'And among men is he who sells himself to seek the satisfaction of God; and God is affectionate to his servants' 2:207, presenting to us the example of a message-focused person who feels that he is not the owner of himself, nor sees any freedom for

himself outside the will of God and obedience to Him, thus living his message in every aspect of his life, living his life for the sake of the message in the right path He does not deviate by giving in to temptations or pressures, but stays firm in the position that the pleasure and satisfaction of God calls for.

After that, he was the *mojahid* (striving struggler) in all the *jihad* days - at Badr¹⁹, Uhud²⁰, Ahzab²¹, Hunain²² and Khaiber²³,. These battles and war experiences put him at the top; none of the great results that were achieved through his *jihad*, and achieved victory to Islam and Muslims, was done by any other Muslim. The Prophet (sawa) used to talk about Ali's deeds in many of these days, such as saying in the battle of Khandaq²⁴: 'The whole of belief has come out (to confront) the whole of atheism'²⁵. Also of the same battle: 'Ali's strike on the day of Khandaq equals the worship of *thaqalain* (people and *jin*)'²⁶. On the conquest of Khaiber, he said: 'I will give the (army) flag tomorrow to a man who loves God and His Messenger, and God and His Messenger love the man who attacks, and does not flee, who will not return until God makes the conquest complete through his hands (his striving)'²⁷. This means that the Prophet (sawa) was confirming the great role of Ali (as) at the forefront of achieving victory.

That said, Ali (as) was as message-focused in war as he was in peace: war did not represent a personal taste for him, because his taste was for Islam (as a whole). This is what we find in the battle of Siffin²⁸: many days had elapsed with his army taking up its positions there, but without him giving his permission to fight. This led the fighters to start questioning the situation: he has brought us here to fight, why then he is delaying it? Is this because he does not like death, or because he is not sure about the (Islamic) position regarding the army of Sham (Syria)? When he heard this, he stood up and explained: 'As for your wondering if this is because of me not willing to die, I swear by God that I do not care whether I enter into death or if death comes out to me! As for your suggesting (that I am) not sure about the Sham (army), I swear by God that I have not postponed the war one day except in the hope that a group of them will come over to me, be guided by me and attracted to my light, and this is more preferable to me than killing them in a state of deviance and ending up shouldering their sins.'²⁹

In this event, the greatness of a leader shows in Ali's personality, when he did not find it hard to deal with the negative words of some of his followers, or with the doubts lurking in their minds. Rather, he was listening to

them with tolerance and replying with an awareness of the Message, because a message-bearer is not like an ego-carrier: the ego-carrier wants people for himself, while the message-bearer wants them for his message. This is exactly what he said: 'My position and yours are not the same: I want you for God and you want me for yourselves.'³⁰

D- The *hadith* of the Prophet (sawa) on Ali (as)

The Messenger of God (sawa) did not talk about anyone as he did about Ali (as), and this is found in everything that Muslims have narrated.

Muslims narrated the Prophet's *hadith*: 'I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door'³¹. And they narrated: 'Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali, and turns with him wherever ('however' in other narrations) he turns'³². And there is his saying: 'Are you not satisfied that you are to me in the position of Aaron to Moses? There is no prophet after me though'³³. The position of Aaron (as) to Moses (as) is explained in the Qur'an: 'Appoint for me a minister from my family. Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him. And associate him in my affairs' 20:29-32.

The question here is: is the matter an emotional one because he had raised him since early childhood? Or was it a question of kinship, as Ali was the Prophet's cousin?

Or did the Prophet (sawa), through his speech, want the Muslims to love Ali (as) merely on an emotional level? Did the Messenger of God (sawa) say all that without any big goal that was related to the whole of Islam in its message and dimensions?

The matter was not one of kinship because the Holy Qur'an cancelled the weight of kinship when it comes to positions and value, as it talked about Abu Lahab³⁴, the Prophet's uncle, while it did not talk about Abu Jahl³⁵. Also, the Holy Qur'an mentioned God's reply to Abraham's question: '(Abraham) said: And of my offspring (will there be Imams)? He said: My covenant does not include the wrong-doers' 2:124; and His speech to Noah (as): 'He said: O Noah! Surely he is not of your family; surely he is (the doer of) other than good deeds' 11:46. Therefore, mere kinship, biological or marital, is not a basis for the position, but it must come from a realistic basis that is determined by the value itself, in reality and practice.

Therefore, the Prophet's speech regarding Ali (as) did not come from emotional, personal desire or with respect to

his kinship to him, but it was on the basis that his desire was that of his Message, affiliation (to God), loyalty and openness to all that satisfies God; this is God's confirmation: 'Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed' 53:3-4.

In addition, that Ali (as) becomes loved by Muslims did not need all that effort! Ali (as) bestowed his love on anyone who knew him - be it a Shi'ah, Sunni, Christian or any other - because if you looked at Ali (as) in his spiritual aspects, loyalty, *jihad* and knowledge, you cannot but bow before this personality. This is why the Christian poet Paul Salama said:

O heavens bear witness, and O earth standstill,
And bow, for I have mentioned Ali!

So, if you are broadminded, have a loving heart, and human awareness, you cannot but love Ali; this does not need any Qur'anic verse or Prophetic advice to affirm it.

From this we say that the Prophet (sawa) did not want the Muslims to love Ali (as) for emotional reasons, because those who have problems of the self do not love the Messenger of God (sawa); they do not even love God. Whoever has a healthy personality must be open to the pure truth and to genuine emotion. Therefore, we

understand that the Prophet (sawa) wanted to prepare Ali (as) in the minds of Muslims as the person who had acquired all knowledge and with whom truth had become bonded in an absolute manner, so that you cannot find any gap between Ali (as) and the truth, which makes him a manifestation of truth. In other words, just as you can visualise the thought-image of truth in your mind, so too can you visualise the practical image of truth in Ali (as).

E- Ali's truth-bound personality in practice

Ali's (as) entitlement to truth of bestowed upon him by the Prophet (sawa) was not a mere title; rather, you can see the manifestation of this in his every word and every act, whether within his reign or outside it.

Historians narrated that Omar bin al-Khattab³⁶ said regarding Ali (as), when he was talking about the *shoora* (council)³⁷: If Ali is appointed (the ruler after him), he will rule them on the white (correct) path. The root of the problems that faced Ali (as) during his caliphate was perhaps that he was not a conventional ruler, but a message-focused ruler who wanted Islam to deepen as a practice in the life of the nation. This is why he rejected all non-straightforward political methods that deviated from the clear Islamic course, which some of those around

him suggested that he should adopt in his confrontation with Mu'awiyeh³⁸. This is why he said: 'One who has been through the thick and thin of life finds the excuses to prevent him from obeying the orders and prohibitions of God, but he disregards them despite his capacity (to obey them), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of God)',³⁹ for these excuses represent an act in the course of falsehood. He (as) also used to say: 'Mu'awiyeh is not more cunning than me, but he acts treacherously and immorally; had it not been for hating betrayal I would have been amongst the most cunning of people.'⁴⁰

He also said to those who said to him: you have the state's revenues, give to the tribe chiefs so that they support and strengthen your rule: 'Do you command me that I should seek support by oppressing those over whom I have been placed a ruler? By God, I will not do so as long as the world goes on, and as long as one star leads another in the sky. If it were my property, I would have distributed it equally among them, then how is that the property of God?!'⁴¹

If we want to go into this matter in depth, we have to know the details of the rule issue as far as Imam Ali (as) was concerned.

The question of rule was not for Ali (as) a question of desire, but it was something that came from the essential nature of the Message that Ali (as) lived in his heart, mind and conduct. For him, rule and authority were no more than a tool through which he would utilise to pursue the truth in the life of the nation, to fight falsehood and spread Islam in all its thought, intellect and purity. This is what Ibn Abbas narrated; he said: I entered to (the place where) the Commander of the Faithful (was) in Thi Qar⁴² when he was repairing his slipper, and he asked me: 'What is the value of this slipper?' I replied: it has no value! So he said: 'By God, it is more valuable to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I may establish right and ward off wrong!'⁴³

He used to pray, pointing to the struggle between him and those who denied him his right and position: 'O' my God, you know that what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world; rather we wanted to restore the signs of Your religion and to usher prosperity into Your cities so that the oppressed among Your creatures might be safe and

Your forsaken commands might be established'⁴⁴. This is because establishing all this cannot be achieved through some word that you advise people with, but it is a comprehensive plan that concerns economic, political, social and other issues.

Ali (as) explains all this, whilst expressing the depth of the spiritual and message-focused pain he was suffering from all that was around him: **'If people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument, and if there had been no pledge by God to the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the rope of Caliphate upon its own shoulders, and would have given to the last one (their request of him to become the caliph) the same treatment as to the first one (when they denied him his right); then you would have seen that to me this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat!'**⁴⁵ This was Ali's point of view.

On the other side, the question of rule was taking a course that led far from Islam, as if the Islamic reality then did not take anything from Islam; this was what those who had gathered in as-Saqifah⁴⁶ said: A ruler from amongst us⁴⁷ and a ruler from amongst you⁴⁸. This logic, if we

separate it from all sectarian sensitivities - and we are not trying to instigate them, but trying to analyse and think using a scientific, objective voice - this logic makes us ask: What is the basis of rule? Was it on the basis of how the matter was divided between al-Mohajiroon and al-Ansar?

It is rather astonishing and puzzling, given that, even if we took the view that Ali (as) was not the most qualified person for the caliphate according to the *hadith* of Ghedir, he was at least one of the key individuals in the race in light of his companionship, kinship, *jihad* and knowledge - in fact he was the most distinguished, so is it reasonable that the matter of the caliphate should be decided without seeking Ali's opinion in that?!

