

Just as he rejected the economic dominance of any class and the political dominance of any tyrant, he equally rejected any prerogatives for the 'ulamā' as a religious class. He states in this regard:

In Islamic jurisprudence, . . . no general or specific injunction can be found that is in the interest of special individuals or classes and detrimental to others.³⁷

MAHDĪ BĀZARGĀN

A Biographical Sketch

Among the prominent contemporary Iranian Muslim thinkers selected for review in this chapter, Mahdī Bāzargān was the closest to Ṭāliqānī in terms of both political background and views. Mahdī Bāzargān (1907–1995), the son of a religiously active Tabrizi merchant who had settled in Tehran, received a privileged education. For his secondary schooling he attended Dār al-Mu'allimīn, one of the earliest modern schools in the country, headed by Abul Ḥasan Khān-i Furūghī, who also taught courses on philosophy and the interpretation of the Qur'an. In 1928 Bāzargān was sent to France to pursue his studies in engineering as a member of one of the first student groups supported by a government grant to attend university abroad.³⁸ Impressed by the progress of European society, Bāzargān was determined to bring back to Iran not only science and technology but also what he thought to be the root cause of development, a modern outlook. As he recalled some thirty years later, while there may have been a modernizing tendency at the time which was primarily concerned with transferring to Iran the technological advancements

³⁷ Ṭāliqānī, *Islam and Ownership*, p. 147.

³⁸ Most of the biographical information on Bāzargān's life is taken from his book *Mudāffāt dar Dādgāh-i Ghayr-i Šāliḥ-i Tajdīd-i Nazar-i Nizāmī* [Defense Before the Illegitimate Military Court of Appeals], (Tehran, 1343; repr., Bellville, Illinois: Nahdat-i Āzādī-i Iran Khārij az Kīshwar, 1356/1978). An analytical biography of Bāzargān may also be found in Ibrāhīm Yazdī, "Muhandis Bāzargān; Nīm Qarn Talāsh dar 'Aršah-i Siyāsāt wa Andīshah-i Dīm" [Engineer Bzargan: Half a Century Struggle in the Fields of Politics and Religious Thought], *Kīyan* 4, no. 23 (1995); pp. 2–12. A more recent source is Bāzargān's memoirs, *Šašt Sāl Khidmat wa Muqāwamat: Khāṭirāt-i Muhandis Mahdī Bāzargān* [Sixty Years of Service and Resistance: Memoirs of Engineer Bazargan], compiled by Ghulāmriḍā Najātī, vol. 1 (Tehran: Rasā, 1374/1996).

of the West, he was more interested in discovering the non-material causes of modern civilization and progress. Undoubtedly, Bāzargān's seven years' stay in France left a profound impression on his critical mind. Besides acquiring some technical and specialized knowledge in his field of study, i.e. thermodynamics, Bāzargān brought home some important observations, which he called his "souvenirs from Europe," including an enhanced interest in religion and a deeper faith in what he calls in his works the "true" Islam, i.e. an Islam which is socially active, not an Islam of superstitions. He perceived that European civilization was neither created by nor was it the property of any individual person, rather it was the by-product of the efforts and contributions of all the members of that society. All individuals participate in its making because their efforts are valued and they enjoy freedom and respect. Thus the lasting progress and prosperity of the European or any other living society can not stand on the initiative and will of one individual, but on the collective will and common cause of the whole society, in which spiritual values such as friendship and honesty unite all members, making it an active, strong and productive unit.³⁹ Some other lasting impressions of his stay in France that Bāzargān describes in some detail are the co-existence of religion and modernity in an advanced civilization, the existence of a high degree of patriotism and sense of national solidarity, and the existence of moral virtues such as honesty, perseverance, righteousness and moderation, as well as co-operation, selflessness and hard work.⁴⁰ More important is his observation that the French were not leader-oriented; rather, ordinary individuals were honored and their rights protected. Therefore, they were motivated to contribute to the advancement of their society through voluntary associations operating free of government supervision, something that was non-existent in Iran.

In a detailed account of what he thought Iranian society needed and what the motivation and goals of a responsible member of the intelligentsia should be, two major lines of thinking emerge. One was his conviction that Islam, as he understood it, is compatible with modernity and progress; therefore there is no need for the two to

³⁹ Bāzargān, *Mudāffāt*, pp. 64–65. This was a striking observation for Bāzargān to have made, particularly in view of the socio-political conditions in his homeland where modernization had just been started from above by the autocratic rule of Reza Shah.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 44–56.

conflict with one another. If Iranian society wanted to raise its status among modern civilizations, there was a need to reconsider or even revive religio-ethical and social values among the people in support of material progress. The second was his anti-tyrannical position. He condemned modernization from above under political autocracy and the exclusion of the community from playing a creative role or taking any initiative. These two major themes took root in Bāzargān's intellectual makeup, due more than anything else to the socio-political climate of the first Pahlavi era. They also stayed with him throughout his life of religio-political activities. They certainly reflect the response of a religiously-minded educated man such as Bāzargān, who like other progressive members of the intelligentsia of his time yearned for the modernization of Iran, to the religiously repressive and politically autocratic policies of Reza Shah's modernizing plans. This is why he was very much impressed and relieved to see modern, civilized Europeans praying devoutly⁴¹ and finding that 68% of his French fellow students were members of Catholic student associations.⁴²

Upon his return to Iran in 1935 Bāzargān, "hopeful of reform and modernism",⁴³ joined the ranks of the civil service of Reza Shah's regime which was the main force of reform and progress in the era known as Iranian Modernism. For about two decades Bāzargān's preference was to avoid direct political activities. He occupied during this period important positions in the civil service. Nevertheless he always considered it his task to contribute to building his society, his main concerns revolving around the issues of religious moralism, updating the role and meaning of religious practices through the scientific interpretation of Islam, and the development of a civil society's institutions and organizations. However, towards the end of the twelve year period of relative political freedom that followed Reza Shah's abdication (1941-1953), Bāzargān's interest in politics increased. During the period of the National Movement he was active in the National Front (NF) led by Prime Minister Muḥammad Muṣaddiq. During the process of nationalizing the oil industry he was appointed, in 1951, by Muṣaddiq to supervise its takeover. It

was only about a month after the 1953 royal coup d'état that Bāzargān became directly involved in party politics by founding, along with some other collaborators of Muṣaddiq, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) of Iran. In 1955 Bāzargān was arrested for the first time and kept in jail for five months. In 1961, with eleven other friends (among them Ayt. Ṭāliqānī and Yadullāh Saḥābī) he founded Nahḍat-i Āzādī-i Iran, the Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI). After nineteen months the FMI was proscribed and in January 1963 Bāzargān and most of its leaders were thrown into prison. Following his release three years later, and throughout the 1970s under the autocratic rule of Muhammad Reza Shah, Bāzargān and his political organization, like every other political movement, kept a low profile. He himself however was actively involved in a number of the intellectual movements of the time. With the relaxation of political control in the final years of the Shah's regime, Bāzargān resumed open political activities with the establishment in 1977 of the Society for the Defence of Human Rights. On the basis of his record of Islamic and nationalist activities, Bāzargān's appointment by Ayt. Khomeini in 1979 as the first post-revolution prime minister was well received in all Iranian political circles.

As mentioned earlier, during the pre-coup d'état period Bāzargān was more involved in social and religious activities than in political ones, even though he was more politically active than Ṭāliqānī. During those years, both he and Ṭāliqānī chose spiritual renewal and self-improvement as the methods for reforming Iranian society.⁴⁴ He had no political ambition nor did he feel any disposition towards party politics.⁴⁵ Like all religious modernizers and social reformers, Bāzargān was critical of many aspects of Iranian society and culture. His main goal in pursuing intellectual activities was to cleanse the tarnished image of Islam held by the younger generation. He repudiated superstitions and superficial language in order to prove that Islam is not incompatible with science and progress, in spite of the claims put forward by the secular modernizing regime and its Marxist opponents. An "original, vital, social and creative Islam," not the "deviant Islam of superstition, ritualism, and individualism,"⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74 and pp. 110-112.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

was what Bāzargān was trying to present as a total way of life, one which could meet the needs of modern man. His emphasis on Islam as an integral component of Iranian nationality was a response to the powerful socio-political current of secular nationalism under the Pahlavi regime launched by Riza Shah, as well as to the popular growth of Marxist ideas.⁴⁷ Bāzargān's preoccupation, however, with the role of Islam in the socio-political sphere, or more generally, in the mundane matters of everyday life, remained one of the major lines of his thought to the end of his life.

