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Home > The life of Imam 'Ali Bin Musa al-Ridha' > Chapter 14: In The Time Of Al-Rashid, Al-Amin, And Al-Ma'mun > His Policy

Chapter 14: In The Time Of Al-Rashid, Al-Amin, And Al-Ma'mun

Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was a contemporary of three 'Abba'sid kings: Al-Rashid, al-Amin, and al-Ma'mu'n. In the time of al-Rashid, the Imam's soul was full of deep sadness and bitter sorrow, for Ha'ru'n al-Rashid took severe measures against the 'Alawides in general and against his (the Imam's) father, Imam al-Ka'zim, peace be on him. We talked about these measures in the previous chapters of this book. Now, we will briefly speak about these kings and their attitudes toward Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him.

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid

He is the most famous 'Abba'sid king; his name is widespread; his reputation is widely known in the east and the west; the world responded to him; the kingdom was brilliant to him; Baghdad, the bide of the east, was his capital; his rule and power extended to most regions of the world; it was he who said to clouds: "You rain in my kingdom!" The kings of the world yielded to him and became small before his power. Now, we will speak about some characteristics of his personality as follows:

A. Cruelty

As for cruelty, it was among his elements and characteristics. Al-Amir Shakib said: "He (Ha'ru'n al-Rashid) was as tyrannical and blood-thirsty just as the tyrannical kings of the east were.1"

An example of his severe cruelty is that he destroyed the 'Alawides, punished them severely, and wreaked upon them painful torture which they had never faced except in the time of his grandfather, the tyrannical shedder of blood, Mansu'r al-Dawa'niqi. We have demonstrated the tragedies they faced in his time.

B. Malice

Yet another element of al-Rashid's personality is that he bore malice against those who had noble lineage and brilliant figures who enjoyed a remarkable rank in the social circles. For example, he bore malice against the master of the Muslims, Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, so he ordered him to be placed in a dark prison, and to be given poison to drink. That was because the Imam occupied a notable position in the souls of the Muslims. Similarly, he bore a grudge against those whose reputation was widely known and whose excellence was spread among the people. He distressed the Bara'mika, killed their eminent figures, abased them, and confiscated their properties; that was because of their rank with the people, for example, the poets spoke constantly about their names, announced their generosity and munificence. He was so angry with them that he punished them severely. As a result, malice was one of the qualities of Ha'ru'n's personality and the most prominent one of his elements.

C. Meanness

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid had nothing of reverential fear and faith; he was ignoble and clinging to his lusts and pleasures. The following are some examples of his meanness:

A. His Drinking Wine

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid was alcoholic. Perhaps he himself undertook giving wine to his drinking companions. His sister 'Aliya made good wine and sent it to him. We have mentioned his alcoholism in detail in our book *Haya't al-Imam Musa' Bin Ja'far* (the Life of Imam Musa' Bin Ja'far), peace be on him.

B. His Fondness of Singing

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid grew up among the songstresses, for there was a large number of female musicians and songstresses, for example, there was in his palace three hundred beautiful women who played musical instruments and sang. 2 He classified the singers into threes categories: The first category consists of Ibra'him al-Mousli, Ibn Ja'mi', and Zalzal al-Da'rib. As for Zalzal, he played on the lute; as for (Ibra'him) al-Mousli and Ibn Ja'mi', they were singers. The second category is composed of Isha'q, Salim b. Sala'm, and 'Amru' al-Ghazza'l. The third category includes the owners of the stringed instruments and the mandolins.3

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid fell in love with three songstresses from among his female-slaves; they are Gha'dir, Ma'rida, and Hayla'na. Concerning them he composed poetry of which are the following lines:

The three young ladies have possessed my rein and

occupied the dearest place in my heart.

Why do all people obey me and I obey them, while

they disobey me?

That is (nothing) except the power of love through which

they overcame those who were powerful than me.4

We have presented in detail this quality of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid's life in our book *Haya't al-Imam Musa' Bin Ja'far* (the Life of Imam Musa' Bin Ja'far).

C. His Playing Game at Dice

Another example of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid's meanness and his paying no attention to the unlawful is that he played game at dice (*nard*), which is a kind of gambling. One day he played game at dice with Ibra'him al-Mousli. He bet him on the robe of honor which he (Ibra'him) wore. He beat Ibra'him, so he (Ibra'him) stood up and took off his garments, but Ha'ru'n al-Rashid refused to wear them and said to him:

"Woe upon you! I wear your garments?"

"Yes, by Allah," replied Ibra'him, "if you want to treat (me) with justice; if you do not treat (me) with justice, then you are powerful and able."

"Woe upon you! Shall I pay a ransom on your behalf?"

"Yes," he answered.

"What is the ransom?" asked al-Rashid.

"You suggest, O Commander of the faithful," replied Ibra'him, "for you are more appropriate for power."

"I will give all the garments I am wearing," al-Rashid retorted.

"Then order them (to be given to me)," demanded Ibra'him.

As a result Ha'ru'n al-Rashid called for garments other than those he was wearing, and then he took off the garments he was wearing and gave them to Ibra'him. 5 He played chess when he traveled by the Tigris.6

These are some acts which have been transmitted regarding Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, and they clearly show that he was mean and did not cling to the teachings of the True Religion.

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid went too far in practicing pleasures; his palace was a theater for all kinds of prostitution and dissoluteness; it was rarely void of dancing and singing parties and drinking wine; therefore, his government did not represent Islam.

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid's Attitude toward Imam al-Ridha'

When Ha'ru'n al-Rashid assassinated Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, peace be on him, he sent a band of his security forces to spy upon the affairs of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and to inform him of his tendencies and inclinations.

The Imam, peace be on him, understood that, so he intended to get rid of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid. He went to market while the detectives were following him. He, peace be on him, bought a rooster, a dog, and a ewe. The detectives informed Ha'ru'n al-Rashid of that. When he (Ha'ru'n al-Rashid) came to know of that, he became free from worry and fear of the Imam and knew that he was not ready to establish any movement against him, and then he ordered his detectives to return to Baghdad.

As for Imam al–Ridha', peace be on him, he busied himself with spreading the laws of Allah and the teachings of Islam and explaining the sides of the Imamate. Accordingly, some eminent figures of his Shi'ites feared that Ha'ru'n al–Rashid would subject him to a reprehensible deed. They felt that the Imam was not afraid of Ha'ru'n al–Rashid after buying the rooster, the dog, and the ewe. 7 Some of those who feared for the Imam and warned him against the attack of Ha'ru'n al–Rashid are as follows:

1. Safwa'n Bin Yahya'

Safwa'n said: "When Abu' Ibra'him, peace be on him, passed way and Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha' spoke (about the Imamate), we feared for him, so it was said to him: 'Surely you have manifested a great affair, and we have feared for you from this tyrannical (i.e. Ha'ru'n al-Rashid).' 'Let him do his best,' he, peace be on him, said, 'for he has no way against me.'8"

2. Muhammad Bin Sina'n

Muhammad b. Sina'n said: "I said to Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha' (peace be on him) during the days of Ha'ru'n (al-Rashid): 'Surely, you have made yourself famous through this affair (i.e. manifesting the Imamate) and your sitting in the assembly of your father, while the sword of Ha'ru'n is dripping blood (i.e. the blood of the Household of the Prophet and their followers.)'

"Hence he, peace be on him, said: 'I have been encouraged by the words of Allah's Messenger (may Allah bless him and his family), who said: 'If Abu' JAhl takes a hair from my head, then bear witness that I am not a prophet.' For this reason I say to you: 'If Ha'ru'n takes a hair from my head, then bear witness that I am not an Imam.'9"

'Isa' Bin Ja'far informs Ha'ru'n al-Rashid of the Imam

When Ha'ru'n al-Rashid left al-Riqqa and headed for Mecca, 'Isa' b. Ja'far approached and said to him: "I want to remind you of the oath you made concerning the family of Abu' Ta'lib; you swore (by Allah)

that if anyone after Musa' claimed the Imamate for himself, you would strike off his head. This is 'Ali, his son, claim this matter (i.e. the Imamate) for himself, and it is said regarding him just as it is said regarding his father."