And if we try to subject the Seqifeh matter to the concept of *shoora* (council), did what took place in the Seqifeh represent a true *shoora*? In other words: if someone in the whole of the contemporary world tried to act politically according to *shoora* in the matter of rule, or in any other matter, and a person was suggested as the one who is qualified to lead the nation and to succeed the Prophet (sawa) in the way that took place in the Seqifeh of Bani Sa'ideh, would he or she accept such *shoora*?!⁴⁹

The matter is not that Muslims should have a ruler by any means possible and without a realistic basis, nor it is a question of management, but it is the Message that counts, on all its intellectual, spiritual, political, economic, security and other levels, and above all on the level that the Messenger of God (sawa) represented.

Ali (as) is the most qualified

In light of what we have said, since what was needed was a leader who was capable of continuing the course of the Message, and who had the knowledge with which he was capable of answering everyone, as was the Prophet (sawa), and that he alone was entirely capable, without needing anyone else to confront the challenges that were facing Islam on all levels, but that people were in need of him, it was Ali (as) who fulfilled all these qualifications - it was Ali (as) who could answer any question, plan for any stage, and open any horizon. This is what we notice in reality, through all the traditions and historical accounts that we have inherited, or through what ash-Sharif ar-Radi compiled - i.e. Nahj al-Balaghah, and ar-Radi. Though we are immensely grateful to Ar-Radi, his focus was the literary aspects of Imam Ali's words, not the intellectual aspects in all its variety; this is why he summarised his

many sermons and words. Ar-Radi wanted to celebrate the eloquence, while the nation needed to follow Ali's intellect, that the loss of one of Ali's words is a loss to the nation and history because every word bears an idea and points to a course of conduct.

What took place after the Prophet (sawa) proved this when we read that Omar bin al-Khattab used to say: 'Had it not been for Ali, Omar would have been lost'; and also: 'Let God not leave me (struggling) with any puzzling problem if Abul-Hasan (i.e. Ali) is not available'. Al-Khalil bin Ahmed al-Farahidi expressed this fact when he was asked: 'Why did you think that Ali is better than all the rest?' He said: 'The need of all for him, and his lack of need for all, is proof that he was the Imam of all!'

This is in addition to the fact that - according to history - there was no one among Muslims who had the same abundant spirituality that Ali (as) had with his Lord, so much so that you hear him in his prayers saying: 'Then my God, my Lord and my Master, though I may patiently bear your punishments, how can I withstand being kept away from You? And my God, if I may patiently endure the scorching fire of your hell, how can I withstand being prevented from looking for your

clemency?’ There was no one amongst them to compare with Ali (as) in knowledge, jihad and loyalty to God and His Messenger.

We can, on this basis, know the greatness of Ali (as) in his responsible attitude towards Islam and his loyalty to the Message, for when he was denied his right to succeed the Prophet (sawa), he did not display any negative attitude when he saw that Islam and the Muslims were in danger, because he believed that he was the individual responsible for Islam and Muslims outside the caliphate as much as inside it, for it was the same question of Islam (not the self). Perhaps the clearest words in this regard are found in what he wrote in his letter to the people of Egypt: ‘I was astonished when the people turned to him (i.e. Abu Bakr, the first caliphate) and swore allegiance to him, and I ceased my struggle for power until I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion of Mohammed (s), so I felt afraid that if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims I might witness a degradation or change in it that would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you, which was (after all) only a transient and short-lived affair, disappearing like a mirage or like

cloud. So, I stood up amidst these events until falsehood was defeated and the religion was saved.’⁵⁰

And he said at the time of Othman’s reign⁵¹: ‘I will adopt peace as long as Muslim affairs are safe and there is injustice to me alone.’⁵²

It is as if the Imam (as) is saying: I am standing between two choices: either to take a negative stance, because the rule is my right, and leave these people to ‘pull out their thorns with their nails’ as people say, which would lead to degradation or change in Islam, or to protect Islam and Muslims and put my right to the caliphate on hold; so I adopted the positive stance, offering my advice, participating, helping and supporting with all my power, because the danger was not facing those who had pushed me away from my right, but was facing Islam.

In these stances, we find Ali (as) elevated to a level never enjoyed by anyone else: we find a person pushed away from his right (and his right is the nation’s, not just his personal right); then we find him, when needed by those who had pushed him away to help with matters that related to Islam and its safety, prepared to give advice and knowledge and answer every question, reaching the highest level in this regard. For example, we find this when Omar sought his advice on leading the

army to fight the Persians, after the leader of the army had suggested it; if Ali (as) had been pursuing a grudge, he would have seen this - as some people would say - as an opportunity to get rid of Omar; but he was the man of Islam, thinking for Islam, not about himself, so he said to Omar: 'In this matter, victory or defeat is not dependent on the smallness or greatness of forces. It is God's religion which He has raised above all faiths, and His army which He has mobilised and extended, till it has reached the point where it stands now, and has arrived at its present positions. We hold a promise from God, and He will fulfil His promise and support His army'. Then he said: 'The position of the head of government is like that of a thread for beads: it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken, they will scatter and be lost, and will never come together again.'⁵³ The relationship of the supreme leader of the state to Muslims is like the thread that holds the beads together, so if he falls, all Muslims will fall, and there will be no one to gather them again because the enemy will have inflicted heavy blows upon them.

Then he continued: 'The Arabs today, even though small in number, are big because of Islam and strong because of unity. You should remain like the axis for them, and

rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their foundation. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you.’⁵⁴

This is why we say that it is a gross injustice to compare Ali (as) to the others - with all due respects to the companions. For Ali (as) attained a position in relation to the Prophet (sawa) that others failed to achieve, to the extent that if you tried to determine the distance between Ali (as) and any other, you would find it wide enough to fit the whole world!

When we say this, it is not from a desire to praise Ali (as), but it is reality which history stands witness for; in any case, he does not need our praise. In this regard, when al-Mutanabbi⁵⁵ was asked: Why did you not praise Ali (in his poetry)? - and he was one of those who believed in Ali’s Islamic *wilayah* - he said:

I have ignored praising the *wasiyy*⁵⁶ on purpose,
For he was a light that is sweeping and all-inclusive,
And if something gets strong enough, it stands on its own,
And the role of the sun’s light becomes worthless!

It's a natural right

Based on the above, we say that the Ghedir event was not an exceptional event as far as Ali (as) was concerned, but was the natural consequence to the history of Ali (as), since he was the only person among all Muslims expected to continue the Message in depth and in its expansion. In fact, we believe that the Ghedir was the culmination of the process, since we ask: what was the reason that made the Prophet (sawa) describe Ali (as) as the door to his city of knowledge, and say that he was with the truth and the truth with him, that he was to him like Aaron was to Moses, and all his other words that relate to responsibilities and could never have been simply a matter of courtesy or compliment.

Obviously, the matter cannot be dismissed as the Prophet's (sawa) expression of his emotions towards Ali (as), because this cannot be accepted of the Prophet (sawa) or seen in the content of the words. It was an expression of his responsibility to strengthen the idea about Ali (as) amongst Muslims in regard to the qualities that he had that would help him to lead the Islamic cause after him.

And when we want to emphasise the *wilayah* of Ali (as) and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as), we do not do this by

trying to stir up sectarian disputes and sensitivities, but we come from the objective basis that the Qur'an founded: **'if you have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger'** 4:59 – on the basis of knowledge, proof and evidence, and through points collectively agreed upon.

In our present day, we see the caliphate – in its depth and dynamic content - as the source from which we get the religion, in that it represents the ongoing argument (proof) (between us) and God the almighty, since Ali (as) and the others have long departed from this life. On this basis, loyalty to the Message and abiding by the argument (proof) imposes on all Muslims the obligation to discuss this matter on the basis of calm scientific dialogue, for we - through our adherence to the *wilayah* - must be wary of any approach dealing with any matter - even if it is right - that might lead to a disturbance or separation between Muslims. When we follow Ali (as), we do so through his mind and his noble goal, his approach and methods in both war and peace, from the angle that Ali (as) represents the whole of Islam.

Ali (as) teaches us that if we find ourselves standing between the supreme Islamic interest and our own concerns, we have to put our own concerns on hold and

care for the supreme interest of Islam. This does not mean that we cancel our own concerns or beliefs that we hold, because this would therefore mean that we would be diverted away from our principles and our convictions about what the argument (proof) between us and God imposes.

We emphasise the right of the Ghedir and also the right to follow in Ali's footsteps in all that concerns Islamic unity, in dialogue with those who dispute with us, and to adopt peace as long Muslim affairs are safe.

PART TWO

Questions about the Ghedir

Q1- Are the *wilayah* (guardianship, leadership) and imamate of the infallibles subject to people's conviction, or do they go beyond that?

A- If the matter had required elections, the Prophet (sawa) would not have succeeded in his prophethood in the beginning of the Islamic Message, because he did not have enough popularity; in fact, most people rejected him. So, if what is meant is that the infallible - prophet or otherwise - cannot attain his position unless with people's conviction, in that case no one could have attained it. But yes, the infallibles needed the people's support, so that their *wilayah* becomes effective, and this might be the role of the oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*).

The issue here is that it is God who selects: 'Surely God chose Adam and Noah and the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of Imran above all people' 3:33. He is the one who select from people His prophets: 'God chooses messengers from among the angels and from among men'

22:75; therefore the *welyy* (guardian, leader), his *wilayah* and their role are God's commands, and He wanted people to obey them.