Bāzargān started his socio-religious activities when he joined Kānūn-i Islām (The Islamic Center) at Ayt. Ṭāliqānī's invitation. Kānūn-i Islām had no organization, programme, or membership; in these respects it was very unlike a political organization. Its primary goal was to teach and spread religious truth among its audience which included university students, military personnel, and civil servants. It was basically an expanded and more developed form of Ṭāliqānī's religious meetings, which he had maintained in continuation of his father's religious activities. The first article that Bāzargān wrote after his return to Iran was a contribution to the Kānūn's journal, *Dānish Amūz* (The Student). It was entitled "Madhhab dar Urūpā" (Religion in Europe). The title is in itself a reflection of Bāzargān's early preoccupation with the position of religion in society. At Kānūn meetings Ṭāliqānī delivered his sermons on Qur'an interpretation, and sometimes university professors, such as Yadullāh Saḥābī, were invited to lecture on the issues and topics relevant to the intellectual needs of the time in order to prove the congruity between modern science and Islamic tenets. Bāzargān's book *Mutahharāt dar Islām* (Purities/Cleanliness in Islam)⁴⁸ is a version of one of his lectures delivered in the Kānūn. In this book he appeals to mathematical formulas and the laws of chemistry and physics in order to prove the scientific viability of Islamic prescriptions for ablution and other rules on personal cleanliness which receive much attention in Islamic jurisprudence. Bāzargān's attempt at a rather scientific rationalization of the Islamic faith and rituals, in which there was embedded a criticism of the traditional interpretation of Islam, continued for many years.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 116-120.

⁴⁸ Mahdi Bāzargān, *Mutahharāt dar Islām* [Purities in Islam], (Tehran: n.p., 1322/1913).

⁴⁹ See for instance his other publications: *Ẓāhir-i Tabaddul Miyan-i Madyat wa*

Among other themes in his writings is his criticism of certain aspects of Iranian culture and social behaviour which he considered as the cause of backwardness and as obstacles to progress and freedom.⁵⁰ He also tried to correct the false and superficial image of the West which was then the model for Iranians, in order to show them that progress and freedom demand hard work and that they are congruent with religious morality too. As he points out, he considered it his duty to describe to his people the Europe that he had visited. He writes:

In addition to my professional activities I considered it my most important task to make my compatriots understand that the civilized, developed, real Europe was not the Europe of the novels and the cinema. Europe had not become Europe because of the men's ties and the women's lipstick. Europe had spirituality, religion, and ideals. Europe was full of activity and sacrifice. It had righteousness and social spirit.⁵¹

Due to his firm belief in cooperation and organizational work as the first step towards a civil society and vital for achieving political pluralism, Bāzargān became one of the leading founding members of Iran's first Engineers Association, Kānūn-i Muhandisīn, in 1942. This was primarily a professional association, but after a split in its ranks the Iran Party emerged out of the association as a vehicle for political action. As the political activities and propaganda of the Tudeh Party increased on the campus of Tehran University, then the country's only university, some medical students founded the first Muslim Students Association at the university's Faculty of Medicine in 1944.⁵² It aimed at disseminating Islamic teachings through propaganda and publication in order to counter the communist effort. The Muslim Students Association for its part had no direct affiliation to any political organizations, even though some of its members were individually

Mānawīyāt [Coefficient of Conversion Between the Material and the Spiritual] (Tehran: Intūshār, 1344/1965); and "Bī Nahāyat Kuchakhā" [The Infinitely Small] (Tehran: Intūshār, 1344/1965).

⁵⁰ See for instance: *Fuḥsh wa Tā'aruf dar Iran* [Complimentary and Abusive Language in Iran] (N.p., 1321/1942); *Sirr-i 'Aqab Uftādāgī-i Milāl-i Musalmān* [The Secret of the Backwardness of the Muslim Nations] (Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1356/1977). An English version of the latter work was first published in *Islamic Review* (London), June, 1951; revised in the 1960s and reprinted in 1977.

⁵¹ Bāzargān, *Mudāffāt*, p. 73.

⁵² Interview with 'Azatullāh Saḥābī, in: Nasir Ḥarri, *Musahibah ba Tārikhsāzān-i Iran* [Interview with Iran's History Makers] (Tehran: n.p., 1357/1979), pp. 173-174.

active in various political associations. Some of them also attended Kāmūn-i Islām's lectures. The idea of establishing a Muslim Students Association quickly spread into other faculties, notably the Faculty of Engineering where Bāzargān was the dean. 'Izzatullāh Saḥābī, the son of Yaddullāh Saḥābī, also became a very active member of the Muslim Students Association.

During the following decade a number of similar Islamic and professional associations were to be formed by teachers, doctors, and engineers in Tehran and other provinces. None, however, became politically significant. Although Bāzargān was not involved in the establishment of the associations, he attended their meetings and delivered lectures on a regular basis. He also allocated them a prayer room on the university campus. The general atmosphere within Iran's educated class in 1941–53 was secular, with Marxist ideology being predominant. The titles of some of Ṭāliqānī's and Bāzargān's writings during this period reflect their attempt at refuting the mandate of Marxist discourse and at providing the Muslim intelligentsia with an alternative Islamic ideology.⁵³ Bāzargān's lectures "Islam or Communism", "Pragmatism in Islam", and "Labour in Islam,"⁵⁴ as well as Ṭāliqānī's lecture "Ownership in Islam" which later became an inspiring source for students of Islamic economics, paved the way for the building of an Islamic agenda which corresponded to the socio-historical agenda of secular ideology: i.e., scientific socialism. Although the impact of Muslim intellectuals' activities in general and of Muslim student associations in particular on Iranian society was only a very marginal one in the pre-coup years,⁵⁵ the intellectual and organizational experience gained was to prove useful after the coup and in the following decade when many members of Muslim student associations joined the National Resistance Movement, and later in the early 1960s when they were recruited by the religiously oriented political party founded by Bāzargān, Ṭāliqānī and Saḥābī,

⁵³ Bāzargān, *Mudaffat*, pp. 78–89.

⁵⁴ Mahdi Bāzargān, *Pragmatism dar Islam* [Pragmatism in Islam] (n.p., 1323/1944), reprinted in idem, *Madhhab dar Uropa* [Religion in Europe] (Tehran: Intishār, 1343/1964); idem, *Kar dar Islam* [Labour in Islam] (n.p., 1324/1946; repr., Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1978); idem, "Islam ya Kummunizm" [Islam or Communism], a speech delivered at the Muslim Students' Association in Tehran (1331/1952), printed in his *A: Khuda Parast to Khud Parast* [From God Worshipping to Self Worshipping] (Tehran: Intishār, 1331/1952), pp. 38–68.

⁵⁵ Hamid, *Musabihah ba Tarikhchān-i Iran*, p. 173; Bāzargān, *Mudaffat*, pp. 123–124.

namely, the Freedom Movement of Iran. The latter was in fact to play a significant role at crucial junctures of modern Iranian history, most notably in the 1979 Revolution.

In the 1941–1953 period, Iran's political scene, which lacked established processes and institutions, witnessed a variety of alliances between various factions depending on the tide of political events. However, the Tudeh Party and the National Front, both seeking social change and fighting conservative resistance, were the two major popular movements to emerge during this period. The Tudeh party's call for a national and democratic programme to challenge the political order and the power of the state and its claim to represent the interests of the middle and working classes, won the party a growth and popularity unprecedented in Iranian political history. Nevertheless, its alliance with the Soviet Union, its Marxist ideology, plus its role in the creation of the Soviet-backed Azerbaidjan Autonomous Government, caused its demise and forced it underground in 1949. Its reemergence during the 1951–53 national democratic rule of Muṣaddiq was short-lived, once the coup d'état engineered by the royalists put an end to the activities of all existing political parties.⁵⁶

A coalition made up of a wide selection of socio-political forces representing a broad ideological spectrum emerged in 1949 under the name of the National Front.⁵⁷ The common ground which brought these groups together was their appeal to an Iranian nationalist and anti-imperialist identity, a commitment to uprooting despotism, and support for a form of constitutionalist government which would bring about the rule of law and ensure social reconstruction.

Three different political stances are distinguishable among the religious movements in Iran during this period; the conservative

⁵⁶ For the Tudeh Party see for instance: S. Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Khalil Malikī, *Barkhurd-i 'Aqā'id wa Ārā'* [Encounter of Beliefs and Opinions], new ed., with an introduction by H. Katouzian and A. Pishdad (Tehran: Nashr-i Markazī, 1372/1993). The latter work was first published in the journal *Shāhid* in 1328/1949; a third edition appeared in 1331/1952.

⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of the structure of the National Front see H. Katouzian, *Muṣaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990); idem, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981); Susan Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism in Iran; the Failure of a Movement* (San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1990); Fakhruddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941–1953* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989).

position of the clerical class led by Ayatullah Muḥammad Ḥusayn Burūjirdī; the pragmatic position of Ayt. Kāshānī, the anti-British political activist cleric who initially supported the NF and Muṣaddīq's government in its early years but who finally split from it and joined the conservatives in supporting the coup d'état of 1953; and the more radical and yet smaller group, the Fadā'iyān-i Islām, whose fundamentalist ideology was to become significant, and who advocated a radical understanding of Shī'ism as a bulwark of Iranian nationalism.⁵⁸

The political activities of both Bāzargān and Ṭāliqānī in the pre-coup period were rather marginal. Nevertheless during the heyday of National Front rule and particularly at crucial moments in the history of the National Movement, they sided with Muṣaddīq. Although they were religiously inclined, politically they sided with the secular wing of the National Front. A religiously-oriented political organization as such was yet non-existent. They did not follow Kāshānī in withdrawing his support from Muṣaddīq. Bāzargān in particular had a close association with Muṣaddīq's government. For a short period, before being appointed by Muṣaddīq as chairman of the Provisional Board of Directors of the National Iranian Oil Company, Bāzargān had worked in the cabinet as the deputy minister of education under Karīm Sanjābī, a leading figure in the National Front. Bāzargān's last managerial job before 1953 was as director of the Tehran Water Organization, supervising the installation of Tehran's first water-supply network.⁵⁹

On the other hand, Ṭāliqānī's activities during this period were primarily religious. He was however involved in politics as a candidate in the Caspian provinces for election to the seventeenth Majlis, an election which was later cancelled by the government. Both Ṭāliqānī and Bāzargān were also active members of the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

It was in the first months after the coup d'état of 1953 that a group of Muṣaddīqists, most of them religiously oriented, came together and set up the National Resistance Movement in order to further the goals of the National Movement, the chief of these being the establishment of Iran's independence and national sovereignty, the fight against corruption and dependency and an end to all foreign interference.⁶⁰ The NRM soon found support from the members and the affiliated organisations of the NF. The significance of the NRM lay not as much in its meager activities during its few years of existence under police control, but rather in the political position that it adopted.⁶¹ At a time when all other factions inside Iran had decided to support the coup overtly or tacitly (even the radical position of the Tudeh, before it became paralysed, had changed to one of caution and quietism), the NRM continued its resistance inside the country. Through its publications and declarations, as well as in the several demonstrations that it organized, the NRM protested against the lack of democratic freedom and most particularly against official censorship, rigged elections and martial law. Its position was based on defence of the constitution and the democratic rights of the nation enshrined in it. This contributed greatly to bringing the regime's legitimacy into question. In one of the NRM's official statements, the shah was directly accused of having "transgressed his constitutional powers."⁶² Among the themes of the NRM's ideology were: a nationalism of an anti-colonial nature; struggle against foreign domination; a demand for democratic freedoms; and popular sovereignty.

Although Iran had never been colonized, the conflict with Britain over the issue of nationalization of oil provoked feelings of Iranian patriotism. The emphasis on national identity was coloured by the anti-colonialist and non-alignment movements in the Third World during the post-World War II period. The NRM in particular viewed its own opposition to the Iranian government, which was seen by many as an instrument for implementing the wishes and policies of

⁵⁸ For Ayt. Kāshānī and the Fadā'iyān-i Islām see A. Ferdows, "Religion in Iranian Nationalism" (Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University, 1967); Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?" in *Religion and Politics in Iran*, ed. Nikki Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 101-125.

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of Bazargan's political activities during the pre-coup period see: Saeed Barzin, "Islam in Defence of Constitutionalism and Democracy: A Political Biography of Iranian Ideologue Mehdi Bazargan" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Exeter, 1992), pp. 19-129.

⁶⁰ *Asnād-i Nahdat-i Muqawimat-i Millī-i Iran: Safahāt az Tārīkh-i Mu'āshir-i Iran* [Documents of the National Resistance Movement of Iran: Some pages from Contemporary Iranian History] (Tehran: Nahdat-i Āzādī-i Iran, 1363/1984), vol. 5, p. 257.

⁶¹ For the activities of the NRM see *ibid.*, pp. 254-293.

⁶² *Asnād-i Nahdat-i Muqawimat-i Millī-i Iran: Hadith-i Muqawimat* [Documents of the National Resistance Movement of Iran: The Story of Resistance] (Tehran: Nahdat-i Āzādī-i Iran, 1365/1986), vol. 1, p. 111.

foreign powers, as being in line with the nationalist and anti-colonial movements in several Muslim countries, especially Egypt, Algeria and Iraq.⁶³ Besides emphatically and repeatedly demanding free elections, the NRM's ideology was directly inspired by and identified itself with the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution. The contribution of these currents of ideas and political events to the development of Bāzargān's political thought was later manifested in the ideology of the Freedom Movement of Iran. In spite of the fact the founders of the NRM were nationalist Muṣaddiqists with religious inclinations, and despite the fact that some religious groups like the *Susyālīsthā-i Khudāparast* (The Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists)⁶⁴ had joined the movement, the religious element in the ideological and intellectual structure of the NRM was not predominant. Religion and politics were in fact kept apart as much as possible. Nevertheless in the following decade the Islamic activism of high ranking members of the NRM like Bāzargān, Ṭāliqānī, and others, converged with their political activities in the Freedom Movement. In 1955 Bāzargān and some other members of the NRM were arrested and imprisoned for a few months. The final demise of the NRM, however, occurred in 1957 when its top leadership, including Bāzargān, Ṭāliqānī and Saḥābī, as well as the members of its Mashhad branch including Muḥammad Taqī Shari'ati and his son Ali Shari'ati, were arrested and imprisoned for about eight months. After that the NRM had no public activity. From then until the early 1960s when Iranian politics enjoyed a short liberalization, Bāzargān's political activities were of a low profile. In the post-coup period he also wrote a relatively small number of books and pamphlets, basically revisions of his previous lectures. The major theme addressed in them was that of the significance of social laws, a reflection of Bāzargān's attempt to defend political and civil liberties against the lawlessness of the arbitrary power of the tyrannical state.⁶⁵ He also developed the thesis that Iranian society, due to 2500 years of despotism, has lost its capacity for democracy, an institution which requires tolerance, compromise and cooperation. Thus,

⁶³ *Asnād-i Nahdat-i Muqarimat i Millī i Iran: Saḥāhāt az Tārīkh-i Mu'āsīr-i Īrān*, vol. 5, pp. 24, 157.

⁶⁴ For more information on this group see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, pp. 113-114.

⁶⁵ See for instance: Mahdī Bāzargān, *Rah-i Tay Shudah* [The Trodden Path] (Tehran: Kanun-i Ma'rufat, 1327/1947; repr. with extensive revisions, 1331/1955).

appropriate social and political education is prerequisite to any meaningful political action.⁶⁶

The Freedom Movement of Iran

The second form of political activity in which Bāzargān engaged was his participation in the Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI), whose ideology reflected his own political thought and discourse on many points. In the early 1960s, at the height of the government's liberalization policy, the National Front was reconstituted as the Second National Front, NF(II) by the NRM's leaders who had been freed from prison, and by other leading nationalist figures and collaborators of Muṣaddiq.⁶⁷ A few months later, conflict within the NF(II) surfaced when its radical wing, most notably the former NRM elements, decided to reconstitute themselves as a party. Nevertheless, as the contemporary literature on the event indicates, the disintegration of the NF(II) was due more to disagreements over structural and strategic issues than religious motivations.⁶⁸ Bāzargān, Y. Saḥābī and Ṭāliqānī, however, aimed at establishing a political party with an Islamic ideology. Bāzargān recalls that in spite of the fact that his group shared many goals in common with the NF(II), such as protecting the sovereignty and independence of the country and the freedom of its people, they had different motivations. He writes: "... for us, for many of our friends... there could be no motivation other than religious belief and the tenets of Islam... for us [Islam] was the basic motivation of our social and political activism."⁶⁹ Finally, in early 1961, the three men joined forces and founded the Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI).⁷⁰ The FMI, however, considered itself part of the National Movement, and informed its leader-in-exile of the event. In his reply Muṣaddiq gave his blessing and support.

The executive committee of the party consisted of Bāzargān, Y. Saḥābī, Raḥīm 'Aṭā'ī, and Ayt. Ṭāliqānī whose membership in a political party was a novel act for a member of the clergy. At the inaugural meeting of the FMI, Bāzargān enumerated the reasons for

⁶⁶ Mahdī Bāzargān, *‘Ishq wa Parastish* [Love and Worship] (Tehran: Sipīhr, 1335/1956).

⁶⁷ Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, chapter 16.

⁶⁸ For a detailed analysis of the NF(II) and the separation of its radical wing see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, pp. 143-153.

⁶⁹ Bāzargān, *Mudafiat*, p. 207.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

founding a new party. Besides his criticism of the performance of the existing parties including the NF(II), and especially their lack of organizational discipline, programme and political vigour and the obvious dissatisfaction that Iranians felt with their efforts, his other argument reflects his earlier conviction regarding the necessity of organizational and cooperative effort in overcoming internal and external oppression, and Iran's weakness and failure in this respect.⁷¹ The four basic principles of the party were a reflection of its concern to distinguish itself from other nationalist forces; these principles describe its members as being Muslim, Iranian, constitutionalist, and Mušaddiqist. A fuller exposition of these principles follow, for they indicate Bāzargān's political mindset, which in itself mirrors his perception of democracy.