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid paid no attention to his statement; he looked at him with anger and asked him: "What do you see? Do you want me to kill them all?"

Musa' b. 'Umra'n was at the meeting, so he hastened to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and told him about the matter, and he, peace be on him, said: "I do not worry; they can do nothing toward me! 10"

Yahya' informs Ha'ru'n al-Rashid of the Imam

Yahya' al-Barmaki was among those who informed Ha'ru'n al-Rashid of the Imam; he said to him: "This is 'Ali al-Ridha' b. Musa' has advanced and claimed the affair (i.e. the Imamate) for himself."

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid paid no attention to him and said to him: "What we had done toward his father is sufficient to us. 11"

All the attempts which were woven against the Imam failed.

The Imam's Supplication against the Bara'mika

The Bara'mika played a dangerous role in subjecting the Imam to tragedies, for they made Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, the tyrannical, bear malice against him. As for Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, he was fully aware (of their plots), hence he invoked Allah against them. Muhammad b. al-Fudayl narrated, saying: "In the year when Ha'ru'n al-Rashid assaulted the Bara'mika and a tribulation befell them, Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha' was standing at 'Arafa and supplicating (Allah); then he bowed his head. He was asked about that, and he answered: 'I was invoking Allah, the Exalted, against the Bara'mika regarding what they did toward my father, so Allah has accepted my supplication against them on this day.' Shortly after that, Ha'ru'n al-Rashid attacked with violence Ja'far and Yahya', and their conditions changed. 12"

Al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Washsha" reported on the authority of Musa'fir, saying: "I was with Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha', peace be on him, at Mina'. Yahya' b. Kha'lid al-Barmaki along with a group of people from among the family of Barmak passed. So he, peace be on him, said: 'Those (people) are miserable; they do not know what will befall them in this year."

The Imam added, saying: "I wonder at this! Ha'ru'n and I are like this." He placed his two fingers together.

Musa'fir said: "By Allah, we did not understand the meaning of his statement until we buried him beside him (Ha'ru'n al-Rashid).13"

Allah accepted the supplication of His friend (al-Ridha'). He severely punished the Bara'mika, removed their blessings, and destroyed their eminent figures. That is because Ha'ru'n al-Rashid attacked them with violence. He killed Ja'far and halved him and put each part in a sensitive place in Baghdad. Moreover, he imprisoned Yahya' along with his own children and confiscated their movable and immovable properties.

The Imam's House is attacked

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid sent al-Julu'di to war against Muhammad b. Ja'far b. Muhammad, who revolted against him. He ordered him to attack the 'Alawides' house and to plunder their womenfolk of their garments and jewels and not to leave them wearing anything except a garment for each of them.

Al-Julu'di attacked the house of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, so the Imam stood up and gathered the 'Alawide ladies from among the daughters of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, in one house, and then he stood up at the door of the house. Al-Julu'di said to the Imam:

"There is no escape from that; I should enter the house and plunder them (of their garments and jewels) just as Ha'ru'n al-Rashid ordered me."

"I will give (their garments and jewels), retorted the Imam, "I swear (by Allah) that I will take all the things they are wearing."

The Imam went on convincing al–Julu'di, and he became calm. Then the Imam entered the house and gathered the garments and ornaments of the 'Alawide ladies, to the extent that he gathered their earrings, their anklets, and their buttons. Then he handed over all these things to al–Julu'di, who handed them over to the tyrannical one of Baghdad (i.e. Ha'ru'n al–Rashid).14"

Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was very displeased with this flagrant aggression against his household. This means that Ha'ru'n al-Rashid did not respect the dignity of the Imam nor the dignity of the daughters of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. Besides he behaved toward them just as Yazid's soldiers did toward the family of al-Husayn the sweet basil of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and the master of the youths of the Garden, peace be on him after murdering him. That was (at Karbala") when they pushed each other like vicious dogs in order to loot the garments and ornaments of the 'Alawide ladies.

Any how, I (i.e. the author) think that Ha'ru'n al-Rashid did not take any other measure toward Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him. It is worth mentioning that the Imam's soul was full of deep sadness because of the misfortunes which befell his father Imam Musa', peace be on him, at the hand of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, who placed him in a dark prison for many years, tortured him, and then assassinated him. Moreover, he was so displeased with the 'Alawides that he punished them severely and killed them everywhere. As a result he paid no attention to their genealogical links and closeness to Allah's

Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who asked his community to treat his Household kindly and to feel pity for them.

Sufya'n's Letter to Ha'ru'n

It is an act of goodness to end our talk about Ha'ru'n al-Rashid with this valuable letter which Sufya'n al-Thawri (or Sufya'n b. 'Ayniya) sent to him, for it discloses many sides of his life. He had written a letter to Sufya'n asking him to show affection toward him and to communicate with him, and he answered him through the following:

"From the servant who will die, to the servant who is deceived by hopes and who is deprived of the sweetness of faith and the pleasure of reciting the Qur'an.

"Now then, I am writing to inform you that I have severed your robe and cut off your love, and that you have appointed me as a witness against you through your confession against your own soul in your letter, for you attacked the Muslim public treasury, spent it on other than its right and used it up on other than its precept; yet you are not content with what you have done; you are far from me when you wrote to me to make me bear witness against you. As for me and my brothers who were present during the recitation of your letter, we have borne witness against you, and tomorrow we will give the witness before Allah, the Just Judge

"O Ha'ru'n, you attacked the Muslim public treasury without their satisfaction. Are the people with reconciled hearts, the workers in charge with it, the *muja'hidin* in the way of Allah, and the tramps satisfied with your action? Are those who know the Qur'an by heart and men of knowledge content with your action? Are the orphans and the widows satisfied with your action? Or are some creatures from your subjects content with it? Therefore, O Ha'ru'n, wrap yourself in your own loincloth and prepare an answer for the question and a gown for the trial; know that you will stand before Allah, the Just Judge, so fear Allah regarding your own soul, for you have been deprived of the sweetness of knowledge, asceticism, the pleasure of reciting the Qur'an, sitting with the good; you are pleased with yourself when you have become unjust and an Imam for the unjust.

"O Ha'ru'n, you have sat on the throne, worn the silk, lowered curtains before your door, and likened yourself, through the argument, to the Lord of the worlds, and then you have sat your oppressive soldiers in front of your door and curtain; while they wrong the people and do not treat (them) with justice. They drink wine, punish the drinker, commit adultery, and kill the killer. Are these precepts not against you and them before they judge the people through them? What shall you do, O Ha'ru'n, tomorrow when the caller calls on the part of Allah: 'Muster the oppressive and their helpers,' so you will stop before Allah and your hands will be shackled to your neck, which nothing untie except your justice and fairness; the wrongdoers are around you, and you are their Imam and driver to the Fire? I can see that you are seized by the neck and taken to the driving, while you see your good deeds in the balance of other than you, and the evil deeds of other than you are in your scale (added) to your evil deeds, a

trial (added) to a trial, and oppression (added) to oppression. Therefore, fear Allah, O Ha'ru'n, regarding your subjects, and keep Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, concerning his community; know that this authority will reach other than you just as it has reached you; in this manner the world does toward its inhabitants one by one, so some of them have supplied themselves with useful provisions, and some of them have lost his (life) in this world and the next. Beware, and then beware of writing to me after this (letter), for I will not answer you! Greetings."

Then he (Sufya'n) sent the letter without stamping and folding. 15 This letter gives an account of that Ha'ru'n al-Rashid illegally spent the properties of the Muslims as well as it gives an account of Sufya'n's firm faith, personality, and self-denial. With this letter we will end our speech about the government of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid.