Q2- How can one convince the non-Imamite (non-Shi'ite) that the verse of *ikmal ad-Din and itmam an-Ni'meh*⁵⁷ is a Qur'anic proof of the Prophet's (arrangement of) *bay'ah* of Imam Ali (as)?

A- The verse is general and therefore whether it relates to this matter is something that must be looked at through the Sunnah and Qur'an commentary books so that we can tell, through the Sunnah narrations and history, that this verse was revealed on the day of Ghedir after the Prophet (sawa) had (already) delivered his Message.

The matter is not a question of Imamite or non-Imamite, but a scientific matter that we must deal with through the study the scripture relating to this matter, and try to compare between this and any other that contradicts it, until we reach a positive conclusion, like any scientific research aiming at arriving at a decisive conclusion.

It is a grave error to enter into dialogue on the basis that this is a Shi'ite who wants to prove his

position, and this is a Sunni who wants to prove his position according to the individual's partisan mentality. We should open our minds to God and read the verse: **'if you have a dispute about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger'** 4:59, i.e. through understanding Islam, and by having a clear stance that fulfils our obligations to God in the Islamic issues.

We have to go about it with the mentality of the searcher for the truth. We have seen how God the almighty taught His Messenger the dialogue-based approach: **'And most surely we or you are rightly guided or in manifest error'** 34:24, when the Prophet (sawa) was not in doubt that he was indeed rightly guided but they were following falsehood, as indeed he was (**'And he who brings the truth and (he who) accepts it as the truth'** 39:33). But God wanted to teach that when you engage in dialogue you show the person with whom you differ that you want to discuss the matter, as if you are in doubt, and that he should discuss the matter as if he is in doubt, with the result that you both go on a journey in search of the truth. You should not set out to impose your point of view, nor he his, because partisanship comes through dialogue.

Q3- Have you (the Shi'ah) a proof of the Imamate of Ali (as) other than the scripture? Some mention the course and conduct (in his life); is this sufficient to prove the Imamate?

A- When we talk about the Islamic rule and the Islamic nature of any position, it is natural that the scripture is the major foundation, as we have the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger. God says: **'and whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, abstain (from it)' 59:7**; so it is meaningless to search for any Islamic label or course away from the scripture; this is the first point. Second, what we have mentioned represents a depth for the meaning that the scriptures represent, so that they are no longer mere words (verses or narrations) that were produced without what manifests them in reality. In this we convey the words of al-Khalil bin Ahmed al-Ferahidi, the founder of the field of *Arood*⁵⁸ and the author of *Al-'ayn*, the first linguistic dictionary, when he was asked: why did you think Ali was better than all the rest? He replied: The need of all for him, and his lack of need for all, is proof that he was the Imam of all!

Q4- What is the secret behind that magical attraction towards Ali's personality among some people? And what is the secret behind the hatred and enmity towards the holy personality of the Commander of the Faithful (as) among some others?

A- As to why people are attracted towards Ali (as), it is because you cannot but be attracted towards him, as you do not find in his mind, heart or life anything but Islam, truth and justice, to the extent that it was narrated that he said: **'Truth left me no friend!'**⁵⁹ You cannot find any shortcomings in Ali - that is regardless of his infallibility-; in fact you cannot but bow in praise of, and respect for, his stances. Hear him saying to Ibn Abbas while looking at his slipper that he was repairing: **'By God, it is more valuable to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I may establish right and ward off wrong'**⁶⁰; and when said: **'if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument, and if there had been no pledge by God to the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate upon its own shoulders, and would have given to the last one**

the same treatment as to the first one (when they denied him his right); then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat!’⁶¹

So how could you not be attracted to Ali who used to say, regarding all the arguments that were raised about the caliphate, when he believed - as we do - that he was the rightful successor of the Prophet (sawa): ‘You have certainly known that I am the most rightful of all for the Caliphate. By God, so long as the affairs of Muslims remain intact and there is no oppression in it save on myself, I shall keep quiet, seeking reward for it (from God) and keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements to which you aspire.’⁶²

When you hear Ali saying: ‘O (vicious) world! Go away from me! Why do you come before me like this? Do you want to seduce me? God forbid (that I should be seduced and tempted by you and your pleasures.) Go and try your allurements on somebody else. I have no need of you. I have forsaken you thrice^{63,64}, do not you see a person that has left this life of materialism, with all his mind, heart, spirit and life, and could you fail to love him?!

That said, you cannot love Ali (as) and be attracted to him and get into the depth of his personality unless you understand him.

As for those who hate him and become his enemies, they are like someone who hates roses and love thorns, hates perfume and loves revolting smells, hates light and loves darkness; such people do not experience humanity as they should, for you cannot be a human being and hate Ali (as). We say this not emotionally, but according to reason that weighs everything precisely.

Q5- Were there reasons behind the concealment of the *hadith* of Ghedir?

A- All the reasons and unstable elements that were present are among the reasons that led to this. When we hear the second Caliph say: 'If Ali is appointed (the ruler after him), he will rule them on the white (correct) path', and then hear (them saying) that Ali (as) was still young and that he had killed the bold men of Quraysh and that Quraysh did not accept Ali (as) (as leader) and so on, we understand how the *hadith* and event of Ghedir was

covered up and concealed and how things became mixed up.

We can perhaps understand the secret behind the concealment of the Ghedir event when we study the contemporary situation in which many an event or matter was so clear, but nonetheless, was covered up in a dubious way in which many interfered. When we look into how things change and whose thoughts change and how issues get mixed up, we can see many of such incidents that we witness. The reason for this is that the things affecting what happens in the social arena regarding any matter do not do so in the way that people like or accept, but through a lot of methods and ways, so that the matter gets diverted from its straight path, even if only with words.

For example: when we study the story of al-Hasan (as) and al-Hosain (as), we find that the Prophet (sawa) created love for them in the hearts of Muslims, and they succeeded in deepening that love through their conduct and behaviour. A proof can be cited from the reply of al-Ferezdaq, the poet, who met Imam al-Hosain (as) on his way to the Kerbala', after the people of Kufa had sent their oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) to him; he described

them as follows: Their hearts are with you but their swords are against you!

We have witnessed a lot of this in Iraq and Lebanon, and in many places in the world, because the problem with the masses is that they act and react with fervour and emotions so that truth turns into falsehood and falsehood into truth, in adults and the young, and things get turned upside down in matters that are as clear as the sun in the middle of the day.

Q6- The great scholar Mohammed Baqir as-Sadr believed that one of the most important and destructive ills from which the Muslims of Imam Ali's time suffered was doubt. Why did that doubt happened, how did it happen, when Imam Ali (as) represented the best role model of a Muslim after the Messenger of God (sawa)?

A- A man remains a man, and takes from Islam and belief in different amounts - he may take the whole of Islam, or half etc, and then the effective elements start their negative effects.

There was doubt at the time of the Prophet (sawa) when, after the battle of Hunain when the Prophet (sawa) was dividing the booty for the fighters in a

certain way, and there was a certain wisdom behind it, Abbas bin Mirdas stood up, believing that he deserved more than he got, and said: Be fair! The Prophet (sawa) replied: **‘And who would be fair if I am not?!’**⁶⁵

And so the hypocrites were showing doubt through the nature of complications in Islam at that time. We have seen how at the end of the Prophet’s life and after many people started to complicate things by planting doubts, the Ghedir *hadith* was the clearest of words. Nonetheless, words started to come out to instigate doubts about it and push the matter away from its true meaning; to the extent that the Prophet (sawa) saw that people were deviating from what he had explained clearly, through the way that they were treating the matter, so he said: **‘Bring me ink and a shoulder (bone, or skin) so that I write something for you, after which you will never go astray’**⁶⁶. Nonetheless, some of those present said: the prophet is hallucinating (*yehjor*), or he is overwhelmed by his illness or the like, and they planted the seeds of doubt in what the Prophet (sawa) would write, something which the Prophet (sawa) himself remarked on when they later said s

(as the narration details): Shall we bring to you the ink and shoulder? He said: '(This) after what you had said?!'

And so, Muslims witnessed many problems and complications that obscured the clarity of truth from them, which is what led even stronger doubt to arise in the time of Ali's rule than at the time of the Prophet (sawa); the question is not that a person starts to have doubts or not through the nature of the person under whose authority he lives, but through the social complications that mix up things and steer the issue away from clarity.

This is what we notice in many situations, conclusions and doubts raised against many of the individuals who are at the forefront of the Islamic movement through grudges, envy, the work of the secret services and so on, something which drags clarity away from truth, so people are fooled into believing that the truth is falsehood and vice versa, and start to fight the truth as falsehood, and to support falsehood as truth; how much evidence of this problem can one find in our present times!

Q7- Your proof of the religious and political imamate using the Ghedir *hadith* that the Messenger of God (sawa)

declared, if the *hadith* is authentic, does not that give the meaning that you believe in?

A- The Ghedir *hadith* is widely narrated, it is indeed *mutewatir*⁶⁷ as far as both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis are concerned. If the person asking the question is arguing about its meaning, its meaning is clear, because the Prophet (sawa) returned from the farewell pilgrimage (*hujjatul weda'*) accompanied by the Muslims until they reached a crossroads; there he gathered the people at noon and raised Ali's arm high enough for people to see his armpit, then said: **'Do not you bear witness that I am *awla* (I have more right) over every believer than he does over himself?'** They said: yes. He said: **'O God be (my) witness'**, then said: **'For whomever I am his *mawla* (guardian, leader, master), Ali is his *mawla*.'** Now, some people interpret his words as 'whoever I love, Ali loves' since the word *mawla* can be used to mean the one who loves, just as it means the one who supports, or the guardian or leader, and so - they go on to say - if the word can mean all these things, we cannot use it to prove that the *hadith* confirms guardianship and rule.