1. We are *Muslims*, but not in the sense of considering prayers and fasting our only duties. Rather, our entry into politics and social activism was prompted by our national duty and religious obligations. We do not consider religion and politics separate, and regard serving the people . . . an act of worship. We recognize freedom as a primary divine gift and its achievement and keeping are for us an Islamic tradition and a hallmark of Shi'ism. We are Muslims in the sense that we believe in the principles of justice, equality, sincerity, and other social and humane duties before they were proclaimed by the French Revolution and the Charter of the United Nations.
2. We are *Iranians* but do not claim that Iranians are superior to other peoples. Our love for Iran and our nationalism imply no racial fanaticism, and are on the contrary based on an acceptance of our own shortcomings and honouring of others' virtues and rights. We insist on our country's standing and independence but are not opposed to contact with other nations, [as we live] in an [increasingly interdependent] world.
3. We respect the *Iranian Constitution* as an integral whole, and will not accept that its basic principles, namely the freedom of thought, press, and reunions, the independence of judges, the separation of powers, and finally honest elections be forgotten and sacrificed, whereas minor details and misinterpreted legal formalities occupy the major role, resulting in the abrogation of national sovereignty and the rule of law.
4. We are *Mosaddeqists* and regard Mosaddeq as one of the great servants of Iran and the East. . . .

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208, p. 211

We honor Mosaddeq as the only head of government in Iran's history who was truly chosen and loved by the majority of the people, who acted in a direction desired by the people, enabling him to establish bonds between the rulers and the ruled and explain the true meaning of government and thus achieve the greatest success in Iran's recent history, namely the victory over colonialism.⁷²

Of the four principles in this manifesto, the first, i.e. emphasis on Islamic identity, and the third, i.e. commitment to a constitutional and democratic form of government, have proven to be the most important and the most persistent characteristics of the FMI up until the present day. These two elements remained predominant in the discourse of Bāzargān, the primary ideologue and the outstanding figure of FMI. The other two, though integral elements of FMI ideology, were more time-bound and their importance diminished gradually alongside the declining fervour of the National Movement.

Besides being their source of motivation for political activism, Islam was appealed to by the FMI as an indispensable element of the Iranian social identity. Thus, the use of what might be called religious symbolism became more frequent. Islamic language, i.e. Qur'anic verses and quotations from the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams were used in their communiqués and publications. Also, emphasis was placed on religious holy days, and on a few but important occasions the FMI sided with the religious establishment or received their support in its opposition to the Pahlavi regime. Bāzargān and Ṭāliqānī were both convinced that Islam inherently opposes tyranny and endorses social democratic norms. Their interpretation of Islam was a constitutional and democratic one. Frequent references in FMI documents to the Constitutional Revolution, and particularly to the role of Ayt. Nā'inī, reveal their source of inspiration and their overall perception of constitutionalism, democracy and Islam.

The FMI commitment to constitutional and democratic government and its call for the rule of law, which indeed echoes the political demands of the constitutional era, should be understood against

⁷² *Asnād-i Nahdat-i Āzādi-i Iran: Saḡahātī az Tārikh-i Mu'āshir-i Jarayān-i Ta'sīs-i Nahdat-i Āzādi-i Iran* [Documents of the National Resistance Movement of Iran: Establishing the Freedom Movement of Iran], vol. 1, (1361/1982), pp. 17-18, quoted and translated in Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 158. The italics are ours.

the background of the political practice of the time, i.e. the arbitrary lawlessness of the government and the Shah's violation of the constitution.⁷³ The FMI regarded it as its primary duty to attempt:

to revive the constitution and to establish the rule of law in order to determine the limits and the responsibilities of the various [government] powers so as to safeguard the true government of the people for the people.⁷⁴

Considering the implementation of the constitution, whatever its content, as being equal to democracy and in accordance with Islamic principles, the FMI repeatedly and consistently referred to different articles in this document and made it the supreme source and main frame of reference for its interpretation of democracy. This explains why the FMI had such high praise for Muṣaddiq as the defender of democracy and why it officially associated its very existence with his name. It should be restated that the FMI and its ideologues had the experiential background of the National Front and the National Resistance Movement, both of which grew out of parliamentary democracy as organizational representatives of the popular National Movement, which aimed at regulating the arbitrary rule of the government and at safeguarding the implementation of the constitutional rights of the nation. This sheds light, as will be explained later, on why Bāzargān's perception of democracy resembles, at least in its principles, that which his predecessors had expressed at the beginning of the century in the form of the first Iranian constitution. For Bāzargān the existence and exercise of political freedom was the main element of democracy and its denial gave him the incentive to engage in political action and oriented his political discourse.

Refutation of Despotism

In the early 1960s the FMI opposed the Shah's "White Revolution" which it considered an impractical programme for Iran, developed by the autocratic modernizing ruler at the request of his foreign allies. It also openly and severely criticized the Shah's suppression of the uprising of June 1963 led by Ayt. Khomeini. Consequently the leading members of the FMI were arrested. Ṭāliqānī and Bāzargān were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Bāzargān used the occa-

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 133-136 and pp. 95-103.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

sion of his trial to condemn the absolutist monarchy of the Pahlavi regime, accusing it of tyranny and despotism. His defense statement, which was later published, includes his most comprehensive and systematic argument against tyranny and in support of democratic and constitutional rule.⁷⁵ This document indicates how Bāzargān had been inspired by Ayt. Nā'inī's refutation of despotism and defense of constitutionalism. Bāzargān goes on to enumerate the disadvantages of despotism, showing his debt to Nā'inī when he adopts the latter's logic and interpretation of the Qur'an and *sunnaḥ* to demonstrate that tyranny is an affront to God. It is *butparastī* (idolatry) and *shirk* (polytheism) and thus has grave consequences for the morals of the individual and society.⁷⁶ Bāzargān's condemnation of absolute rule and its incompatibility with the rule of God remains one of the most consistent lines in his political thought. It is also a clear example of his politicization of certain Islamic tenets. Bāzargān turns to religious argument in order to appeal to the Muslim community to resist despotism. Referring to Qur'anic stories about how all the prophets fought against the tyrants of their age, Bāzargān concludes that religion is by nature against tyranny, which is the subordination of people to the rule of someone other than God:

Religion and despotism have never been compatible. An ongoing contradiction and conflict exists between the two. Neither can God permit the obedience of one man to another nor can despotic rulers and tyrants accept the subordination and submission of people to the rule and interests of anyone other than themselves.⁷⁷

Bāzargān asserts that religion in general and Islam in particular has always been the only haven and refuge of people from absolutism. In this respect, however, Shi'ism, in historical perspective, scores far

⁷⁵ Mahdi Bāzargān, *Mudāffāt dar Dādghāh-i Ghayr-i Sālih-i Tajdid-i Nazar-i Niẓāmī* [Defense Before the Illegitimate Military Court of Appeals] (Bellville, Illinois: Nahdat-i Azādi-i Iran Khārij az Kishwar, 1356/1978).

Bāzargān's defense consists of two parts. The first part includes his political autobiography and a defense of the political ideas and activities of the FMI. This part, which he delivered orally to the court was first published in Tehran in 1343/1964. The second part, which includes his ideas regarding tyranny and absolute monarchy, he was not permitted to read out loud at his trial. However, a full and critically edited version of the defense was published in the United States in 1971 and reprinted in 1356/1978.

⁷⁶ Bāzargān, *Mudāffāt*, pp. 294-295, p. 305; idem, *Ajāt-i Taḥid* [Monotheism's Plagues] (Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1357/1979), pp. 34-40.

Bāzargān, *Mudāffāt*, pp. 258-259.

better than Sunni Islam. For it at least never yielded to the autocratic rule of caliphs or kings. Besides, the existence of the institution of *marja'-i taqlid* in Shi'ism, which is independent of the political establishment but very dependant on the masses, financially and otherwise, gives it a democratic quality.⁷⁸ Here, Bāzargān is confusing the freedom of choosing a religious authority with that of choosing a political authority. Moreover, it indicates that he looked for a religious justification and precedent for a people's right to choose. Bāzargān's view of absolute rule and its incompatibility with Islam is consistent with his pre- and post-revolutionary discourse. Once again, in the 1980s when the *wilāyat-i faqih* theory of Islamic government was consolidated by the ruling clergy, Bāzargān appealed to the same line of argument and to Nā'ini's book in refuting despotism in its worst form, i.e. religious despotism. He vehemently criticized the use of divine attributes and dazzling religious titles to describe political officials, most of whom were members of the clergy, and particularly if they were considered, as they themselves would have it, to be the deputies of God, the Prophet and the Imams. Thus to oppose them would have been equivalent to opposing God. By comparing this combination of political and religious authority in the Islamic Republic to the practice of the medieval Catholic Church, Bāzargān concludes that under such conditions the nation would never enjoy its due rights, nor would freedom, progress and prosperity ever survive. He appeals to the Qur'an and prophetic traditions to show that Islam is incompatible with tyrannical rule, whether it be that of pharaohs, emperors, modern secular monarchs or any other autocratic ruler acting in the name of God.⁷⁹

Opposing despotism on every front, Bāzargān draws attention to the way in which it harms the dignity of the individual character. Despotism is "the mother of all evils"⁸⁰ and causes the greatest damage to spirituality by destroying the individual. Since it is based on deceit and duplicity, it creates corruption and dishonesty. Those who live under despotic rule suffer humiliation and loss of self respect

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 255-258.

⁷⁹ Mahdi Bazargan, "Din wa Azadi" [Faith and Freedom], in his *Bazargan-i Arzishāh* [Recovering the Values], 3 vols. (Tehran: Naraq, 1361/1985-6; repr. 1992), pp. 78-79.