The Government of Al-Amin

Al-Amin undertook the Islamic leadership after the death of his father. According to the unanimous resolution of the historians, he was unqualified to this high office, for he was distinguished by mean inclinations of which are the following:

1. His Absorbing in Pleasures

After assuming the caliphate, al-Amin devoted himself to amusement and glee; he entrusted the affairs of the state to al-Fadl b. al-Rabi', who moved about in the affairs of the state according to his desires and tendencies. 16 He was serious about seeking entertainers 17 as well as he busied himself with the boys and the dancing of women. 18

2. His Hating Knowledge

Among the qualities of al-Amin is that he detested knowledge and hated scholars. He was unlettered. 19

If al-Amin had such a quality, then how did Ha'ru'n entrust him with the affairs of the Muslims and appoint him as a ruler over the greatest empire in the world? He entrusted him with the caliphate in response to the feelings of Mrs. Zubayda and the rest of the 'Abba'sid family whose inclinations were for him.

3. His Weak Opinion

Al-Amin had no wise opinion, for experiences did not teach him; nor did the days educate him. He was given the wide kingdom while he did nothing well. Al-Mas'u'di has described him, saying: "He (al-Amin) had ugly behavior and weak opinion. He followed his caprice, neglected his affairs, relied on other than him during great misfortunes, and had confidence in those who were not loyal to him.20"

Al-Kutubi also described him, saying: "The ugly things were easy to him, so he followed his caprice and

did not reflect on anything of his final result. He was the most miserly of the people (in giving) food. He did not worry where he sat or with whom he drank.21"

Concerning him al-Fakhri said: "I have found nothing good in al-Amin's behavior in order to mention it.22"

4. Concealing himself from Subjects

Another example of his inclinations is that he turned away from people as a sign of pride toward them as well as he hid himself from his subjects and the inhabitants of his kingdom, so Isma'il b. Sabih, who was preferred to him, hastened to him and said to him: "O Commander of the faithful, the souls of your commanders, your soldiers, and your subjects in general have become malicious; their viewpoints (toward you) have become bad; and they regard as great what they see because of concealing yourself from them, so sit in front of them for an hour and let them come in to you; surely this will calm them and renew their hopes."

Al-Amin responded to this advice and sat in his royal court. The poets went in to him and praised him through their poems, but he did not understand their words. When the people departed, he boarded *al-Harra'qa* and went to al-Shamma'siya. As for the horses, they stood in ranks and there were men on their backs; they stood on both banks of the Tigris; the kitchen wares and stored things of the palace were carried along with him.

As for *al–Harra'qa* which he boarded, it was a small ship like the lion. The people had never seen a view more splendid and beautiful than that view. Abu' Nu'a's was with him on the ship. He had a drink with him and described that ship, saying:

Allah has prepared for al-Amin mounts which He had not

prepared for the Possessor of the mihrab (Sulayma'n b.Da'wud).

When his riders travel by land, he travels on the water riding a jungle lion.

A lion stretching out its arms, running, with wide mouth

and showing its teeth.

He does not suffer it with the bridle nor with the whip; nor

has he placed his own foot in the stirrup.

The people wonder when they see you riding the image of

a lion passing like clouds.

They become calm when they see you riding it, then how (is their condition) when they see you riding al-'lqa'b (the Eagle)23, with chest, beak, and wings, passing through the waves, going ahead of the birds in the sky in coming and going when they hasten it?

May Allah bless al-Amin and maintain for him the vitality

of youth!

He is a king of whom praise falls short and a lucky

Ha'shmi!24

These are some trends and qualities of al-Amin; they give an account of an insignificant man who devoted himself to his pleasures and lusts, and paid no attention to the affairs of the Islamic state.

His deposing Al-Ma'mu'n

Al-Amin assumed the caliphate on the day when his father al-Rashid died; he received the ring of the caliphate, the gown, and the (iron) bar which the 'Abba'sid kings had received before him.

Shortly after that, the relationships between al-Amin and Al-Ma'mu'n become corrupt, for the retinues who were around them played an important role in creating the crises between them; they exchanged letters which carried insults and curses for each other; and there was in them no summons to cordiality and good will. Accordingly, al-Amin officially removed his brother al-Ma'mu'n from the office of regency and entrusted it to his son Musa', who was still a baby in the cradle, and called him *al-Na'tiq bi al-Haqq* (the one who says the truth). Then he sent someone to the Holy Ka'ba to bring him the document of regency which was hung on it and in which al-Rashid had appointed al-Ma'mu'n as a successor (after al-Amin). When it was brought to him, he tore it up and did not fulfill it. The historians said that this procedure occurred according to the viewpoints of al-Fadl b. al-Rabi' and Bakr b. al-Mu'tamir. Concerning his breaking regency and his pledging allegiance to his son, a blind man from Baghdad said:

The cheat of the minister, the act of the Imam, and the opinion of the adviser have lost the caliphate.

That is (nothing) except the way of vainglory, and the way of vainglory is the most wicked of all ways.

The Caliph's deeds are wonderful, but the minister's deeds

are more wonderful than them.

The most wonderful of this and that is that we pledge

allegiance to the young child from among us, to him who

does not rub his nose well and does not remove the

fire stone from his own shoulder.

And that is (nothing) except a tyrannical, seductive one who desires to abolish the brilliant Book.

Were it not for the change of the time, would these two

(qualities) concern moral lessons or thinking?

However, they are discords like mountains therein he was

promoted by the action of the ignoble one.25

Al-Rashid is Responsible for these Events

It was Ha'ru'n al-Rashid who created the enmity and discord between his two sons, for he appointed al-Amin as a king after him and nominated al-Ma'mu'n as a successor after al-Amin; concerning that he wrote promises and covenants, made (some people) bear witness to that, and then he ordered the document of regency to be hung on the Ka'ba; whilst he was fully aware of the violent enmity between the two brothers. As a result sorrowful events occurred and resulted in killing ten thousand people and destroying Baghdad. In this connection a poet expressed his deep regret toward al-Rashid's procedure, saying:

I say out of the grief in my own soul and the increasing tears of my eye: Firmly prepare yourself for terror; you will meet that which will prevent you from sleeping.

Surely if you stay long, you will see an affair which will

prolong for you depression and sleeplessness.

The opinion of the well-mannered king regarding dividing

the caliphate and country is the most evil one.

If he had followed the opinion with knowledge, his black

partings would have turned white.

Through the opinion he desired to put an end to the

differences between his two sons and to make them show

affection toward each other.

But he indifferently exited enmity (between them) and

made dispersion inherit their friendliness.

He lighted between them a fierce war and made it easy for

them to avoid leadership.

So woe be to the subjects shortly after that, for he (al-Rashid) has given to them as gift intense distress, clothed them in an endless tribulation and made them accompany

declination and corruption.

Copious seas will flow out of their blood; they will not see

their exhaustion.

So the sin of that is always against him, whether that is

right or wrong!26

Destructive Battles

When al-Amin officially removed his brother from succession and informed him of that, he summoned 'Ali b. 'Isa', gave him a gold shackle, and said to him: "Shackle al-Ma'mu'n and do not kill him until you bring him to me." He gave him two million dinars in addition to furniture, horses and mules. When the news concerning the procedures which al-Amin took against his brother came from Baghdad, al-Ma'mu'n deposed his brother. He appointed himself as a general ruler over Islamic world; deprived al-Amin of land tax; removed his name from the embroidery, the dirham, and the dinar; mutinied against him; summoned Ta'hir b. al-Husayn and Harthema b. A'yun to war against him; and supplied them with an army.

The two armies met in al-Ray and a terrible battle took place between them, at which rivers of blood flowed. Finally al-Ma'mu'n's Army gained a victory over al-Amin's Army; the commander-in-chief of his armed forces was killed; and all his provisions and weapons were looted. Then Ta'hir b. al-Husayn wrote to al-Fadl b. SAhl, al-Ma'mu'n's minister, to tell him about this marvelous victory and to

congratulate him on it. He has mentioned in his letter: "I am writing to you while the head of 'Ali b. 'Isa' is on my lap; his ring is in my hand; and praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."

So al–Fadl hastened to al–Ma'mu'n, gave him good news of this victory, and congratulate him on the caliphate. As for al–Ma'mu'n, he became sure of the victory, hence he sent gifts and properties to Ta'hir, thanked him very much for that, named him *Dha' al–Yaminayn wa Sa'hib Khayr al–Yadayn* (the possessor of the two right hands and owner of the best hands), and ordered him to head for Iraq in order to occupy Baghdad and to but an end to his (al–Ma'mu'n's) brother.