To comment on this, we say: first, when we study the event and how the Prophet (sawa) gathered the people at that hot time of the day - was it just to tell them that whoever I love Ali loves as well, or that whoever loves me should love Ali as well? This is meaningless when looking into the nature of the event. Then, his saying **‘Do not you bear witness that I am *awla* (I have more right) over every believer than he does over himself?’** carries the meaning of guardianship and rule, because he first asked them to confirm their belief in his position as set out by the Qur’anic verse⁶⁸, which means that what is meant by **‘*awla* over every believer than he does over himself?’** is the guardian and ruler, and this is the proof of the imamate in the Ghedir *hadith*.

Q8- The *tewator* of narrations on the day of Ghedir makes it absolutely certain and provides absolute proof on this great Islamic day; some however question the Imam’s abstention from not using this event when arguing his case for the caliphate in a clear way. What is your opinion?

A- Ali (as) said: **‘By God the son of Abu Quhafah (Abu Bakr)⁶⁹ dressed himself with it (the caliphate),**

and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill; the flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me'⁷⁰, which shows that he talked about it using symbolism; this is on the one hand. On the other, historians narrated that Ali (as) talked about this event openly, such as when he gathered the people in the Rahbeh (in Kufa, Iraq) during his reign and said: 'I seek by God's position of every Muslim person who heard the Messenger of God (sawa) to say on the day of Ghedir of Khomm what he said, to stand up and give witness of what he heard, and let no one stand up except those who saw him with their eyes and heard it with their ears'; so thirty (of the Prophet's) companions stood up, twelve amongst whom had fought in the battle of Badr, and gave their witness that he (sawa) took Ali's arm and said to the people: 'Do not you bear witness that I am *awla* (I have more right) over every believer than he does over himself? They said: yes. ' they said: yes, so he (sawa) said: 'For whomever I am his *mawla* (guardian, leader, master), Ali is his *mawla*. O God, support

whomever supports him and be the enemy of whomever becomes his enemy.’⁷¹

Three men did not stand up to give their witness, one of whom was Anas bin Malik. So Ali (as) said: ‘Why did you not stand up with the companions of the Messenger of God to give witness of what you had heard on that day?’ He said: O the Commander of the Faithful, I have grown old and forgotten (it)! Ali (as) said: ‘If you are lying let God strike you with a whiteness that your turban cannot cover!’ (Indeed) he did not stand up and leave until his face became white from albinism, after which he used to say: I was stricken by the prayer of the pious man. This was mentioned by Imam Ibn Qutaibah ad-Dainoori⁷², and is also supported by what Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal narrated in vol.1 of his Mosned; he said: So, thirty stood up (to give their witness), but three did not stand up, so his prayer smote them.

The Imam (as) talked about this on more than one occasion, sometimes using symbolism, others by pointing out a little and in others quite openly, because he used to face matters with wisdom, observing the best interests of Islam and the Muslims.

Q9- Some think that the *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance and appointment) of the Ghedir became void when Ali (as) gave *bay'ah* to the first Caliph, and so they think that there is no need even to celebrate this event in light of the end of the matter?

A- When we look into Ali (as) in the Shiqshiqiyyeh sermon⁷³, we find that even during his reign he believed in his right of rule and that the circumstances which surrounded him did not make him retreat from his right; because such a matter in which the *wilayah* was from God and executed by the Messenger (sawa) is not something that he can give up, for there would be no meaning in this: it is a matter in which Ali (as) did not have a personal choice, but rather it is a matter relating to Islam in its dynamics, vitality and originality.

When we mention Ali (as), we do not want to quarrel to dismiss those who became rulers before him and place Ali in their place, for Ali and they died and are in the hands of God; but the matter relates to Ali's thought, approach, spirituality and *jihad* and this is the meaning of our actions following the course of *wilayah*.

Q10- In the Ghedir *hadith*, it was narrated that the Messenger of God (sawa) gathered thousands of Muslims when he appointed Ali. The question is: where was this huge gathering after the Prophet's death regarding Ali's oath of allegiance (which they had given)?

A- The situation that followed after the Ghedir event was surrounded by psychological circumstances that made everyone forget the matter altogether, and if some people are surprised by this or do not think that is that probable, we have other events in our history that stood witness to this, such as the oath of allegiance of Imam al-Hosain (as) when their hearts were with him while their swords were against him. In our contemporary time also, we have seen many leaderships that Muslims have gathered around (in support), but later, when they were persecuted one way or the other, they could not find one supporter or one voice of support..

Q11- A preacher talked about the disturbances that took place during Ali's caliphate and said: he (Ali) was a learned, brave and knowledgeable man but lacked

(knowledge of) politics and this is why wars raged during his reign; is this correct?

A- Some people do not fully understand the politics during the course of the Message. Yes, Imam Ali (as) might not have been a politician like those politicians who would protect their rule and hold onto it in whatever way possible, such as those who want to become rulers even through dealing with Satan, so you see him - if comes to power - oppress people, cause corruption and do all forbidden things in order to stay in power. Ali's greatness shows from the fact that he considered his role was to give the Message its realistic image and to prove that a ruler was needed to implement Islam, even if this meant him not staying in power. Moreover, he used to say: 'One who has been through the thick and thin of life finds the excuses to prevent him from obeying the orders and prohibitions of God, but he disregards them despite his capacity (to obey them), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of God)',⁷⁴.

He also used to say: 'Mu'awiyeh is not more cunning than me, but he acts treacherously and immorally; had it not been for hating betrayal I would have been amongst the most cunning of people.'⁷⁵ Imam Ali (as), therefore, wanted politics to be pursued so as to deepen the great issues in people, not to be something that would corrupt people's spirit and lead them to make it a game for self-advancement. He used to say: 'My position and yours are not the same: I want you for God and you want me for yourselves.'⁷⁶

We believe that the caliphate was Ali's right because he was the only Muslim to live Islam to the full, knew Islam in its entirety, opened up to the spirituality of Islam in all its aspects and lived with the Prophet (sawa) who, due to the battles, circumstances and problems, could not complete his mission to firmly instil the Islamic values in people, so he needed a person who was qualified to complete the mission, and there was none but Ali (as). Therefore, the caliphate was his natural right and his role was to protect Islam, which explains his co-operation with the caliphs who ruled before him, although they denied him his right, because he regarded himself responsible (for Islam) both

outside the caliphate and inside it. The role of the imamate here is the role of prophethood without prophethood; as the Prophet (sawa) said to him: 'Are you not satisfied that you are to me in the position of Aaron to Moses? There is no prophet after me though'⁷⁷.

Imam Ali's role was to confirm the truth so as to give people an idea of the Islamic rule and how to establish the Islamic values in his rule, even with all the negative issues that faced him.

Q12- It is said that you mentioned, in an interview with Al-Hayat newspaper, that the *wilayah* of Ali (as) is not absolutely established?

A- We say that it has been absolutely established that the Prophet (sawa) appointed Ali (as) through a command from God on the day of Ghedir and in other instances. However, we were saying that this matter is one of the theoretical issues disputed between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis, with the Shi'ah confirm it and the Sunni's do not; this is why it became a matter of arguments and dispute. There is a difference between saying that this is an fundamental fact that not a single Muslim disputes

and saying that it is a theoretical matter. All scholars say that it is a theoretical matter that demands the proof presented by our scholars, and negating proof presented by the Sunni scholars; this does not contradict the fact that the Shi'ah believe that it absolutely took place.

Q13- What is the role of the Commander of the Faithful (as) during the 25 years of the caliphs before him?

A- His role was the greatest role, as he considered himself the Commander of the Faithful both when he was outside the caliphate rule and when he was inside it, and that he was responsible for the whole of Islam, whether he was in the highest position of power or not. This is why he stood with those who denied him the caliphate – and usurped his right to offer them all council and advice and to solve for them the problems which faced them without feeling of any complex – because the difference between Ali (as) and the rest of the companions is that he was completely Islamic, and his responsibility to Islam was as the Prophet's without prophethood. This is why he said: 'I will adopt peace as long as Muslim affairs are safe and there

is injustice to me alone'⁷⁸, and this is why he offered advice to all the caliphs who ruled before him, even to the extent that, as some historians have claimed, he defended Othman and sent his two sons to defend him. All this did not mean that he abandoned or gave up his right, but that he was observing the supreme interests of Islam.

We have to learn from Ali (as) how to think about Islam with all tolerance and straightforwardness, for Ali (as) taught us that before his caliphate and during it.

Q14- What are the reasons behind Imam Ali's moving the caliphate capital to Kufa, in spite of what Medina meant to him?

A- This was because when he came back from Basrah, he found that the circumstances surrounding him required choosing Kufa so that to achieve greater control.

Q15- The Shi'ah theory about imamate says that the imamate is a divine command from God as it is the continuation of prophethood, so how come Imam Ali (as) gave up his right to the caliphate when it was not allowed

for the Prophet (sawa) to give up his Message; is it not like that?

A- Imam Ali (as) did not abandon his right nor give it up, but he froze his demand because it was not possible in light of the objective circumstances. He explained the reason behind this when he said: 'until I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion of Mohammed (s), (so) I felt afraid that if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims I might witness a degradation or change in it that would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you'⁷⁹. Even prophets, when they faced challenges and difficulties that prevented them from fulfilling their duties, stopped, not because they wanted to but because the circumstances dictated it.