⁸⁰ Bazargan, *Mudāfi'at*, p. 271.

and develop a servile character. In a society ruled by despotism, humanity, decency, independence, innovation and belief in progress are destroyed by the deceit of tyranny,⁸¹ whereas under a democratic regime, or a true Islamic government as it was once correctly put into practice by Imam Ali, the individual's character is considered worthy of respect.

Beyond the moral damage that it entails, despotism is the source of all social corruption. Bāzargān enumerates and explains in detail a number of its destructive consequences, among them: dissemination of individual and public insecurity and mistrust; a weakening of the spirit of social cooperation, tolerance and solidarity upon which democracy is founded; social and political instability encouraging colonial interest and subordination to foreign rule. Despotism is by nature against development and is the chief enemy of freedom.⁸²

In his analysis of despotism, Bāzargān compares it to the rule of law and democracy, and tries to explain why the latter has never taken root in Iranian society, whereas despotism has had a long history in the country.⁸³ Three causes are identified. In the first place there is the historical fact that the land of Iran has, since ancient times, frequently been invaded by her neighbours, who imposed violence and despotism in order to maintain their rule. Second there is the fact that the inhospitable geographical conditions keep small villages apart and scattered all over the country. This does not allow for close relations or easy communication between them, or even the urban growth which in turn would encourage the development of civil institutions independent of the ruler. Such institutions are vital to the evolution of democracy on a larger scale. This explains why most Iranians are individualistic rather than communalistic and are not used to cooperation and consultation. To these two causes there should be added a third: i.e., the fact that Iranian society is predominantly an agricultural society surviving in an inhospitable and harsh setting, with all the attendant cultural and social effects

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 260-281; Mahdi Bāzargān, *Musalman-i Ijtimā'i wa Musalmān-i Jahānī* [The Social Muslim and the Universal Muslim] (Tehran: Intishār, 1344/1965; repr., Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1356/1978), pp. 43-44.

⁸² Bāzargān, *Mudāfi'at*, pp. 237-245, 260-268, 281-294.

⁸³ This theme is dealt with in his *Mudāfi'at* and in more detail in his *Sāzigān-i han* [Iranians' Agreeability] (Tehran, 1343/1964; repr., Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1357/1979).

that these conditions would have on a people's mentality and way of life. For instance, control over limited water resources was one of the factors in the creation and acceptance of despotism. These were just some of the cultural and historical reasons for the failure of democracy in Iran and her surrender to despotism.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Bāzargān did not relent in his attacks on the latter nor did he give up hope that if the rule of law were established, and the people given the opportunity to participate in decision making, then Iranians would also enjoy the prosperity and development of a modern, democratic, civilized nation. For this reason he insists in his writings on the observance of the constitution, according to which the monarch should reign, not rule, and on the people's representatives to the national parliament being elected through a free plebiscite.⁸⁵ In this argument Bāzargān has attempted a discussion of necessary means and conditions for the development of democracy, having it in mind to show the reasons that have led to the absence of a spirit of civil society. His speculations, though anthropologically interesting, are neither theoretically sound nor historically defensible. Yet they are significant in that they show that he did not consider religion to be a contributing factor in the acceptance of despotism by Iranians.

Although Bāzargān's argument against tyranny was originally prepared for his trial defence and was thus very circumstantial, the main line of his argument, particularly on the incompatibility of Islam with despotism in any form, persisted in his political discourse under both the Pahlavi and the Islamic regimes for about half a century. However, the main thrust of his political message, at least at this stage, did not go beyond the refutation of despotism, which in the Pahlavi era was synonymous with the institution of monarchy. Nor did his defense of democracy amount to anything more than preserving constitutional parliamentarism as explained in the first Iranian constitution and practised during the short period of Muṣaddiq's government. He refuted despotism in terms of its social and moral consequences.

The military tribunal referred to earlier sentenced both Ṭāliqāni and Bāzargān in 1963 to ten years' imprisonment each. Bāzargān was released after serving three years. After his release, the political conditions of the time forced him to keep a low public profile, at least until 1976–1977 when the political openness of the last years of the Shah's reign brought him back onto the scene. In 1978 he

⁸⁴ Bāzargān, *Mudafāt*, pp. 306–322; idem, *Saḡgar-i banū*, pp. 1–72.

⁸⁵ Bāzargān, *Mudafāt*, pp. 101, 132–135, 333–334.

founded the Iranian Committee for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights and finally in 1979 was appointed by Ayt. Khomeini to serve as the prime minister of the Islamic Revolutionary Provisional Government. Nevertheless, throughout the period 1966–1979 Bāzargān was intellectually active. Although he did not associate himself with the activities of the Ḥusaynīyah-i Irshād, the most active intellectual centre of the period, he nevertheless published some fourteen books and pamphlets. The most important and the best political work among these was his book entitled *Bīthat wa Īdī'ulūzhī* (Prophetic Mission and Ideology) published in 1966.⁸⁶ The book reflects the typical intellectual concern of the pre-1979 era, i.e., polemical ideological dialogue. The pre-1979 era was an era of ideological conflict as the opposition attempted to elaborate ideological constructs as theoretical bases for their political struggle against the regime. In particular, the relative success of the armed struggle of the Marxist guerilla organization Fadā'īyān-i Khalq motivated Muslim intellectuals to construct an Islamic ideological alternative. It is in the light of this intellectual climate that the works of Iranian Muslim intellectuals, especially those of Bāzargān and Shari'ati, should be evaluated.

Islamic Ideology

In *Bīthat wa Īdī'ulūzhī*, Bāzargān deals with a body of political ideas which he selected and brought together from the arguments contained in traditional Islamic, modernist and liberal discourse. With them he constructs an Islamic ideology which he insists is indispensable for any uprising or attempt at national liberation.⁸⁷ Trying to convince his audience that each nation should find the ideology that best suits it and then operate accordingly, Bāzargān contends that Islamic ideology is the most appropriate for those Iranians who do not want to borrow or to imitate foreign ideologies or schools of thought.⁸⁸ Islamic ideology is the best because it is a divine ideology based on the prophetic mission of the Prophet Muḥammad, and is thus more comprehensive than other man-made ideologies, and eternally valid.⁸⁹ The main elements of Bāzargān's effort to create a

⁸⁶ Mahdī Bāzargān, *Bīthat wa Īdī'ulūzhī* [Prophetic Mission and Ideology] (Mashhad: Tulū', 1345/1966).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 80–89.

harmonious political ideology, one which reflects his attempt at reconciling Islamic teachings with the democratic theory of government, will be examined here. His ideas in this respect will be cross-checked with both his pre- and post-revolutionary writings in order to examine them for the presence or lack of consistency in his views regarding the compatibility of Islam with democracy.

For Bāzargān, as for the FMI and other Shī'ite Muslim intellectuals, religion and politics could not be separated. Living as they did in an age when the state has developed into an institution that actively interferes in almost all aspects of people's lives, political abstinence on the part of Muslims was seen as no longer being justified. As a matter of fact the necessity of a Muslim presence in politics was the *leitmotiv* of Bāzargān and his colleagues in founding the FMI. According to Bāzargān, Islam, unlike Christianity, from its very beginning preached matters of faith and of social and political action concurrently. The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams are full of political teachings. This is particularly true of Shī'ism whose entire history is the story of political resistance against despotism, a resistance which will continue until the reappearance of the twelfth Imam and the establishment of his legitimate rule. Islam is anything but apolitical; indeed the issues of government and authority (*wilāyat*) have long been of major concern to Muslims. Their participation in social and political affairs and in choosing a leader has been urged and put on an equal, or even higher footing than fasting and prayer.⁹⁰ Bāzargān however emphasizes that although in Islam the temporal and religious realms are not separated, their relationship is not entirely a reversible one. Religion should interfere in and direct all aspects of the lives of Muslims, including socio-political affairs, and yet politics should never interfere with religion, for this would lead to polytheism. Religion determines the goals and the main principles of the state,⁹¹ whereas religion should never be manipulated by politicians in pursuit of their worldly aims.⁹² Bāzargān

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 77–78. Here Bāzargān is very much influenced by Haydarqulī Qalamdāran's work *Hukūmat dar Islām* [Government in Islam] (Tehran: Mihr Ā'in, n.d.), to which he refers repeatedly in his text.

⁹¹ Mahdī Bāzargān, *Marz-i Miyān-i Dīn wa Umm-i Ijtimā'i* [The Borderline Between Religion and Social Matters] (Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1355/1976), pp. 28–34. The book consists of a lecture delivered in Tehran in 1311/1962.