When al-Fadl b. al-Rabi', al-Amin's minister, came to know of the defeat of the army and murder of 'Ali b. 'Isa b. Maha'n, he became perplexed and was sure of the fatal blow which befell them; concerning that the poet says:

I wonder at the people who hope for a success in an affair

through which affairs are not completed.

And how is complete that which they have concluded and

sought while dissoluteness is in the foundation of their

building?

The seductive Satan whose promises are delusive have

invited them to error.

He achieves through them (his goals) and play with them

just as wine plays with him who drinks it.

They have treacherously schemed against the Truth and

al-Ma'mu'n; the fallacious are never successful!

He (al-Ma'mu'n) is just, excellent, and kind to us; the

hearts show love for him.

The final results of the affairs are surely for him; the

Shari'a and the Zabu'r bear witness to that.27

This poetry gives an account of the victory of al-Ma'mu'n. It shows that he wined the caliphate; that the authority did not go well with al-Amin, for the foundation of those who supported him was standing on

licentiousness and oppression; that error and temptation moved them; and that al-Ma'mu'n was victorious, for he was just and highborn, and made the hearts of the people incline to him.

Baghdad is besieged

Al-Ma'mu'n's Army, headed by Ta'hir b. al-Husayn, went in a hurry to Baghdad, and it could blockade it. As for al-Amin, he was sure of defeat, so he wrote to Ta'hir and asked him for security for his own soul, his family, and his supporters. He promised to hand over the caliphate to his brother al-Ma'mu'n. However, Ta'hir said: "He (al-Amin) has been besieged; his wing has been broken; and his sinful followers have been defeated. No, by Him in whose hand is my soul, (I will not leave him) until he puts his hand in my hand and yields to me." He did not responded to anything of what he (al-Amin) wanted.

Accordingly, Baghdad remained besieged for a long time to the extent that the features of civilization wherein were destroyed; poverty and misery dominated all its inhabitants; the mischievous and deviants assassinated the innocent, looted properties, and followed women. So a group of the good people headed by SAhl b. Sala'ma resisted them with their own weapons and drove them away from Baghdad.

Any how, Baghdad suffered heavy casualties, lost its embellishment and radiance; bereavement, sadness, and mourning spread all over its districts. Hence a group of poets lamented over it; among them is al-A'ma', who says in his poem:

I weep for burning and demolishing houses, looting

seeds and provisions, manifesting veiled women

bareheaded; they went out without veil or loincloths.

You could see them bewildered, not knowing where to go,

fleeing just like fleeing antelopes.

Baghdad seemed as if it was not the best view and place of

amusement which the eye of a viewer and of a beholder

had seen.

Yes such was it, but the decree of the fates took away its

beauty and dispersed its unity.

What had befallen the people before them befell them, so

they have become conversations reported by those in deserts and cities.

O Baghdad! O house of the kings and place of obtaining

various kinds of wishes! O place of pulpits!

O garden of the world! O place of seeking riches and of

creating funds through the stores!

Explain to us, where are those as far as I knew that they

lived in the flourishing meadow of livelihood?

And where are those kings who walked in processions in

the morning and were as beautiful as the bright stars?

The whole poem is pain and anguish for the destruction which included both properties and souls in Baghdad. Another poet describes the condition of Baghdad and the destruction occurred wherein, saying:

Who envied you, O Baghdad? Were you not the delight of

the eye for a time?

Were not there in you people whose neighborhoods and

houses were one of the ornaments?

The time shouted to them through separation and they

perished. What a kind of pain of separation have you found through them?28

Another poet mourned for Baghdad and the tragedies which befell its inhabitants, saying:

My eye wept for Baghdad when it lost the freshness of the

elegant life.

Worries have taken the place of our delight and distress

replaced our plenty.

The eye of an envier befell us and annihilated our

people with the catapult.

So some people were forcibly burnt by fire, and a female

weeper wailed over a drowned one.

A female crier calling out: O my friends! A female sayer

saying: O my brother!

A woman with intensely white and deep black eyes,

coquetry, limbs perfumed with musk called out to the

compassionate one but there was none compassionate, for

the compassionate one was lost along with the gentle one.

And people took their goods out of the shadow of a

world, but it was sold at every market.

And an emigrant with a distant house placed without a head in the middle of the road.

He was among their dead, so they did not know to which

party he belonged.

There was no son to stay with his father, and the friend

escaped from the friend.29

This poem shows that Baghdad led a life of chaos, for murder spread; there was no security; and fear dominated it.

Al-Amin is murdered

Al-Ma'mu'n's Army besieged al-Amin; yet he was absorbed in amusement and glee. The historians narrated: "Al-Amin was fishing along with a group of his servants. He was in love with one of them called Kawther. Kawther went out in order to look at the army which surrounded the palace, and he was wounded in the face. Al-Amin came to him, washed the blood off his face, and said:

They have struck the delight of my eye, and because of

me they have struck him! May Allah punish the people

who have burnt him!30

News about his defeated army and his besieged palace successively came to him; still he paid not attention to all of that and went on, along with Kawther, catching fish and putting them into a large basin,

and said: "Kawther has caught three fish, and I have caught nothing except two fish."

In spite of that critical situation, he went on amusing himself. Any how, the vanguards of al-Ma'mu'n's Army attacked him, beheaded him, and sent his head to Ta'hir b. al-Husayn, who installed it on a spear, and recited these words of Him, the Exalted: *O Allah, Master of the Kingdom, You give the kingdom to whomever You please and take away the kingdom from whomever you please*.31

A poet satirized him, saying:

If a king occupies himself with amusement, then decide

against his kingdom through woe and destruction.

Do you not see that the sun descends in the Balance

when it leaves early in the morning; and it is the

sign of amusement and glee.

Ta'hir sent al-Amin's head to al-Ma'mu'n in Khurasa'n. When al-Ma'mu'n saw the head, he became sad and felt sorry for him; however, al-Fadl said to him: "Praise belongs to Allah for this great favor, for Muhammad (i.e. al-Amin) wished to see you in this state in which you have seen him."

Then al-Ma'mu'n ordered the head of his brother to be installed on a piece of wood in the door yard. Then he gave salaries to the soldiers and ordered them to curse the head. Each soldier took his salary and cursed it. A non-Arab soldier took his salary, and it was said to him: "Curse this head." "May Allah curse him and his parents," he retorted. It was said to him: "You have cursed the Commander of the faithful (i.e. al-Ma'mu'n)." Al-Ma'mu'n heard him, but he overlooked him. Then he ordered the head of his brother to be brought down and to be returned to Iraq, so it was buried along with the body.32

With this tragedy al-Amin's life ended, and it gives an account of that al-Ma'mu'n was cruel toward his brother and had no mercy on him, and that he was merciless because he craved for the kingdom.

As for al-Amin, he did not face Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him. Perhaps, the reason for that is that he was busy warring against his brother al-Ma'mu'n.

The Government of al-Ma'mu'n

Before we speak about the affairs of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, during the time of al-Ma'mu'n, it is necessary to give a brief account of al-Ma'mu'n as follows:

His Mother

As for al-Ma'mu'n's mother, she was a female slave; she was one of the servants in al-Rashid's palace;

al-Rashid had entrusted her with cooking food. The historians said that she was the ugliest and dirtiest female slave in al-Rashid's kitchen. Some sources said: "Mrs. Zubayda played chess with Ha'ru'n al-Rashid and beat him, so she asked him to have a sexual intercourse with the ugliest slave-wife in the kitchen, who was Mara'jil. Ha'ru'n al-Rashid refused that and gave her the land tax of Egypt and Iraq in order to exempt him from that, but she refused and did not accept it. Then he yielded to her decision and had a sexual intercourse with Mara'jil, and she born him al-Ma'mu'n.33"

Al-Ma'mu'n was born in the year 170 A. H. when al-Rashid became a caliph. When al-Rashid was given good news of him, he named him al-Ma'mu'n as a sign of good omen. 34 Al-Ma'mu'n's mother died during her confinement, so al-Fadl b. SAhl took care of bringing him up.