Q16- Is the *hadith* of Ghedir a divine scripture or a mere preparation and nomination that all Muslims should have followed?

A- Not a nomination, but appointment. God said: 'O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then

you have not delivered His message, and God will protect you from the people' 5:67, so there is an obligatory side to this appointment. And He said: 'This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion' 5:3. Therefore, Imam Ali (as) was appointed by God the almighty and His Messenger (sawa), and also by the truth and the facts.

Q17- One of the reasons why some researchers refused to accept that Nahj al-Balaghah is Imam Ali's was that massive knowledge was needed in different fields, empirical and otherwise, and some say this knowledge could not be acquired by a companion. So how come Ali (as) could? This they regard as a proof that Nahj al-Balaghah was written in a later era.

A- Those who talk like this do not understand Ali (as), because they talk about him as they do about any of the companions, but Ali is not like that since he embodied the whole of the Messenger of God (sawa) in his knowledge, as the prophetic *hadith* announced: 'I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door'⁸⁰. Ali (as) described that knowledge in his

famous saying: **‘The Messenger of God taught me one thousand fields (*bab*, lit. door) of knowledge’⁸¹**, and **‘*bab*’** represents the area that covers all the wide aspects of a given field, which means that the Imam (as) not only was receiving knowledge, but was producing it when he was learning from the Prophet (sawa) all that he gave him; then he would produce new knowledge. This is why he continued to say: **‘from every door one thousand doors open to me’**.

We know that Ali (as) was the student of the Qur’an as he was the student of the Prophet (sawa) and he understood the Qur’an when it was being revealed like no one else could except the Prophet (sawa), who said to him: **‘You see what I see and hear what I hear; you are not a prophet though’⁸²**. He was with the Messenger of God (sawa) day and night and this is why he knew every verse when it was revealed, why and so on. We know that the Holy Qur’an represents the book that people still, after all these centuries, open up to, draw ideas from and understand it as if it has just been revealed, so it is renewed continuously in a similar manner to the succession of day and night and the moon and the sun. Every new generation sees that

the Qur'an is talking about all of its affairs as if it was revealed for it.

Imam Ali (as) used to say in his last days: **'Ask me before you lose me, for I am more knowledgeable of the pathways of heavens than the pathways of earth'**⁸³. He used to say: **'Surely here (pointing to his chest) is a huge amount of knowledge; I wish I had found bearers for it'**⁸⁴. On his knowledge of God, Ali (as) said: **'If the cover is lifted, my belief would not be stronger'**⁸⁵.

So, Ali (as) is a different matter to the others, with all due respect to all people; he is a human being and not a prophet, as the Prophet (sawa) said to him: **'Are you not satisfied that you are to me in the position of Aaron to Moses? There is no prophet after me though'**⁸⁶. This is when we talk about Ali (as) through what people managed to know, otherwise the great bounties from God to him that opened for him horizons, these were within God's knowledge and people do not know them. Therefore, when Ali (as) talked about future events and on spiritual and other things that people were not used to, it is not surprising because people did not know much, to the extent that some

commentaries of Nahj al-Balaghah suggested that Ali (as) was the founder of many fields of knowledge that people pursued later.

Q18- I engaged in a dialogue with a brother on the issue of the caliphate of Imam Ali (as) and he said that all that was narrated on Ali's position after the Prophet (sawa) is not correct because it contradicts the Qur'an, for the Qur'an says: **'Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed'** 53:3-4 and there were a lot of things which the Messenger (sawa) mentioned in his life and said that they will happen in the future and they did happen after his death, but the caliphate of the Imam after the Prophet did not happen, which proves that the Prophet did not say anything in this regard, otherwise wouldn't it have taken place?

A- This man does not understand the matter as should be, because most of what the Prophet (sawa) said with regard to Ali (as) is *mutewatir* amongst both the Sunnis and Shi'ah, and the *hadith* of Ghedir is also *mutewatir* in both schools through the narrations of the companions and those after them which they mentioned. However, there is a discussion by the Sunnis on the meaning of the

hadith, not of it being definitely said and done by the Prophet (sawa) in his sayings on the day of Ghedir. As for the verse: **‘Nor does he speak out of desire’**, it confirms that the Prophet (sawa) announced the caliphate of Ali (as) as a divine command, not because he was his cousin; but it being established or not, this is not exclusive to Ali (as), but to the whole of Islam! God says: **‘And say: The truth is from your Lord, so whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve’ 18:29**; Islam was not established in its entirety and not all people believed in the Prophet. This is in addition to the fact that the Prophet (sawa) did not say the *hadiths* concerning Ali (as) like prophecies, so that it can be said that they did or did not happen, but rather, he was confirming Ali’s right to succession and from the position of his being qualified and better than the rest. So, your friend should look again into his intellect and understanding of things.

Q19- Some researchers trying to understand the scripture with regard to Ali’s imamate say that it does not mean

political leadership, but a leadership in thought. What do you say about this?

A- The Prophet (sawa), in the verse: **‘Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder. You are not a warder over them’ 88:21-22**, has the position of the caller (to the faith); he also has the position of the announcer of the good news and a warner: **‘O Prophet! Surely We have sent you as a witness, and as a bearer of good news and as a warner. And as one inviting to God by His permission, and as a light-giving lamp’ 33:45-46**; also the personality of illuminating with thought and spirituality: **‘and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom’ 62:2**; but there is also the personality of the leader, which is the political personality of the Prophet (sawa), as clearly established in the verse: **‘The Prophet has a greater right over the believers than they have on themselves’ 33:6**, this is in all aspects. This is why when he asked: **‘Am I not *awla* (I have more right) over the believers than they over themselves?’** They said: yes. He said: **‘Whoever I was his *mawla* (guardian, leader, master)’**, that is whoever I have more claim over him than he over himself then **‘Ali is his *mawla*’**, that is has more right over him than he

over himself. These words were narrated by the Sunnis and Shi'ah and through a lot of narration chains. God says: 'O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message' 5:67 the commentaries narrated that this verse was revealed with regard to Ali's wilayah, and after the Prophet (sawa) appointed Ali imam the following verse was revealed: 'This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion' 5:3.

The imamate that we believe in is, therefore, one of thought, spirituality, politics and in all fields because Ali's infallibility means that his thought is the truth/right and that his rule is the truth/right and the Prophet (sawa) did say: 'Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali, turns with him wherever ('however' in other narrations) he turns'⁸⁷.

Q20- Was the Prophet's appointment of Imam Ali as caliph in the Ghedir of Khomm a non-changeable obligation or otherwise; i.e. was the Imam's appointment founded on a

asis that can never be challenged or that the caliphate was acceptable to go to someone else as a matter subject to opinion?

A- When it is proven to us that Ali (as) was appointed by the Prophet (sawa) as an execution of God's command: **'O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you' 5:67**, in this case it is a non-changeable matter, not otherwise, because the issue was not a mere nomination or something that happened as a result of temporary circumstances so that if they change the command changes, but it is - according to the evidence we have - is a divine selection; and that was nothing but because God knew that he was qualified and the Prophet (sawa) wanted to confirm it. The matter is a non-changeable one by nature and in the proof available and it is proven to us. However, when Muslims went separate ways in it, it became a matter of dispute.

Q21- What are the lessons to be learned from the Ghedir bay'ah and what could the Ghedir event benefit us in the present time?

A- The lesson which we can learn is to proceed from the thought that the leadership act its leadership particulars according to it, in its mind, spirit and course and to manifest Islam in its whole; to proceed from the idea of choosing the better person for leadership; to live inside the personality of the Prophet Mohammed (sawa) when he faced the negative challenges that Ali's appointment was because he was his cousin and son-in-law, not retracting or hesitating to follow the truth; to live inside the personality of Imam Ali (as) at the distinguished level which his life showed in all the complicated issues he faced before he became to power and after.

Q22- Is it necessary for the person who has embraced Islam to give *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) after reciting the two witness statements as we see done by some Muslim sects and also by some Islamic parties in Africa as they base this on the *bay'ah* that took place in the time of the Prophet (sawa) during his time, so they give *bay'ah* to the scholars of their sects?

A- The *bay'ah* is not a condition in Islam, so who says:
'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and

that Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah' is a Muslim with all the rights and obligations of Muslims. What the Prophet (sawa) did when he took *bay'ah* was so that the Muslims confirm their practical adherence, for the Prophet is a prophet first, and a leader second, and he is a ruler 'The Prophet has a greater right over the believers than they have over themselves' 33:6. In light of this, this the *bay'ah* means abiding by the leadership that makes people feel their responsibilities, and this is why the Prophet (sawa) used to take the *bay'ah* from all women and men so as to confirm their allegiance to his leadership, and so it was their obligatory bond with him, and their declaration of Islam was his argument with them. So, the Prophet (sawa) has two personalities: the personality of the messenger and the personality of the leader. The first receives the two witness declarations and the second receives the *bay'ah*. Therefore, the *bay'ah* is for leadership and so if there is an Islamic leadership, the *bay'ah* confirms the people's allegiance to it.

Q23- Regarding the knowledge of Ali (as), we find that he did two things: offered general knowledge to all people, and offered a certain kind of knowledge to his closest companions such as Ammar, Abi Tharr, Kumail and some others. Concerning that second type, what is your direction with regard to that special education?

A- It is natural that you give according to what the general atmosphere needs in its general outlines and details, which can be digested by the intellectual level of the people. There are individuals who attain a good level of knowledge and intellect, so they should be offered more, deeper and more detailed knowledge. This is perhaps similar to what a high school teacher gives in comparison to a university teacher, for every group has different level. But it is perhaps inaccurate to talk about a difference in knowledge, as it might only be a difference in the level and some details.