⁹² Ibid., p. 29, p. 33.

developed and expressed his ideas in a state which was largely in secular hands and which from time to time exploited the religious sentiments of the nation in order to suppress its non-religious political opponents, e.g., the Marxists. On the other hand the religious leaders were themselves largely apolitical and somewhat resigned to developments in public life. This political apathy began with Ayt. 'Abdulkarīm Ḥā'irī Yazdī (d. 1937) at the time of Reza Shah, and continued under his successor Ayt. Burūjirdī (d. 1961). Politically minded and articulate '*ulama'* were scarce during the Pahlavi era and those who entered politics did so only on an individual basis.⁹³ Bāzargān, as pointed out earlier, was himself critical of quietism on the part of the '*ulama'*. He repeatedly urged them to become politically active. Nevertheless, Bāzargān was quick to warn against the danger of the clergy merely assuming that their privileged religious status guaranteed them the right to interfere in politics.⁹⁴ This was an issue that he had to address directly about twenty years later in his criticism of the activities of the clergy in the Islamic Republic of Iran. When responding to the allegations made against them by the religious class, i.e. that they advocated the separation of religion and politics, Bāzargān and his fellow FMI leaders had to restate the *raison d'être* of the organization, i.e. that of establishing a political party with religious ideology, but they still had to make it clear that in their view politics was subordinate to religion (*dīyānat*) but not to the clergy (*rūhānīyat*).⁹⁵ Even in his pre-revolutionary works, Bāzargān criticized the *fuqahā'* for their exclusive preoccupation with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and for giving it undue prominence at the cost of neglecting other aspects of Islam. He considered this development to be one of the reasons behind the general decadence of Islamic society; thus the blame for the separation of religion from politics

⁹³ Besides Ayt. Ṭāliqānī and Ayt. Khomeini, Bāzargān refers to two other clerics of an earlier period who had exceptionally turned to writing on social issues, namely, Sayyid Asadullāh Khāriqānī (d. 1315/1936) and Shaykh Muḥammad Khāliṣizādah (d. 1342/1963). (see for example *ibid.*, pp. 8–12). For detailed information on the latter two and the nature of their religio-political position see Said Amir Arjomand "Ideological Revolution in Shi'ism," in S.A. Arjomand, ed., *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 184–191.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Bāzargān, "Ibrāhim, Imām wa Ummat" [Abraham, Imam and the Ummah], in his *Bāzargān i Arzishā*, pp. 336–337.

could be laid at the feet of Muslims themselves and not, as was widely believed, at those of foreigners and their allies.⁹⁶

Following the traditional line of Islamic political discourse, Bāzargān begins his discussion in *Bī'that wa Idī'ulūzhī* by emphasizing the importance of government as a means of maintaining order and law and of managing the affairs of society. He provides ample references to the Qur'an, to the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, and to historical events such as Imam Ali's conflict with the Kharijites in arguing that Islam acknowledges the inevitable need for government and commands man to establish God's government on earth. This ideal state is based on Islamic ideology, which in its turn is based on divine law and the democratic participation of the people.⁹⁷ Divine law guarantees man's salvation. He emphasizes that

in divine ideology God is the primordial and eternal law-giver and no one, neither the sultan, nor the people, nor any group of the latter, whether through referenda or other similar mechanisms, has the right to make laws.⁹⁸

Here, potential conflict arises between, on the one hand, the absolute authority of God as the main law-giver,⁹⁹ and on the other hand, the democratic participation of the people. For Bāzargān, this is not incompatible with progressive ideological governments of modern times.¹⁰⁰ His solution is similar to what the constitutionalist *'ulamā'* had proposed. The divine law determines the principal rules that govern the Muslim community. The legislative activity of the people is limited to the implementation of these basic rules in everyday life, and to legislating secondary and executive laws.¹⁰¹ In the absence of the Prophet and the Imams, the legitimacy of the Islamic state is based on the notion of *wilāyat*, which for Bāzargān meant the delegation of authority from the people to their representatives.¹⁰² It is

the people themselves who must choose the government, whereas the government, on behalf of the people, is responsible for carrying out the task that has been entrusted to it. This is the meaning of *wilāyat*, ensuring that "the Islamic state is a perfect democratic state or a government of the people."¹⁰³

Bāzargān continues by pointing out that the role of the people is not limited to choosing a government. Rather, in a true and perfect democratic state, public participation continues in the process of decision-making through supervision of the government's activities.¹⁰⁴ This Bāzargān considers to be the right of the people, which is recognized in Islam by the Qur'anic injunction of *mashwarah* (consultation) and prophetic practice and statements.¹⁰⁵ He cites the famous verses: "And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish worship, and whose affairs are a matter of counsel, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them" (42:38); and "... pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah..." (3:159). According to Bāzargān these verses indicate the solidarity and cooperation that are expected of the Islamic community in managing its affairs. Arguing for the general applicability of this direct divine rule, Bāzargān maintains that if the Prophet himself, who was a genius of his time, was commanded to carry out decisions through consultation, this is all the more so imperative for rulers who do not enjoy divine inspiration.¹⁰⁶ From these verses he also concludes that the counsellors are meant to be ordinary average members of the community, and not necessarily of the élite as some interpreters have suggested.¹⁰⁷ Several examples of Imam Ali's and Prophet Muhammad's experiences of consultation on important occasions are mentioned to show how they surrendered to the view of the majority, despite the fact that it may have contradicted their personal opinions.

Bāzargān extends and emphasizes the consultative role of the people in opposing or dismissing the imam or the leader of the community. In other words he refers to the principles of *ijmā'* and *bay'ah*

⁹⁶ Mahdī Bāzargān, *Sīr-i 'Aqab Uffādaqā-i Milal-i Musalmān* [The Secret Behind the Backwardness of Muslim Nations] (Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1356/1977), pp. 23-28.

⁹⁷ Bāzargān, *Bī'that wa Idī'ulūzhī*, pp. 108-120.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100, p. 109; Bāzargān, "Iran wa Islām" [Iran and Islam], in his *Bāzargān i Azīshha*, p. 232.

¹⁰² Bāzargān, *Bī'that wa Idī'ulūzhī*, p. 108, 115-116, 159.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

as practised in early Islam. In support of this view, which somehow justifies the principle, though not necessarily the results, of the practice of the early Muslims in choosing the Prophet's successors, Bāzargān quotes several *hadiths* and statements from different Shī'ī Imams.¹⁰⁸ This is indeed not a very orthodox Shī'ī position. But Bāzargān's detailed explanation clarifies the problematic points. Although he states that Sunni Muslims were not wrong in principle,¹⁰⁹ he still does not confirm the results of their choice. Moreover he states that the first three successors of the Prophet were not elected by a consultative body representing the whole community, nor did there exist a consensus of all the companions of the Prophet.¹¹⁰ Here Bāzargān, again benefiting from Nā'īnī's reasoning, argues against some scholars of his own day¹¹¹ who had argued in favour of the consensus of the élite of the believers (*ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*) and who had refuted the validity of majority view on the basis of some Qur'anic verses which condemn a majority who does not know, does not think, does not have faith, etc. In Bāzargān's opinion, the rule of a minority over a majority is condemned, no matter who the minority consists of. Besides, he argues, there are no decisive, universally accepted criteria for choosing the members of such an élite group. Piety, righteousness, religious knowledge, etc. and other religio-moral virtues, though needed in the realm of human relations with the divine, should not dictate who will be elected to take charge of managing and administering the socio-political and economic affairs of the community. This is an executive task, which involves dealing with the relations of people with one another and their mutual rights and duties. It requires other qualifications besides moral virtues.¹¹² In spite of overcrediting *mashwarah* or consultation as the main legitimizing factor in state decisions, Bāzargān insists that this does not contradict the principle of *wilāyat*. The *walī* should carry on his responsibilities according to the commands of the Qur'an, wherever and whenever they are clearly indicated. The principle of *shūrā* is applicable only in minor and executive matters. Also, certain rights are

reserved for the *walī*. In the tradition of the Prophet and Imam Ali, military commanders and governors should be appointed by the person of the *walī*.¹¹³ This however, as Bāzargān emphasizes, does not include the appointment of judges or the head of the judicial system, which should remain independent of the executive power.

How far are the decisions made in accordance with *shūrā* binding? What if a disagreement breaks out between the ruler and the ruled? There are issues of particular concern in the Islamic state, where both sides may claim the compatibility of its own views with God's law. Here, Bāzargān appeals to Islam as an ideology,¹¹⁴ the principles of which should be referred to for a final judgement. These principles are to be found in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and Imams. Many verses and traditions are cited to suggest that the community should stay united and avoid division since the religion, in God's eyes, is also one, i.e., Islam.¹¹⁵ Here, Bāzargān considers Islam to be a fixed, unified entity, without taking into consideration the fact that disagreements often emerge as a result of different interpretations of what constitutes the nature of Islam. However, he insists that checking the validity of the government's or the ruler's decisions against the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions should be the task of a high commission of the clergy, consisting of a certain number of just (*'ādil*) '*ulamā'*' elected directly or indirectly by the people. This committee would act as an arbitrator, basing its decisions on the Qur'an, the traditions and reason, and would have the final word in instances of disagreement between the people and the state or even between the judiciary and the executive powers.¹¹⁶ This committee could also veto parliamentary legislation. In his proposal for the creation of such a supervising committee, Bāzargān was very much inspired by the first Iranian constitution which guaranteed the '*ulamā'*' such a role. In spite of all these limitations, however, Bāzargān still considered his model of government to be democratic. Out of concern for the consequences of disagreements and discrepancies, however, Bāzargān argues that obedience to the imam or the ruler, as long as he acts according to the Qur'an and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 147-149.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 151-156. Bāzargān's direct reference is to Qalamdārān, *Hakūmat dar Islam*.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 156-157.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 160.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

the traditions of the Prophet, is obligatory.¹¹⁷ The first inference that may be drawn here, is that Bāzargān, like other traditionalists, gives preference to the good of the society rather than to the rights of the individual. Second, the minority, in Bāzargān's democratic theory of state, is given a very defined and limited role. The minority may not go any further than raising legitimate objections and giving guidance; otherwise its opposition may be regarded as harmful to the good of the society.¹¹⁸ This opposition has the same role as *amr-i bi ma'rūf wa nahy-i az munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the bad) which every member of the community is entitled to do and whose performance is recommended. This, for Bāzargān and other Muslim activists, is one of Islam's most progressive principles, and one which renders it democratic. It may in fact be taken as the equivalent of the system of checks and balances in a democracy. As far as majority rule and the role of the people is concerned, Bāzargān's treatment of this issue falls within the same frame of reference as do the traditional theories of the Islamic state. Only the terminology that he uses and the corresponding elements that he refers to in western democratic states are new.