Those who harbored malice against al-Ma'mu'n used his mother and his incapability of undertaking the caliphate as means to satirize and slander him. His brother al-Amin said to him:

If men vie with each other for their excellence, then you

stop, for you cannot vie (with them).

Your Lord has given to you what you desired, but you

meet that which is contrary to your caprice with Mara'jil.

You ascend the pulpits every day hoping for that which

you cannot attain after me.35

During the days of the discord he reviled him because of his mother and wrote to him:

O son of her who was sold by auction for the smallest

price among the people at the market.

Every place of the stitch of a needle in you has a sperm

from someone else.

So al-Ma'mu'n answered him, saying:

The mothers of men are mere containers and depositories, and the female-slaves have qualified ones.

Many an Arab woman does not beget, and non-Arab one

often begets in the female-slave's quarters.36

Praising al-Amin and dispraising al-Ma'mu'n's mother, al-Raqqa'shi says: "He was not born by a slave-

wife well-known at the market of the traders.37"

Al-Ma'mu'n had no defect on the side of his mother, for Islam has demolished all these fanatical, pre-Islamic instincts and regarded all human races as equal; therefore none has an excellence over the others except through reverential fear.

Al-Ma'mu'n's Qualities

As for al-Ma'mu'n's psychological qualities and trends, they are as follows:

Treachery

As for treachery, it was among al-Ma'mu'n's characteristics and one of his elements. For example, he appointed Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, as his successor, but when his political ambitions terminated, he betrayed him through giving him fatal poison to drink; we will explain that in the chapters that follow. Similarly, he betrayed a group of the eminent figures of his time of whom he was cautious; who are as follows:

1. 'Abd Allah Bin Musa' al-Ha'di

He criticized al-Ma'mu'n and shouted at him when he had a drink with him. Al-Ma'mu'n was displeased with 'Abd Allah, so he imprisoned him in his house and ordered some guards to sit at his door. Then he pardoned him and ordered the guards to leave his door. 'Abd Allah was fond of hunting, so al-Ma'mu'n put poison in a francolin and gave it to a servant of his in order to give it to him to eat. That was when 'Abd Allah was at Musa' Aba'd. When he felt poison, he said to his companions: "This is the last thing which he (al-Ma'mu'n) gave me to eat.38"

2. Isha'q Bin Musa' al-Ha'di

When al-Ma'mu'n was in Khurasa'n, Isha'q headed some units of the army and occupied some areas of it, so al-Ma'mu'n secretly sent his son and one of his servants, and they killed him; then his son took the servant and whipped him to death.39

3. Hamid Bin 'Abd al-Hamid al-Tu'si

Al-Ma'mu'n invited him (Hamid) to have a meal. Ahmed b. Abu' Kha'lid al-Ahwal was with him; he was one of those who harbored malice against Hamid and among his enemies. When it was time (for them) to have the meal, al-Ma'mu'n sat Ahmed beside him. Hamid was displeased with that, and he said to al-Ma'mu'n: "O Commander of the faithful, may Allah not make me die until he make me see that the world is easy to you, that you may see which of us is more useful to you."

Ahmed seized the opportunity and said to al-Ma'mu'n: "O Commander of the faithful, he hopes that corruption and discord will dominate your kingdom."

As for al-Ma'mu'n, he became angry, left the food and did not finish it, and concealed that in his heart. When he wanted to marry Boura'n, he said to Hamid: "O Abu' Gha'nim, I have permitted you to make a pilgrimage." Hamid happily departed and ordered his baggage to be prepared. As he was fond of having sexual intercourse, Gabriel b. Bakhtishu" went in to him and said to him: "O Abu' Gha'nim, be in a hurry. I hope that you will bring with you some slave-wives while they are pregnant." Then he gave him (poison) to drink. 'Abd Allah al-Tayfu'ri was at the meeting; he had knowledge of medicine. When he saw the drink, he understood the matter and said to Gabriel: "Abu' Gha'nim has become weak because of this (drink)."

Al-Tayfu'ri meant that he understood the assassination which had been schemed against Abu' Gha'nim. Abu' Gha'nim had the drink (of poison) and it immediately acted on him. Al-Tayfu'ri began treating him and he got well a little bit, but he (al-Ma'mu'n) gave him poison to drink again and put an end to him.40

4. Al-Fadl Bin Sahl

Al-Fadl b. SAhl was the minister and adviser of al-Ma'mu'n. As al-Ma'mu'n was afraid of him, he secretly sent someone to assassinate him in the bath-house. We will explain this matter in the researches that follow.

These are some persons whom al-Ma'mu'n assassinated; therefore, he followed the example of Mu'a'wiya, who was the first king to open the door to assassination and treachery in the time of Islam.

Cruelty

Another example of al-Ma'mu'n's qualities is that he was cruel and merciless, for he ordered his brother to be killed and his head to be brought to him. If he had had a tendency of mercy, he would have pardoned his brother, who asked him for pardon and security and was ready to hand over the authority to him. Yet another example of his cruelty is that when he had assassinated Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, he treated the 'Alawides with cruelty and severity. That was when he ordered his executioners to kill and punish them severely everywhere. 41

Slyness

The Islamic diplomacy in the 'Abba'sid time did not witness any person slyer than al–Ma'mu'n or more knowledgeable than him in political affairs. He was a first–class politician, for he, through his deception, was able to overcome most terrible events which befell him and were about to fold his life and authority. Through an excellent skill he was able to put an end to his brother al–Amin, who was strongly supported by the 'Abba'sid family and the high military commanders. He was also able to suppress the great revolt of Abu' al–Sara'ya', the inspired leader. It is worth mentioning that this revolt widely spread and included most Islamic regions when the revolutionists dominated them. The motto of the revolt was 'the summons to al–Ridha' from the family of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family.' Al–Ma'mu'n forced Imam al–Ridha's peace be on him, who was the only leader of the 'Alawide family and high authority of

Islamic world to leave Medina' for Khurasa'n.

Then he forced him to accept regency and ordered all the organs of his government to announce the outstanding merits of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, and of the rest of the pure Imams. Moreover he ordered the currency to be minted in the name of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him. In this manner he made the revolutionists and the military forces who adopted the authority of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on him believe that he had 'Alawide beliefs, and that he was earnest in handing over the caliphate to the 'Alawides, to the extent that they thought that there was no need to continue the revolt and to shed blood. Meanwhile he was able to discover the Shi'ite elements whom his fathers were unable to discover. In this manner he suppressed those revolts. I (i.e. the author) think that this is one of the most marvelous, political schemes which the world has ever known throughout the stages of history.

Inclination to Amusement

Al-Ma'mu'n extremely inclined to amusement. The following are examples of his inclination to amusement:

A. His Playing Chess

Chess was the most lovable game to al-Ma'mu'n. He was fond of it, so he described it through the following poetry lines:

A square, red ground (made) from skin between two

thousand (persons) described by generosity.

They discuss war, so they occupy (places) like it

without striving therein to shed blood.

This attacks this, and that attacks this, and the eye of

war does not sleep.

So look at the horses which have surged at a battle

between two armies without a drum nor a flag.42

This poetry contains an exact description of chess. I (i.e. the author) think that al-Ma'mu'n was the first to describe it in detail, and that he took this game from his father Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, who was the most skillful person in chess. It is worth mentioning that Ha'ru'n gave chess pieces to the King of France, and that the pieces are still available in the Museums of France.43

B. His Fondness of Music

Al-Ma'mu'n was fond of singing and music. The historians said that al-Ma'mu'n extremely admired Abu' Isha'q al-Mousli, who was the greatest musician and singer in Arab world, and concerning whom he said: "When he sings, my increasing Satanic temptations go away from me.44"

Al-Ma'mu'n enlivened his nights through singing, dancing, and playing on the lute. He imitated his father Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, who did not mention the name of Allah in his palace; rather his nights were red.