Q24- I heard some preachers say: had it not been for Ali, the Messenger of God would not have been created. Isn't this blasphemy?

A- This speech is meaningless, because Ali - as we know - was the Prophet's disciple and was raised by him (sawa), and the Prophet (sawa) is the best of all people, including Ali (as). Some people exaggerate in their speech, and Ali would reject all this. Read Nahj al-Balaghah and you will see how Ali praises the Prophet (sawa). Read how he talks about the courage of the Prophet (sawa): 'We used, when the fighting became intense, to take the Messenger of God as a shield; and no one would then be nearer to the enemy than him.' The problem with many people is that they do not know the greatness of the Messenger of God.

The Messenger of God (sawa) is the foundation, the basis and the starting point, he is the teacher and the mentor; it is part of his greatness that he raised Ali so that Ali's personality was the making of the Prophet (sawa), and all that Ali had was came from the spirit, thought and knowledge of the Prophet (sawa) - this is what Ali (as) described when he said: 'The Messenger of God taught me one thousand fields (*bab*, lit. door) of knowledge, from every door one thousand doors open to me'⁸⁸.

Q25- God says: 'O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message' 5:67, and it is said in some commentaries that this verse was a warning to the Messenger of God from his Lord to convey to people that Imam Ali (as) was to be the caliph after him. Someone hearing this commentary might think that the Messenger was given a command to do this, but he himself failed to deliver, something which contradicts the verse: **'Nor does he speak out of desire' 53:3?**

A- This is not a warning, but God wanted to show that this matter was extremely important, to the extent that if it did not happen the Message would fail, because the leadership issue is linked to the Message. So, this is not a speech addressed to the Prophet (sawa) meaning that he failed to deliver the Message, but that God wanted to say to him: deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord in this matter that represents a vital, major element without which the Message would be lost because it needs guardianship and following in the right direction.

Q26- Why did the Messenger (sawa) not want to deliver the *wilayah* of Ali (as), as we understand from the line ‘and if you do it not’, even though delivering it would bring perfection of the religion and completion of (God’s) favour?

A- Who said that he did not want to when God almighty had ordered him to do so?! God was telling him in this verse that there were problems that might take place to prevent his deliverance of the *wilayah* but that He would protect him from them. This does not mean that the Prophet (sawa) was refusing and that God threatened him, as some people wrongly understand.

Q27- Taking the Ghedir *hadith* as proof of the *wilayah* of Ali bin Abi Talib (as) is subject to the authenticity of the *hadith* in the narration chain (*sened*) and on collective agreement about that. Do the Sunnis agree about this? Have any doubts been cast by some people on its narration chain (*sened*)?

A- When we look into the books of *hadith* we find a collective agreement as far as the Shi’ah are concerned, and a widespread knowledge of the *hadith* as far as the Sunni’s are concerned, with

some Sunni's even regarding it as *mutewatir*; therefore, there is absolutely no doubt about the *sened* of the Ghedir *hadith*. If there is some discussion, it is about some of the words narrated, such as: 'O God, let down him who lets him down and support him who supports him', which some narrators mention while others do not.

And it is rather a joke that some people claim that I cast doubt on the *sened* of the Ghedir *hadith* because they have read my words in An-Nedweh book⁸⁹ applying their grudges not their piety, for I was saying that the Sunni's do not doubt the *sened*, and we must look into this as well as meaning to answer the question that I was asked, which was: how do you say that there were 120 thousand people gathered in the Ghedir then it turned into four or five? I said that there is no doubt about the *hadith* of Ghedir and that this question must be studied as to how 120 thousands became four or five, but they said that I was talking about the *sened*, not the question at hand, and did not read the book itself.

At any rate, the *sened* of the *hadith* of Ghedir arouses no dispute among the *hadith* scholars; the

dispute, rather, has been about the meaning of the word 'mawla'.

Q28- On the anniversary of the Ghedir, the Shi'ah Muslims celebrate while the Sunni's do not, and they do not even mark that event in any way; we also see that the Shi'ah love the Imamate while the Sunni's love the Caliphate. This has been going on for more than 1,400 years without any sign of the two parties approaching the other over this issue. How could the different schools of thought unite so that Muslims can live loving each other, especially now that the great problem today is that there is neither a caliphate for the Sunni's nor an Imam for the Shi'ah? Why do we talk about the Ghedir and not about unity?

A- For 55 years we have been calling for Islamic unity, abiding by the Qur'an and the narrations of the Prophet (sawa) and the Imams (as). The problem, however, is that the Islamic unity - in reality - does not proceed from a firm Islamic basis, meaning that Muslims should sit to discuss their differences in an objective, scientific way in intellectual institutes that are concerned with such issues, not in public places which often deal with the matter within an emotional framework, without objectivity. We here

say: the unity question must be treated with scientific objective mentality, as the existence of these elements that stir up disputes between Muslims is making them like boils that can erupt in many places.

Therefore, scholars and intellectuals must study the matter in a scientific way, because we do not encourage dispute that takes place in a frenzied or undisciplined way, or in the non-scientific way of laymen, because they cannot discuss these matters with the approach that the Qur'an emphasises: **'if you have a dispute about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger'** 4:59. That said, when we differ in some issues and call upon the Muslims who aspire for unity to join in dialogue, we say: there are fundamental issues that we must agree on - we do not differ on the unity of God or the Prophethood of the Messenger of God or the Book of God, or the Hereafter, the main acts of worship and most Islamic concepts, and do not differ even in the supreme Islamic interests on political and economic levels, so why do we treat this matter in a way that makes it a wall between us?

Muslims have experienced unity in various shapes and forms, as the Sunni's are not one group, but many: the Mu'tezileh, Asha'ireh, Hanefiyyeh, Shafi'iyeh, Hanbeliyyeh, Malikiyyeh and Dahiriyyeh are all Sunni sects. Nonetheless we do not see any great grudge and hatred within this variety. The Shi'ah also have differences that relate to the scholars' opinions. So it is possible - in light of this - for the degree of awareness to rise so that we all open up to the great issue together, as the enemies do not want settle the question of the head of the Sunni's only, or of the Shi'ah only, but the head of Islam as a whole.

Q29- Was rebellion against the religious scripture something the previous religions experienced, as has happened with the *hadith* of Ghedir, despite the fact that it has been confirmed, and with a chain of narration and clear meaning?

A- Such a state of affairs might not have been experienced in the previous religions; any rebellion against the scripture that took place was related perhaps to distorting and altering the scripture.

Q30- Why was the likening of Ali (as) to Aaron (as) repeated in the narrations? Is this with regard to the succession and continuation of the course of leadership, or with regard to the rebellion of the followers against their leader?

A- What is meant is what the Qur'an said: **'Appoint for me a minister from my family. Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him. And associate him in my affairs. That we may glorify you much. And remember you much'** 20:29-34. So, the Prophet (sawa) did not mean that the people did not follow Aaron (as), and this is why he said: **'Are you not satisfied that you are to me in the position of Aaron to Moses? There is no prophet after me though'**⁹⁰ - meaning, you, Ali, are not a prophet, but a minister (or a vicegerent), which here means a caliph.

Q31- I am one of your brothers from the Hanafi school. I question this: if Imam Ali was the most qualified person for the caliphate, why did he not insist on that right? Does not his abstention from doing so represent disobedience?

A- The Imam (as) used to say: **'I will adopt peace as long as Muslim affairs are safe and there is**

injustice to me alone'⁹¹, so Ali (as) wanted to protect Muslim unity at that time, as any action he would have taken was bound to cause a shock in Islam and might have even destroyed it completely. This is what he said: 'I was astonished when the people turned to him (i.e. Abu Bakr, the first caliphate) and swore allegiance to him, and I ceased my struggle for power until I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion of Mohammed (s), so I felt afraid that if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims I might witness a degradation or change in it that would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you, which was (after all) only a transient and short-lived affair, disappearing like a mirage or like cloud. So, I stood up amidst these events until falsehood was defeated and the religion was saved.'⁹² The Imam, therefore, abstained from pursuing his right in the interest of Islam and Muslims.

Q32- In one of your books you said that Imam Ali (as) is a person like us and that he could commit mistakes. What did you mean by that?

A- I did not say that, but mentioned Imam Ali's saying in one of his sermons: **'Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring unless God helps me (to avoid errors).'**⁹³ This is in Nahj al-Balaghah. I commented on that saying: he was above that because he is infallible, so we believe, but he wanted to encourage people to follow his way in rule, which is the way without error, so that they learn how to criticise who would come after him, who would not be infallible; otherwise, we believe that Ali bin Abi Talib (as) is completely infallible.

Q33- Imam Ali (as) was a friend and companion to people of knowledge, and a foe to ignorant and uncivilised people, whom he fought with his sword. You, however, always say: engage in dialogue with them and **'Repel (Evil) with what is better'** 41:34?

A- Who can compare with Ali as a man of dialogue?! Ali (as) did not fight the Kharijites⁹⁴ because they

were ignorant; he fought them because they abused public order when they killed Abdullah bin Khebbab and his wife and became bandits. Then he said to us afterwards: 'Do not fight the Kharijites after me, for who sought the truth but failed to find it is not like he who sought falsehood and achieved it'.^{95,96} Ali (as) engaged in dialogue with the Kharijites, discussing all their thoughts and said to them that if I committed mistakes - although he was above that - why do you condemn Mohammed's nation as deviant? Why do you fight all people? Has any person of dialogue reached such a level as this?