Essential also to Bāzargān's version of Islamic ideology is freedom. According to Bāzargān, the ideals and slogans of modern western political philosophies, particularly those of the French Revolution, i.e. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, are essential doctrines of Islam too. They are certainly not unknown in Muslim societies. It was for this reason that at the time of the Constitutional Revolution the slogan "*Hurriyah, Musawāt, wa Ukhuwwat*", a direct translation and imitation of the French slogan, was eagerly adopted by Iranians.¹¹⁹ Providing ample evidence from the Qur'an, Bāzargān contends that freedom is a divine gift that God has bestowed upon man; that in fact the prophets had brought to man the first declaration of human freedom.¹²⁰ For Bāzargān freedom is of divine origin. God has created man and granted him freedom on earth. Here Bāzargān refers

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 164–167.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

¹²⁰ See for instance: Ibid., pp. 132–141; Bāzargān, "Dīn wa Āzādī," in his *Bāzargānī Arzishā*, pp. 67–70; idem, "Āzādī Khawstah-i Abadi" [Freedom: The Eternal Wish], in his *Bāzargānī Arzishā*, pp. 364–373; idem, *Tabi'at, Takamul, Tawhid* [Nature, Evolution, Monotheism] Houston: Book Distribution Center, 1356/1977, pp. 32–34.

to the Qur'anic story according to which God gave man the freedom to obey or disobey Him. He equates the term *ikhliyār* (free will) with freedom.¹²¹ This is but one example of how in his post-imprisonment works Bāzargān appeals to religious discourse, more than ever before, in an effort to render Islamic ideology more compatible with democratic norms. Although in his trial defense Bāzargān also invoked the same theme, the use of religious language was less pronounced, and the thrust of his argument was to condemn tyranny, which demands total obedience from its subjects, rather than stressing obedience to God's will or the total freedom which He has given man, even to the extent of disobeying Him. Bāzargān's perception of the concept of freedom thus eventually moved into the domain of the relation between man and God. Man is the vicegerent of God and enjoys freedom of choice on this earth. The political implication derived from this God-given freedom is that man's obedience to tyranny is first and foremost *shirk* (polytheism); the latter enslaves man, and thus denies him natural freedom. Therefore, freedom as perceived by Bāzargān and as expressed in the FMI manifesto¹²² of 1340/1960–61 is still very much the same as the traditional Islamic perception of it, i.e. the opposite of slavery and servitude to someone other than God. Obedience to God and observing the principle of *tawhīd* necessitates struggle against tyrannical rule and foreign dominance. In the mid-1960s Bāzargān wrote a book entitled *Āzādī-i Hind*¹²³ (The Freedom of India) in which he analyzed India's experience as a model for achieving political freedom in Iran. Paying particular attention to the role of religion in the Indian freedom movement, Bāzargān suggests therein that religion can and should be the quintessential foundation of social and political movements.

Regarding freedom of speech and freedom of religion, Bāzargān assures his readers that Islam provides citizens with a better guarantee of these rights than any other ideology or any other religion. He appeals to evidence from the Qur'an and from the manner in which the Prophet and Imam Ali exercised power to support his view.

¹²¹ For a discussion on freedom and *ikhliyār* see chapter 2, above.

¹²² Bāzargān, "Dīn wa Āzādī," p. 69; see also *Asnad-i Nahdat-i Āzādī*, vol. 1, pp. 24, 43, 65, 208–210.

¹²³ Mahdi Bazargan, *Āzādī-i Hind* [The Liberation of India] Tehran: Muḥammadī, n.d.

Freedom of speech is vital for the development of any society. It creates a spirit of responsibility among its members who, through expressing their opinions and criticism, see their share in the affairs of their society at work; thus hope and a sense of belonging and responsibility will flourish. The individual will develop a positive relation with his/her society. This is one of the main causes of development in democratic societies, as opposed to other societies in which despotism is the main cause of underdevelopment. This according to Bāzargān is because their individual members are deprived of participation in legislation and have no say in its making.¹²⁴ It is evident that living under censorship and extreme restraint on freedom of expression led Bāzargān to overemphasize the functional significance of freedom of speech and to avoid dealing with the theoretical problems arising from practising it in an Islamic society. Freedom of speech for Bāzargān consists almost entirely in criticizing the policies of the state, in other words, having the political freedom to propose changes to or to oppose the state. The lack of freedom of speech is detrimental to any state. Bāzargān cites a tradition from the Prophet saying that a society in which the weak man cannot stand up for his own rights and claim them from the powerful will never enjoy prosperity.¹²⁵ Preventing criticism and punishing political opponents were, according to Bāzargān, the reasons why regression and decadence grew in early Islamic society from the time of the third caliph Uthmān onwards, causing affairs to return to the state of *jāhiliyyah*.¹²⁶ The only exception since that time was the caliphate of Ali, when people were urged to criticize the government whenever they faced any misconduct on the part of their leader or his governors.¹²⁷ Bāzargān, like his predecessors at the time of the Constitutional Revolution, equates freedom of speech with the Islamic principle of *amr-i bi ma'rūf wa nahy-i az munkar*. Thus preventing the former would be equal to abandonment of the latter. And as Imam Ali warned, abandoning this Islamic duty will allow the vices of society to prevail.¹²⁸ Bāzargān also explicitly and strongly argues against

¹²⁴ Bāzargān, *Musalman-i Ijtima'i wa Musalman-i Jahani*, pp. 64–66; idem, *Afāt-i Tawhid*, p. 40; idem, *Mudāfāt*, p. 266.

¹²⁵ Bāzargān, *B'ihat*, p. 136.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

those who believe, in spite of regarding democracy and freedom of speech as valid ideals, that erroneous opinions should not be permitted freedom. He cites the Qur'an, "... and reason with them in the better way" (16:25), in order to show that freedom of speech must be granted even to one's opponents.¹²⁹

The famous verse *lā ikrāha fi dīn*, "no compulsion is there in religion" (2:256), is repeatedly cited by Bāzargān to show that God entrusted man with the freedom even of embracing Islam or rejecting it.¹³⁰ Therefore, no individual person and no political entity should impose upon its subjects the Islamic faith or the observation of its religious practices. Although the assertion of this view is found in Bāzargān's early works, it gained more significance in his works¹³¹ written after the Islamic Revolution when he opposed the policy of the Islamic regime regarding the impingement of the state upon the religious conduct of the people, especially regarding the performance of rituals and observation of the rule on the *hijāb* (Islamic veil), etc.¹³² Bāzargān asserts that the true meaning of freedom is the freedom to oppose or to criticize without restraint; otherwise it would be a meaningless and useless freedom. This right should be granted to the opposition, even if the political establishment considers the opposition illegitimate (*nāḥaq*).¹³³ This definition of freedom, or at least its explicit emphatic tone, seems to indicate an enhancement of Bāzargān's perception of freedom which, when placed in its context, makes it more meaningful. He made these assertions at a time when the hardliners of the revolutionary Islamic regime were consolidating their position and silencing their political opponents with changes of religious rebellion, apostasy and hypocrisy. Bāzargān on the one hand accepts the traditional reasoning (although he quotes it from Marcel Boisard's *L'humanisme de l'Islam*) that total religious freedom in an Islamic community, which may lead to apostasy, can not be tolerated

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹³⁰ See for instance: Bāzargān, *Musalman-i Ijtima'i*, pp. 35–36; idem, *B'ihat*, p. 126; idem, "Āzādī Khawstah-i Abadī," pp. 366–369.

¹³¹ Bāzargān's *Bāzghābi-i Arzishā* is essentially a collection of his articles and lectures delivered after the Islamic Revolution. See specifically his article "Dīn wa Āzādī" (Religion and Freedom).

¹³² Bāzargān, *Bāzghābi*, p. 367; Abdol'ali Bāzargān, ed., *Mas'āl wa Mushkilāt-i Nikhustm Sal-i Inqilab* [The Problems and Difficulties in the First Year of the Revolution] Tehran: Nahdat-i Azad-i Iran, 1362/1983, p. 334.