C. His Drinking Wine

Al-Ma'mu'n was alcoholic; he drank wine by day and night, paying no attention to the sin which resulted from this unlawful thing.

With this quality we will end our speech about al-Ma'mu'n's qualities and tendencies.

Al-Ma'mu'n receives valuable Gifts

The chiefs and the noble sent valuable gifts to al-Ma'mu'n in order to seek nearness to him. The following are some of them:

1. Ahmed b. Yusuf: He sent him a basket made of gold and there was in it an Indian lute equal to is its length and width, and he wrote on it: "This is the day on which the slaves have habituated themselves to sending valuable gifts to their masters; and I have said:

There is a right against the slave and he, without doubt,

does it, even if the master is great and his favors are

grand.

Do you not see that we give as gift to Allah His property,

and He accepts it though He is in no need of it.

If (things) were given as gift to the great one according to

his rank, then the sea and its coast would someday fall

short of him.

However, we give as gift to him whom we magnify

though we do not have that which is similar to him.45"

2. Abu' Dalaf al-Qa'sim b. 'Isa' al-'Ijjli: He sent him on the day of a festival a hundred loads of saffron in silk bags. Wild, gray she-asses carried them. The gifts came while al-Ma'mu'n was along with his wife. He was told about the gifts, and he hurried to look at them. When he saw them, he admired them. Then he asked whether the asses were males or females. It was said to him that they were females, so he became pleased with that and said: "I know that the man is so sane that he sends (gifts) on nothing except on she-asses.46"

The King of India: He sent him a group of gifts; among them were a cup (made of) ruby and a letter in which he mentioned: "We ask you, O brother, to show favor (toward us) through accepting them and to apologize us for negligence.47"

These are some persons who sent gifts to al-Ma'mu'n in order to seek nearness to him and to crave for some jobs from him.

His affecting Shiism

Some historians and researchers believed that al-Ma'mu'n adopted the Shi'ite doctrine; they depended on the following:

Who taught him Shiism?

Before his retinues and companions, al-Ma'mu'n declared that he embraced the Shi'ite creed; this has been mentioned in the following tradition: Sufya'n b. Naza'r narrated, saying: [On day I was with al-Ma'mu'n and he asked his companions:]

"Did you know him who taught me Shiism?"

"No, by Allah, we did not know him," they all replied.

"Al-Rashid did," he retorted.

"How did that occur whilst al-Rashid killed the Ahl al-Bayt?" they asked.

"He killed them for the kingdom," he answered, "for the kingdom is barren. One year I made a pilgrimage along with him. When he arrived in Medina, he walked toward his visitors and said to them:

"If those from Mecca, Medina, the *Muha'jireen* (migrants), the *Ansa'r* (supporters), the Ha'shimites, and the rest of the tribes of Quraysh visit me, they should mention their ancestry.' The chamberlains obeyed that. When a man wanted to visit him, he introduced himself to the chamberlains. When the man visited him (al-Rashid), he gave him as a gift according to his rank and lineage; his gift ranging from two hundred to five thousand dinars."

Al-Ma'mu'n said: "While I was standing, al-Fadl b. al-Rabi' came in and said: 'O Commander of the

faithful, there is a man who claims that he is Musa' b. Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib.'

"So al-Rashid walked toward his sons and the rest of his commanders and said to them: 'Keep your own souls.' Then he said to al-Fadl: 'Give him permission to enter and do not (let him stop at any place) except at my own carpet.'"

Al-Ma'mu'n said: "Then an old man with a yellow face came; worship exhausted him; he was like an old (water) skin; prostration wounded his face and his nose. When al-Rashid saw him dismounting, he shouted: 'No, by Allah, (he will not dismount) except on my own carpet.' So the chamberlains prevented him from dismounting; and all the people looked at him with honor, admiration, and magnification. The Imam arrived at the carpet; he was surrounded by the chamberlains and the commanders. He dismounted, and al-Rashid rose for him, received him, accompanied him to the end of the carpet, kissed his face and his eyes, took him by the hand, accompanied him to the beginning of the assembly, sat with him, talked with him, asked him about his conditions, and then he asked him:

"'O Abu' al-Hasan, what about your family? Are all of them boys?' 'No, most of them are followers and retainers,' answered the Imam, 'As for my children, they are more than thirty.'" Then he mentioned the number of the males and of the females.

Then Ha'ru'n (al-Rashid) turned to him and asked him: "Why do you not marry your womenfolk to their cousins and their qualified ones?"

"The hand falls short of that," replied the Imam.

"What about your land?" asked Ha'ru'n.

"It sometimes produces and sometimes does not produce," answer the Imam.

"Are you in debt?" asked Ha'ru'n.

"Yes," replied the Imam.

"How much is it?" asked Ha'ru'n.

"Ten thousand dinars," answered the Imam.

"O cousin," retorted Ha'ru'n, "I will give you a sum of money in order to marry the males to the females, pay your debt, and reform your lands."

The Imam thanked him for that and said to him: "You have tightened the bonds of kin, O cousin, and Allah has thanked this beautiful intention; the blood relationship is contiguous; kinship is close; the ancestry is one; al-'Abba's is the uncle of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and full brother of his father, the uncle of 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib, peace be on him, and full brother of his father; may

Allah not make you far from doing that; for He has made you open-handed, made your element honorable, and made your origin high."

"I will do that with pleasure," promised Ha'ru'n.

Then the Imam advised him to show kindness to the poor in general, saying: "O Commander of the faithful, surely Allah has made it incumbent on the rulers to refresh the poor of the community, to pay (the debts) on behalf of the debtors, to settle (the debts) on behalf of the over burdened, to clothe the naked, and to treat the worried with kindness, for you are appropriate for doing that."

"I will do that, Abu' al-Hasan," promised Ha'ru'n.

Then the Imam, peace be on him, rose and Ha'ru'n al-Rashid rose for him, kissed his eyes and his face, and then he turned to his sons and said to them: "'Abd Allah, Muhammad, and Ibra'him, go before your uncle and master; take hold of the stirrup (of his mount); set right his garments on him; and accompany him to his house."

The Imam departed; on the same road, he delighted al-Ma'mu'n and gave him good news of the succession, saying to him: "If you undertake this authority, then treat my children with kindness."

The Imam went to his house escorted by Ha'ru'n's sons. Then al-Ma'mu'n returned to his house. When the sitting-place became void of the people, he turned to his father and asked him: "O Commander of the faithful, who was the man whom you honored, magnified, for whom you rose from your sitting-place and received, whom you sat in front of the sitting-place and you sat beside, and whose stirrup you ordered us to set right?"

"This is the Imam of the people, the proof of Allah over His creatures, and His vicegerent over His servants," replied Ha'ru'n.

Al-Ma'mu'n admired this statement, so he asked his father: "O Commander of the faithful, are not all these qualities yours and fulfilled in your person?"

"I am the Imam of the masses by force and through oppression," answered Ha'ru'n, "as for Musa' b. Ja'far, he is the Imam in truth. By Allah, my little son, his more worthy of being the successor of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, as the caliph than I am and anyone else among the people. By Allah, if you yourself attempt to take such caliphate from me, I shall take it away from you even if that means gouging your eyes, for power is blind!"

When Ha'ru'n al-Rashid intended to leave Medina for Baghdad, he ordered a parcel of two hundred dinars (to be prepared), and then he said to al-Fadl b. al-Rabi': "Take it and go to Musa' b. Ja'far and say to him: The Commander of the faithful say to you: 'We are in financial straits; and our gifts will come to you in the near future."

Al-Ma'mu'n stood up and said to his father: "You give five thousand dinars or less than it to the children of the *Muha'jireen* (migrants), of the *Ansa'r* (supporters), and those whose ancestry you do not know; however you give two hundred dinars to Musa' b. Ja'far, whom you honored and magnified. This is the least gift you have given to any of the people."

Ha'ru'n scold al-Ma'mu'n and said to him: "Keep silent! May you have no mother! If I gave this (i.e. Musa' b. Ja'far) what I had guaranteed, I would not be safe from him, for he will tomorrow strike my face with one hundred thousand swords from among his Shi'ites and followers; the poverty of this (man) and his household is more useful to me and you than lending a helping hand to them."