Ali (as) was the greatest man of dialogue after the Prophet (sawa), and his greatness was that he opened his mind to Islam and his heart to the care of Muslims. The problem of many, however, is that they still regard Ali (as) as a warrior of sword and spear, and a man that could split a knight into two halves. He used to say: I swear by God that I have not postponed the war one day except in the hope that a group of them will come over to me, be guided by me and attracted to my light, and this is more preferable to me than killing them in a state of deviance and ending up shouldering their sins.⁹⁷ Ali (as) did not have a lust for war, but the desire to spread awareness and

guidance for those who deviated from the correct path,; this is why his war was one of pressure, so that people would turn back to him, which is to Islam, which he represented.

So, understand Ali (as) well, for a lot of people do not understand him; many of Ali's communities of today are perhaps his communities of tomorrow- are not a lot of questions which are put to those who have some of Ali's knowledge along the lines of: How many hairs are there on my head?!⁹⁸

Q34- You said that those who followed Ali in *wilayah* failed to learn from Ali (as)?

A- I was talking about those who should have learnt from Ali (as) the wide horizons he had, but they failed to do so because the problem is that you see the narrow horizons that some people have; they pursue their course through partisanship, psychological and social complexes and so on, while Ali (as) used to enter into dialogue with those who accused him of deviation; he entered into discussions with the Kharijites and with Talhah⁹⁹ and al-Zobair¹⁰⁰. Imam Ali (as), when found himself facing someone who differed with him over a

certain idea and he knew that that idea was wrong, would stand up to discuss it with them. This is why we say: it is not your right, for merely differing with someone over some idea, to call him atheist, blasphemous or deviant, as this is the way of the weak, the partisan, or those suffering from complexes. Otherwise, who amongst us has faced a problem like Ali's with the Kharijites? Who amongst us has faced a problem like Ali's with Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, Talhah, al-Zobair or Mu'wayyeh? Nonetheless, you find Ali (as) broadminded and tolerant, engaging in dialogue calmly and speaking objectively. So, how many like Ali (as) do we have? Do not you see that for merely differing over some issues with a person, we condemn him out of Islam?!

So, what was meant was to learn from Ali (as) Islam in its tolerance and wide horizons.

Q35- The Prophet's saying: 'O Ali, you will not be loved except by a believer, and will not be hated except by a hypocrite', was this exclusive to Ali (as), or it would be true with regards to the Prophet (sawa), the rest of the Prophets (as) and the Imams (as) as well?

A- Ali is the symbol of Islam, and when this saying was addressed to him **'you will not be loved except by a believer'**, it is with regard to his symbolic meaning in Islam - as the believer will go on loving with his mind, heart and life, in the best and most complete way, whoever manifests belief; so whoever manifests belief will find such love directed towards him.

Q36- We find that Imam Ali (as) treats the position of power in two ways: one in which he views authority and power as less valuable than his worn-out slipper, and another in which he painfully feels the loss of power and that his position in relation to it is like that of the axis in relation to the hand-mill, the flood water flows down from him and the bird cannot fly up to him. What is your explanation of these two approaches?

A- It is, rather, one approach, but two pronged. In the first he says to Ibn Aabbas: **'O Ibn Aabbas, do not you see this slipper'** - and he was repairing it because it was worn out - **'it is more valuable to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I may establish right and ward off wrong'**¹⁰¹. And said: **'f people had not come to me and**

supporters had not exhausted the argument, and if there had been no pledge by God to the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the rope of Caliphate upon its own shoulders, and would have given to the last one (their request of him to become the caliph) the same treatment as to the first one (when they denied him his right); then you would have seen that to me this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat!'¹⁰² So, power and authority are like a worn out slipper when it is personal, but it is like the axis of the hand-mill when it is a right.

Q37- Some Sunni scholars say: even if we agreed with you - the Shi'ah - that the Prophet did appoint Imam Ali on the day of Ghedir, still the Imam's *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) to the caliphs before him proves the legality of their caliphate. So why do you insist on the scripture, and why do you not go beyond this to the (proving) effect of the Imam's *bay'ah* to his predecessors? And if the rightful person himself gave up his right to the caliphate, why do you insist on him?!

A- We can study Imam Ali's words in the Shiqshiqiyyeh sermon and others, as in the question he asked about the arguments that raged in the Seqifeh: 'And what did the Ansar say?', they said: 'A leader from amongst us and a leader from amongst you (i.e. the Mohajiroon)', he (as) said: 'Why did you not argue against them (the Ansar) that the Prophet had left his will that whoever is good among the Ansar should be treated well, and whoever is bad should be forgiven?' They said: 'What is there against them in it?' He said: 'If the leadership was for them, there should have been no will in their favour' Then he asked: 'What did Quraysh say?' They said: 'They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet.' He said: 'They argued with the tree but spoiled the fruits.'¹⁰³

So, the Imam (as) never acknowledged the legality of what happened, and if it is proven that he gave bay'ah, in this case it has a political, realistic meaning more than just a confirmation of legality.

Q38- Historians discuss the dialectic of revolution and the state, and how this can be applied to the period after the

Messenger of God (sawa) to show that Ali (as) would have failed to succeed in running the state, based on his admission that he would be a better minister than a leader. What is your opinion of this? And was what the Prophet (sawa) did when he confirmed the *wilayah* of Ali (as) merely condemnation of some companions, or was he putting in place a mechanism for distinguishing amongst them in the future, so that only a very few would stay with Ali (as)?

A- We argue with these people on the question of the dialectic of revolution and the state, for when we look into Ali's thought and loyalty, and look into how his personality was the same as the Prophet's, we see that if Ali had continued the course he would have continued with the course of the Prophet (sawa) in running the state, and the way the Prophet (sawa) used to treat all affairs would have continued and Islamic awareness would have continued exactly as in the time of the Prophet (sawa).

In addition, when we study the management mentality that Imam Ali (as) applied, as seen in his letter of guidelines to Malik al-Ashtar¹⁰⁴ and study his way in checking on his governors, we know that

had Ali (as) become the caliph after the Prophet (sawa) he would have achieved great success and he would have directed the nation on the right track, because he had no problems on the level of Muslims in general, and we have not found any Muslim, on the level of the general public then, who argued against the *wilayah* of Ali (as). Those who argued against it were some companions whom history mentioned, and who had an interest in doing so, but no popular voice was heard to reject Ali's *wilayah*.

This is why we read in the history of Fatimah az-Zahra' (as) that she spoke with the women of the Mohajiroon and the Ansar, who came to visit her in her illness, about the right of Ali (as), and she said: **'I am finding myself loathing your life, detesting your men'**¹⁰⁵, so they conveyed this to their husbands, who then came to her and said: 'Had Ali came first to us before we gave *bay'ah* (to Abu Bakr), we would have given him the *bay'ah*', which means that there was no problem amongst Muslims to give *bay'an* to Ali (as).

Therefore, the Prophet (sawa) did not want to condemn some of the companions, but wanted,

rather, to confirm the *wilayah* in the Islamic reality.

Endnotes

¹ *Tewator* (recurrence) is the degree a *hadith* has attained, where so many individuals, amongst whom a conspiracy to fabricate it is impossible, have narrated it. (*The translator.*)

² *Tabi'in*, lit. followers, are those who met the Prophet's companions but who did not themselves meet the Prophet (sawa). (*The translator.*)

³ *Mosned Ahmed bin Hanbel*, vol.3, p.17, vol.4, p.171, vol.5, p.181.

⁴ Al-Hakim, *al-Mostedrek*, vol.3, p.109.

⁵ *Al-Moraje'at*, p.289-90.

⁶ Al-Fakhr ar-Razi, *at-Tefsir al-Kebir*, vol.12, p.50.

⁷ His eminence will later point out that the love of Ali (as) imposes itself on anyone with a humane soul, let alone the believers, and does not need the direct intervention of the Prophet (sawa); in addition to the fact that he (sawa) would not do anything unless through what the Islamic message requires, not through his own desires.

⁸ Mohammed bin Yaqoub al-Kulaini, *al-Kafi*, vol.2, p.74, narration 2.

⁹ From Ali's words in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 3.

¹⁰ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.4, saying 96.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Salman al-Farisi (the Persian), died 33H/654AD, the famous companion who, when each of the al-Mohajiroon and al-Ansar chanted 'Salman is one of us' - following his advice to dig the trench (*khandaq*) around Medina to protect it from the imminent attack of the enemies (the Khandaq battle) - the Prophet (sawa) said: 'Salman is one of us, Ahlul Bayt (the people of the house of the Prophet).' (*The translator.*)

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- ¹³ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.4, saying 45.
- ¹⁴ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary of Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.20, saying 478.
- ¹⁵ Al-Kulaini, *al-Kafi*, vol.2, p.74, narration 3.
- ¹⁶ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.46, sec.4, narration 58.
- ¹⁷ As-Sadouq, *Oyoon Akhbar ar-Rida*, vol.2, sec.28, narration 63.
- ¹⁸ *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Peak of Eloquence), sermon 192.
- ¹⁹ The first battle between the Muslims and Quraysh in the year 2H/624AD. (*The translator.*)
- ²⁰ The second battle between the Muslims and Quraysh in the year 3H/625AD. (*The translator.*)
- ²¹ Ahzab, i.e. parties, the third battle between the Muslims and Quraysh and their allies in the year 5H/627AD. (*The translator.*)
- ²² The battle between the Muslims and the two tribes of Hewazin and Theqif in the year 8H/630AD in the valley of Hunain. (*The translator.*)
- ²³ The battle between the Muslims and the Jews of Khaiber, the strong fortress outside Medina, in the year 7H/629AD. (*The translator.*)
- ²⁴ Khandaq, i.e. the trench, which is the trench Muslims dug around Medina to protect it from the attackers of the Quraysh and its allies (Ahzab). (*The translator.*)
- ²⁵ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.20, p.215, sec.17, narration 2.
- ²⁶ This was narrated in different forms and minor differences; refer to Mohsin al-Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, vol.1, p.264.
- ²⁷ Al-Kulaini, *al-Kafi*, vol.8, p.351, narration 548.