¹³³ Bāzargān, "Dīn wa Āzādī," p. 80.

because it is not merely a matter of personal faith; it weakens the solidarity of the ummah and the foundations of the Islamic government. On the other hand he aims the thrust of his argument against religious intolerance, particularly if it is used as a means to achieve political ends, pointing out that cases of apostasy and religious rebellion are so difficult to detect or to prove that it makes these laws virtually inapplicable.

Bāzargān's view on equality is more or less the same as that of other Muslim modernists. He too invokes Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's or the Imams' sayings in order to show that since there is no discrimination in Islam, and by extension in Islamic political ideology, regarding race, sex or class, all citizens enjoy equal rights in social, political and juridical affairs.¹³⁴ In one of his earlier books, Bāzargān analyzed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and concluded that, according to the Qur'anic verse which reads: "the dearest to God are those who are most virtuous," the equality that Islam guarantees between nations, the sexes, and races transcends all other pleas for equality made by any other later human ideologies.¹³⁵ In another passage he, like other Muslim modernists, stresses the rational and peaceful character of Islam, spelling out his position that in a political ideology based on Islam, Muslim and non-Muslim citizens would be treated equally and by implication enjoy the same rights and duties. Without dealing with the legal aspects of the restrictions on non-Muslim citizens present in Islamic jurisprudence, Bāzargān focuses on the occasion of revelation of certain related Qur'anic verses, and concludes that these verses commanded violence against only those infidels who had broken their peace treaties with the Muslims or against those who had started wars with them. Otherwise, these verses do not have general applicability; hence, offensive action against the people of the book, infidels and polytheists is not permissible. Furthermore, he points out, in Islam, engagement in war and violence has primarily a defensive nature.¹³⁶ Ample Qur'anic evidence is adduced by Bāzargān to signify that Islam prescribes tolerance and peaceful co-existence among the members of society in general, and between Muslims and non-Muslims in par-

¹³⁴ Bāzargān, *Bī'that*, p. 111.

¹³⁵ Bāzargān, *Rah-e Tay Mubdāh*, pp. 113-117.

¹³⁶ A detailed discussion of these verses was given above in chapter 2.

ticular.¹³⁷ As historical justification, Bāzargān refers to the policy of Imam Ali spelled out in his famous letter to his governor in Egypt, Mālik al-Ashtar, advising him to rule in that land justly and to treat his subjects equally.¹³⁸ As stated earlier, this letter is constantly invoked by Shī'ite political activists and modernists to indicate that true Islamic rule respects equality. In this letter the fourth caliph writes: "treat them [your subjects] all with justice and kindness for they are equal to you. They are either your brothers in faith or your equals in humanity." Later, after the Islamic Revolution, Bāzargān had to restate perhaps even more vigorously his interpretation of these verses and his perception of the rights of religious minorities in the Islamic regime. This time however it was in a concrete setting rather than in a debate about the ideal Islamic state. The Islamic leadership of Iran, which considered all opponents of the new regime to be traitors or even unbelievers, often invoked the very same verses to justify in Islamic terms its policy of suppressing them.¹³⁹ Bāzargān had a double motivation to argue against the regime's policy. In the first place, on the basis of his religious conviction he felt compelled to defend Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance; an Islam which his opponents labelled "liberal Islam." Secondly, he felt obliged to defend the constitution of Iran in which the freedom and equality of all citizens before the law were guaranteed.¹⁴⁰

Regarding women's rights, Bāzargān contends in his writings that many Qur'anic verses address men and women simultaneously and equally, particularly the famous verse, "O mankind! We have created you male and female, . . . the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct . . ." (49:13), which explicitly indicates their equality. Therefore, men and women should be treated equally

¹³⁷ Bāzargān, *Bī'that*, pp. 174-192.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹³⁹ This topic was especially significant for Bāzargān in that the Iran-Iraq war, which was to last eight years, was being waged by the Iranian leadership as a conflict between Islam and *kufi*. Once the Iranian army had finally succeeded in regaining land lost to Iraq and had secured the border, Bāzargān went on record as opposing Ayt. Khomeini's policy of continuing hostilities. He considered any prolongation of the war to be unjustified in Islamic terms and potentially harmful to the nation. He stated his position on this issue in several open personal letters to Ayt. Khomeini, as well as in various declarations of the FMI.

¹⁴⁰ See for instance his articles "Sumay-i Islam" [The Face of Islam], and "Dīn wa Azādī," in *Bāzargān's Writings*, pp. 15-44 and pp. 76-79 respectively.

in all cases except in those where natural duties and matters of chastity require women to be treated differently.¹⁴¹ Assuming that governorship is an act of guardianship of public affairs performed by the people's representatives on their behalf, Bāzargān concludes that since women in Islam have similar rights to men in matters of ownership and possession, and since they are given the right to have and to choose their own representatives in any matter, they must enjoy the same right as men to choose political representatives, as well as the right to express their views about those in power. The historical precedent for this may be found in the time of the Prophet, when the oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) was sought even from women.¹⁴² Here, although Bāzargān takes a different and more independent position from that of the traditional '*ulamā'*' and acknowledges the right of women to vote, he does not talk about their right to be elected to any public office. Still, this is an improvement since 1962, when the FMI had somehow chosen to support the traditional '*ulamā'*' in their opposition to the Shah's reform plan and particularly to two measures: one which extended the suffrage to women and another which allowed for the election of non-Muslims to provincial assemblies. Clarifying their reasons for taking such a position, the FMI explained that under a dictatorial state in which even those who enjoyed the suffrage did not have real political rights, (i.e. men), pleas for women's suffrage were irrelevant and a show.¹⁴³ The reasonings behind Bāzargān's proof of the equality of women in the matter of political participation is a very clear example of his approach to the important issue of "rights" in democracy. As explained above he infers the political right of women by analogy to certain other rights that Islam has recognized for them, and not by virtue of their equality on a human level. As he does in the case of other issues, he tries to derive the people's rights to representative rule, to freedom and to equality before the law from Islamic sources and history. Therefore, his argument remains entirely religious.

¹⁴¹ Bāzargān, *Bī'that*, p. 142.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁴³ See Bāzargān, *Marz-i Mhyān-i Din wa Umm-i 'Ijtima'i*, p. 28-29; see also, *Asnad-i Nahdat-i Azadi-i Iran*, vol. 1, pp. 171-173, 175, 178, 196-202.

‘ALLĀMAH SAYYID MUḤAMMAD ḤUSAYN ṬABĀṬABĀ’Ī

‘Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā’ī's answer to the question of whether Islam and democracy are compatible was an explicit and emphatic no. Ṭabāṭabā’ī's view on this matter is presented here in rather more detail, however, for he represents the opposite extreme of modern Iranian Muslim scholars like Bāzargān and Ṭāliqānī. Ṭabāṭabā’ī was neither a political activist nor a socio-religious preacher. He was best known as a theosophist. Nevertheless, he expressed his opinions on certain issues of the time, usually in the form of articles and most often in response to requests from his students or when other occasions necessitated his doing so. He was a philosopher, a mystic and a Qur’anic exegete of an unprecedented scholarly calibre in the modern history of the Shī’ite faith. Although he had the necessary qualifications to become a *marja’-i taqlīd*, he purposely avoided publishing a *risālah-i ‘amalīyah* (a manual of ritual practice) and devoted his life to studying and teaching philosophy and Qur’anic exegesis, subjects which were considered as minor and often condemned by the '*ulamā'*', for whom *fiqh* has always been the primary, and most often the only, field of specialization.¹⁴⁴

Ṭabāṭabā’ī's professional life and intellectual career were very different from those of the mainstream '*ulamā'*'. His attempt at revitalizing the "rational" dimensions of Islamic learning (*‘ulūm-i ‘aqlī*) through teaching philosophy and Qur’anic exegesis as well as the method of his antimaterialist campaign (i.e., defending and empowering Islam on rational, not dogmatic and doctrinal grounds) provide sufficient reasons to label him as a religious modernist.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless his opinion on political authority was in line with that of the

¹⁴⁴ For biographical and other general information on Ṭabāṭabā’ī's career see for instance: Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Tehrānī, *Mīhr-i Tabān* [The Luminous Sun] (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bāqir al-‘ulūm, n.d.); *Kayhan-i Farhangī* 6, no. 8 (1989) which is a special issue on Ṭabāṭabā’ī; an English translation of his brief autobiography is also available in *Islamic Teachings: An Overview*, translated by R. Campbell (New York: Mostazafan Foundation, 1989), pp. 13-18.

¹⁴⁵ For a good account in English of the difficulties that Ṭabāṭabā’ī faced from the side of the religious establishment in Qum, and from Ayatullah Burūjirdī in particular, for his determination to teach the nonjuridical branches of the Islamic sciences, see Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 278-286. An earlier work which situates the modernist position of Ṭabāṭabā’ī in the Shī’ite context is: William G. Millward, "Aspects of Modernism in Shī’a Islam", in *Studia Islamica* 37 (1973): pp. 111-128.