Ha'ru'n expressed his fear of the Imam, peace be on him, so he decided to wage an economic warfare against him lest he should be able to revolt against him. Makha'riq, the singer, was in the session. He felt pain, so he opposed Ha'ru'n and said to him: "O Commander of the faithful, when I enter Medina, its inhabitants ask me for something. If I leave it and do not divide anything among them, they do not realize the favor of the Commander of the faithful toward me, and my rank with him."

So Ha'ru'n order ten thousand dinars to be given to Makha'riq, but he said to him: "O Commander of the faithful, this (sum of money) is for the people of Medina. I am in debt, and I want to pay it."

So Ha'ru'n ordered ten thousand dinars to be given to him. Then he said to him: "I want to join my daughters in marriage." So he ordered ten thousand dinars to be given to him. Then he said to him: "There is no escape from giving me a land producing for me, my family, and my daughters." So he gave him a productive land whose revenues amounted ten thousand dinars a year, and he ordered it to be given to him quickly. Then Makha'riq quickly went to the house of Imam (Musa') al–Ka'zim, peace be on him. When he arrived at it, he asked for permission to visit the Imam. He was given permission, and he said to him: "I have understood why this tyrannical (i.e. Ha'ru'n al–Rashid) treated you in such a manner and what he ordered to be given to you. I tricked him for you, and I took from him three gifts amounting thirty thousand dinars, and a land producing ten thousand dinars a year. By Allah, master, I am in no need of any of that. I did not take it but for you; I bear witness that this productive land belongs to you; and I have brought you the money."

The Imam, peace be on him, thanked Makha'riq for that and said to him: "May Allah bless you concerning your property and reward you well. I will never take even a dirham of it or a thing of the land. I have accepted your gift and kindness, so depart on the right path and do not consult me concerning that.48"

This narration gives an account of the following:

1. Ha'ru'n al-Rashid honored Imam Musa' al-Ka'zim, peace be on him, whilst he had never honored anyone before him, for he (Ha'ru'n) dominated most regions of the earth and his name spread in the east and the west.

- 2. He admitted that Imam al-Ka'zim, peace be on him, was the proof of Allah over His creatures, that he was the Imam of the community, leader of its temporal and spiritual authority, and that Ha'ru'n was the leader of the community by force and through oppression, not through merit.
- 3. He gave an enormous amount of money to Makha'riq, the singer, whilst he deprived the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, of their legal rights.

Returning Fadak to the 'Alawides

Among the matters depended by those who believed that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite is returning to the 'Alawides Fadak, which the previous government confiscated in order to spread poverty and deprivation among them, and to impose an economic siege on them lest they should oppose those rulers. As a result al-Ma'mu'n returned Fadak to them and raised the economic straits from them. Accordingly, Di'bil al-Khaza'i, the poet of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, praised him for this noble deed, which he offered to the 'Alawides, saying:

The face of the time has become smiling when al-cMa'mu'n returned Fadak to the Hashimites.

Many researches have regarded this step as a proof of that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite.

His Praising Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful

Al-Ma'mu'n lauded Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, the pioneer of fairness and justice in Islam. He wrote to all regions that 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib, peace be on him, was the best of the creatures after Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. 49 Al-Sawli has reported his poetry lines concerning the excellence of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. The following are some of them:

Repentance is not accepted from a repenter but through

love for Ibn Abu' Ta'lib,

The brother of Allah's Messenger, successor of the rightly

guided one; brother is superior to bosom friend and

companion.

If they someday gather together regarding excellence,

brother surpasses the desire of the desirous.

Advance the guide (al-ha'di) in his excellence so that you

will be safe from blamer and captious criticizer.

Another example of his poetry lines through which he refuted those who criticized him for his being close to the children of the Prophet is the following:

Many a seducer bites (the tips of his fingers) in rage

against me when I bring near the children of the

testamentary trustee.

So I have said: Have you not given knowledge,

distinguished the misguided from the guided, come to

know of my argumentation through the seven oft-repeated

verses, intellectual concepts, and firm traditions?

Through which quality and meaning do you prefer

unbelievers to 'Ali?

'Ali is the greatest and best of the thaqalayn (men and

jinn) in right except the right of the Prophet.50

The following lines are another example of his poetry which he composed regarding the *Ahl al–Bayt*, peace be on them:

If the opponent turns aside (from the Shi'ite), then I stand

by the Shi'ite.

I am among the family of the Prophet of guidance, the

best Prophet from among the children of Gha'lib.

Love for them is an obligatory religious duty which we

should perform just as we perform an obligatory pilgrimage.51

This poetry clearly shows that he was a follower of the *Ahl al–Bayt*, peace be on them, and that he preferred them to others.

Al-Sawli has narrated the following poetry lines al-Ma'mu'n composed concerning Imam 'Ali, peace be

on him:

(it).52

Mother shows love for the testamentary trustee Abu' al-Hasan, and that is with me among the wonders of this time.

The successor of the best of men, and the first to help Allah's Messenger secretly and openly.

Had it not been for him, the Ha'shimites would not have seized an authority, and they would in the course of time have perished and been despised.

So he has appointed the 'Abba'sids as governors and has not singled out other than them (for authority).

So 'Abd Allah made clear guidance in Basrah, and 'Ubayd Allah bestowed lavishly on Yemen.

And he divided the works of the caliphate among them, so he is still connected to this thankfulness and hostage to

This poetry gives an account of that Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, rendered a service to the 'Abba'sid family when he appointed 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abba's as a governor over Basrah, and he was his minister and special adviser. Similarly he appointed 'Ubay Allah b. al-

over Basrah, and he was his minister and special adviser. Similarly he appointed 'Ubay Allah b. al-'Abba's as a ruler over Yemen; however the 'Abba'sid family renounced this favor and treated the children of the Imam with murder and severe punishment and committed toward them crimes which even the Umayyad family had not committed. In this book we have given many examples of their persecuting the 'Alawides. It goes without saying that the 'Abba'sids did not regard them as the children of the Prophet and his trust among his family, on the contrary they killed them everywhere.

The following two poetry lines has been ascribed to al-Ma'mu'n:

If you want the Muraji'i to die before the time of his death,

then mention before him the name of 'Ali and call down

blessing upon the Prophet and his Household.

Ibra'him b. al-Mahdi, better known as b. Shakkla, answered him, saying:

If the Shi'ite maunders regarding an statement and you

want him to reveal what is in himself, then call down

blessing upon the Prophet and his two companions, his

two helpers and his two neighbors by his grave.53

Al-Sawli has mentioned that it was written on one of the columns of the mosque of Basrah: "May Allah have mercy on 'Ali; surely he was pious(*taqiya*')."

Hafs Abu' 'Amr al-Khatta'bi, who was one-eyed, would sit beside that column. He erased the writing, and one of the neighbors of the mosque wrote to al-Ma'mu'n and told him about al-Khatta'bi's erasing the writing, so he was displeased with him and ordered him to be brought before him. When al-Khatta'bi was brought before al-Ma'mu'n, he asked him: "Why have you removed the name of the Commander of the faithful from the column?"

"What was on it?" asked al-Khatta'bi.

"'May Allah have mercy on 'Ali; surely he was pious (taqiya'),' was on it." replied al-Ma'mu'n.

"It was written on it," retorted al-Khatta'bi, "'May Allah have mercy on 'Ali; surely he was a prophet (nabiya')"

"You have told a lie," said al-Ma'mu'n, "rather the *qa'f* was sounder than your sound eye. Had it not been for that I increase your hypocrisy before the general populace (*'a'mma*), I would punish you." Then he ordered him to be driven out.54

His Disparaging Mu'a'wiya

Those who thought that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite indicated that he ordered Mu'a'wiya b. Hind to be cursed and disparaged all over Islamic world, for he ordered the caller to call: "There shall be no pardon for anyone guilty of praising Mu'a'wiya or preferring him to any companion of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family.55"

This cannot be as a proof of that al-Mu'mu'n was a Shi'ite, for Mu'a'wiya was discovered; his realty appeared; all circles have agreed on dispraising him; he was the mortal enemy of Islam; he was the leader of the events and committed grave sins.