²⁸ The war between Ali (as) (and his army in Iraq) and Mu'awiyeh, the governor of Syria, who refused to accept Ali's caliphate, in the year 37H/657AD. (*The translator.*)

²⁹ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, speech 136.

³¹ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.10, p.120, sec.8, narration 1; also al-Hakim, *al-Mostedrek*, vol.3, p.127, at-Teberani, *al-Mo'jem al-Kebir*, vol.11, p.55.

³² Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.33, p.376, narration 606; also Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimeshq*, vol.42, p.449.

³³ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.2, p.226, narration 3; also al-Bukhari, *al-Jami' as-Sahih*, vol. 4, p.208 and vol.5, p.129, and Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, vol.7, p.120.

³⁴ Abu Lahab bin Abdul Mottalib, the Prophet's uncle who was one of his staunchest enemies; the Qur'an allocated for him and his wife, Umm Jamil, who was also one of Islam's enemies, the Chapter of Lahab (flame). (*The translator.*)

³⁵ Amir bin Hisham (d. 2H/624AD), one of the leaders of Mecca and one of the staunchest enemies of Islam, killed in the battle of Badr. (*The translator.*)

³⁶ The second Caliph after the Prophet (sawa), his reign covered the period 13-23H/634-644AD. (*The translator.*)

³⁷ The council which Omar appointed to elect a caliph following his expected death after being fatally stabbed; Ali (as) was one of the six members of the council. (*The translator.*)

³⁸ The first Umayyad caliph who refused to acknowledge the caliphate of Ali (as) and fought him in Siffin, then fought his son Imam al-Hasan (as) before signing a treaty with him in the year 41H/661AD; his reign ended in 60H/680AD. (*The translator.*)

³⁹ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.2, letter 41.

⁴⁰ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.10, sec. 193.

⁴¹ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 125.

⁴² In the south of Iraq; at the present a county bears this name in Iraq. (*The translator.*)

⁴³ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 33.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, sermon 130.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, sermon 3.

⁴⁶ Seqifeh, i.e. a covered place, in which some of the Ansar and a few of Mohajiroon elected Abu Bakr as the first caliph after the Prophet (sawa) in the year 11H/632AD. (*The translator.*)

⁴⁷ They, al-Ansar (supporters), Muslims originally from Medina, were referring themselves. (*The translator.*)

⁴⁸ They meant al-Mohajiroon (emigrants): Muslims originally from Mecca. (*The translator.*)

⁴⁹ See *At-Tabari's History*, the events of the year 10 Hijri.

⁵⁰ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, letter 62.

⁵¹ Othman bin Affan, the third caliph, elected by the council which Omar appointed before his death; his reign covered the period 23-35H/644-656AD. (*The translator.*)

⁵² *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 74.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol.2, no.146.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Abu at-Tayyib, Ahmed bin al-Hosain, 303-354H/915-965AD, regarded by most as the greatest Arab poet of all times. (*The translator.*)

⁵⁶ *Wasiyy*, lit. the testator of a will; here it is the guardianship over Muslims after the Prophet (sawa). (*The translator.*)

⁵⁷ What is meant is the verse: 'This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as (your) religion' 5:3.

⁵⁸ *Arood* is the science of Arab poetry which divides the forms of poetry lines as followed in every poem into sixteen forms, each of which called *bahr* (lit. sea); before al-Ferahidi, it was followed instinctively without determining the differences between them. (*The translator.*)

⁵⁹ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.2, sec.43, p.58

⁶⁰ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 33

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, sermon 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, sermon 74.

⁶³ It is like divorcing a woman thrice after which act she cannot be taken back as a wife. (*The translator.*)

⁶⁴ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 4, saying 77.

⁶⁵ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.33, sec.22, narration 572.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.16, sec.6, narration 75.

⁶⁷ A *mutewatir* *hadith* is one that has been narrated by so many reliable individuals that a conspiracy to fabricate is impossible. (*The translator.*)

⁶⁸ The verse is: 'The Prophet has a greater right on over the believers than they have on themselves' 33:6.

⁶⁹ Abdullah bin Abi Quhafah (573AD-13H/634AD), the first Caliph elected in the Seqifeh by some of the Muslims present, immediately after the Prophet's death; his reign lasted just over two years and witnessed wars against some tribes after it was claimed that they refused to pay *zakat* (tax), and also against other tribes that had abandoned Islam and followed self-appointed false prophets. (*The translator.*)

⁷⁰ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.1. sermon 3.

⁷¹ Al-Hakim, *al-Mostedrek*, vol.3, p.109.

⁷² In his famous history book *Al-Imamah wal-Siyasah*.

⁷³ The *Shiqshiqiyyeh* sermon is sermon 3 of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.1, so entitled because when Imam Ali (as) was stopped to answer someone, then was asked to continue the sermon from where he had stopped, he said: 'It was like a *shiqshiqeh* (the sound of a camel raging) that came out loudly then stopped.' (*The translator.*)

⁷⁴ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.2, letter 41.

⁷⁵ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.10, sec. 193.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, speech 136.

⁷⁷ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.2, p.226, narration 3; also al-Bukhari, *al-Jami' as-Sahih*, vol. 4, p.208 and vol.5, p.129, and Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, vol.7, p.120.

⁷⁸ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 74.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, letter 62.

⁸⁰ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.10, p.120, sec.8, narration 1; also al-Hakim, *al-Mostedrek*, vol.3, p.127, at-Teberani, *al-Mo'jem al-Kebir*, vol.11, p.55.

⁸¹ Al-Bahrani, *One Hundred Words of Amir al-Mu'mineen*, p.56.

⁸² Al-Mahmoudi, *Nahj as-Se'adeh*, vol.7, p.33.

⁸³ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.13, p.106.

⁸⁴ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.65, p.224.

⁸⁵ Al-Laithi al-Wasiti, *Oyoon al-Hikem wal-Mewa'id*, p.415.

⁸⁶ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.2, p.226, narration 3; also al-Bukhari, *al-Jami' as-Sahih*, vol. 4, p.208 and vol.5, p.129, and Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, vol.7, p.120.

⁸⁷ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.33, p.376, narration 606; also Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimeshq*, vol.42, p.449.

⁸⁸ Al-Bahrani, *One Hundred Words of Amir al-Mu'mineen*, p.56.

⁸⁹ *An-Nedweh* book is a series of weekly lectures (each followed by a question-and-answer session) that his eminence holds in Damascus, Syria; it contains lectures, questions about the faith, education, jurisprudence and history.

⁹⁰ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.2, p.226, narration 3; also al-Bukhari, *al-Jami' as-Sahih*, vol. 4, p.208 and vol.5, p.129, and Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, vol.7, p.120.

⁹¹ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, sermon 74.

⁹² *Ibid.*, letter 62.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, sermon 215.

⁹⁴ The Kharijites (pl. of *kharij*, i.e. one who went out) are a group of Muslims who were first part of Ali's followers and army then rebelled against him when he (as) accepted negotiations with Mu'awiyeh to solve the dispute with him and stop the war, after first forcing him to accept it with threats to kill him when victory of his army was imminent. It is worth mentioning that the Prophet (sawa) described them - as reciting the Qur'an and praying all the time, but with no understanding - and said that Ali (as) will be fighting and defeating them. See *At-Tabari's history*, *Ibn al-Athir's history* or any history account of that period. (*The translator.*)

⁹⁵ He meant Mu'awiyeh bin Abi Sufian, who was after power in any way, while the Kharijites where striving for justice but in the false direction. (*The translator.*)

⁹⁶ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.1, no. 61

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, sermon 55.

⁹⁸ This is pointing to what was narrated that when Ali (as) was giving the opportunity to people to benefit from his immense knowledge, saying to them: '**Ask me before you lose me**'; a person present then asked him: How many hairs do I have on my head? His eminence is also pointing to the fact that some leaders try to lead the nation in the course of awareness when a lot of people do not have such a

mentality and fail to seize the opportunity of the presence of such leaders.

⁹⁹ Talhah bin Obaidullah, (died 36H/656AD), the famous companion who was one of the council (*shoora*) that Omar appointed to elect a caliph after he was fatally stabbed, and later rebelled against Imam Ali (as). He was one of the leaders of the battle of Jemel (camel) near Basrah, Iraq, where Ali (as) put down the rebellion, and Talhah was killed. (*The translator.*)

¹⁰⁰ Az-Zubair bin al-Awwam, (died 36H/656AD), the famous companion and the Prophet's cousin, who was one of the council (*shoora*) that Omar appointed to elect a caliph after he was fatally stabbed, and later rebelled against Imam Ali (as) and, though was a supporter of Ali (as) when the first Caliph was elected, was one of the leaders of the battle of Jemel (camel) near Basrah, Iraq, where Ali (as) put down the rebellion, and Az-Zubair was killed. (*The translator.*)

¹⁰¹ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 33.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, sermon 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, sermon 67.

¹⁰⁴ Known as the covenant of Ali to Malik al-Ashter (one of his closest companions and his army chief in the battle of Siffin, assassinated with poison in Egypt), composed when he appointed him governor of Egypt after its governor Mohammed bin Abi Bakr was killed; see *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.3, letter 53. (*The translator.*)

¹⁰⁵ Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.43, p.158.



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