His Proving the Imamate of Imam 'Ali

The most important thing which those who believed that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite gave as a proof of that he was a Shi'ite is that he held scientific sessions and gave firm proofs of that 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, was an Imam, that he was the first Muslim leader after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, that he was more entitled to his rank and worthier of his office than the rest of the people.

Among the most marvelous and important sessions which al-Ma'mu'n held in his palace is that which attended by the forty traditionalists and theologians, whom Yahya' b. Akkthem had chosen from among the scholars of Baghdad, who spared no effort to prove that the caliphs were better than Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. However, al-Ma'mu'n refuted their proofs through his decisive indications, which showed his skill and abundant knowledge of theological researches. We will mention the full text of this marvelous debate because it is of great importance; it is as follows:

Al-Ma'mu'n

When the scholars appeared before al-Ma'mu'n, he turned to them, greeted them, and said to them: "On this day of mine I want to place an argument between Allah and me, so he who suffers from retention of urine or wants to relieve his nature, then let him go and relieve his nature; be delighted; take off your sandals and your cloaks."

They carried out al-Ma'mu'n's order, then he turned to them and said: "O People, I have summoned you in order to advance you as an argument before Allah, the Exalted, so fear Allah; consider your own souls and your Imam (leader); let not my majesty and my place prevent you from saying the truth wherever it be and returning falsehood to him who brings it; fear for your own souls from the Fire; seek nearness to Allah, the Most High, through His good pleasure and preferring obedience to Him, for everyone who seeks nearness to a creature through an act of disobedience to the Creator, Allah empowers him over him; therefore debate with me with your all intellects.

"I claim that 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib is the best of all creatures after Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. If I am right, then regard me statement as right; if I am wrong, then answer me quickly. If you want me to question you, I will question you; if you want to question me, then question me."

In this speech there is no crookedness or deviation from logic, for its owner seeks plain truth.

The Traditionalists

"Rather, it is we who will question you," retorted the traditionalists.

Al-Ma'mu'n undertook the matter and guided them to the way to debates, saying: "Give (me your

proofs) and entrust one of you with your speech. When he speaks and one of you has an addition, then let him add it to his speech; if he brings a shortcoming, then show him rightness."

The First Proof

A traditionalist mentioned a proof of that Abu' Bakr was the best of the community after Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "We claim that Abu' Bakr is the best of the people after Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, for a tradition, upon which there is unanimous agreement, has been transmitted from Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who said: 'Follow those who will come after me: Abu' Bakr and 'Umar.' As the Prophet of mercy ordered (us) to follow them, we have come to know that he ordered us to follow none except the best of men."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He objectively discussed the traditions fabricated against the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "The traditions are numerous; there is no escape from that either they are all right or they are all false or some of them are right or some of them are false; if they are all right, then they are all false, for they contradict each other; if they are all false, then the religion is false and (Islamic) law is dead. As these two possibilities are untrue, the third (possibility) is true, namely some traditions are right and some are false. If (the matter) is such, then there is no escape form (giving) a proof of which of them is right, that we may believe in it and reject the opposite of; therefore, if the evidence for a tradition is right in itself, then it is necessary for one to belive in it and to put it into effect.

"As for this tradition of yours, it is one of the traditions whose proofs are false in themselves, for Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, is the wisest of the wise, the most entitled of the creatures to truthfulness, and the farthest of men from ordering the impossible and making the people embrace the opposite, for this means that these two men (i.e. Abu' Bakr and 'Umar) are harmonious with each other in all sides, (namely) they are one in number, quality, form, and body; it is impossible that two (persons) are equal in meaning in all sides.

"If they are different, then how is it permissible to follow them? This is an order (to perform) that which is unbearable, for if you follow one (of them), you will oppose the other; the evidence for that they are different is that Abu' Bakr had ordered the apostates to be taken as prisoners, while 'Umar regarded them as free; 'Umar ordered Kha'lid to be removed (from the office) because he had killed Ma'lik b. Nuwayra, whereas Abu' Bakr prevented him from doing that; 'Umar prohibited the two *Muta'as*, while Abu' Bakr had adopted them; 'Umar established the Divan of Gifts, whereas Abu' Bakr had not adopted it; Abu' Bakr had appointed ('Umar) as successor (after him), whilst 'Umar did not do that; there are numerous examples of this (matter)."

Al-Ma'mu'n's answer is very trustworthy, for he refuted the tradition and established that it was one of

the fabricated traditions.

The Second Proof

Through a tradition attributed to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, another traditionalist indicated that the two Shaykhs (i.e. Abu' Bakr and 'Umar) were better than Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, saying: "Surely, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If I had to take a bosom friend, I would have taken Abu' Bakr as a bosom friend."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

Al-Ma'mu'n disproved this tradition, saying: "This is impossible, for your traditions show that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, asked his companions to associate as brothers with each other, and that he delayed 'Ali, peace be on him. When he ('Ali) asked him about that, he replied: 'I have delayed you (for nothing) except for my own soul.' Therefore, if one tradition is established, the other is null and void."

Al-Ma'mu'n's discussion about the tradition is objective; there is no partiality therein; rather it was based on a decisive proof.

The Third Proof

Another traditionalist said: "Surely 'Ali, peace be on him, said on the pulpit: 'The best of this community after the Prophet are Abu' Bakr and 'Umar."

Al-Ma'mu'n discussed this tradition, saying: "This is impossible, for if the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, had come to know that they were the best (of the community), he had not appointed 'Amru' b. al-'Ass as a commander over them one time and Usa'ma b. Zayd another time; among the things which refute this tradition is the statement of 'Ali when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, passed way: 'I am more worthy for being near to the Prophet (than they are), but I feared that the people would become apostates'; these words of him, peace be on him: 'How are they better than me? I have worshipped Allah before and after them.'" In this manner al-Ma'mu'n disproved the tradition and showed that it was fabricated.

The Fourth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "Surely Abu' Bakr closed his door and said: 'Is there anyone to accept my resignation and I will render my resignation to him?' So he ('Ali), peace be on him, said to him: 'Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, has advanced you, then who can delay you?"

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer to the Tradition

He disproved the tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is untrue, for 'Ali, peace be on him, did not pledge allegiance to Abu' Bakr; you have narrated that he did make homage until Fa'tima, peace be on her, died, and that she asked ('Ali) to bury her at night lest they (Abu' Bakr and 'Umar) should witness her coffin.

"Another proof is that if the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, appointed him (Abu' Bakr) as a caliph, then why did he resign and say to the Ansa'r: 'I have chosen for you these two men: Abu' 'Ubayda and 'Umar'?"

The Fifth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "'Amru' b. al-'Ass asked: 'O Prophet of Allah, which woman is the most lovable to you?' "Ai'sha,' he replied. 'Amru' asked again: 'Which man is the most lovable to you?' 'Her father (i.e. Abu' Bakr),' he answered."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He refuted this tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is false, for you have narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, placed before him a grilled bird and said: 'O Allah, bring me the most lovable creature to you,' and it was 'Ali (who came to him). Then which of your traditions do you accept?"

The Muslims have unanimously agreed that 'Ali was the most lovable of the creatures to Allah and the nearest of them to Him.

The Sixth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "Ali said: 'If one prefers me to Abu' Bakr and 'Umar, I will administer the punishment of the liar to him."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He answered this tradition ascribed to Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, saying: "How is it permissible for 'Ali to administer such a punishment to him against whom there is no punishment? Therefore, he broke the punishments prescribed by Allah and opposed His orders. He who prefers 'Ali to Abu' Bakr and 'Umar is not a liar, for you have narrated on the authority of your Imam (Abu' Bakr), who said: 'I have become a caliph over you but I am not the best of you.' So which of the two men is more truthful in your viewpoint. Abu' Bakr against himself or 'Ali against Abu' Bakr, though the tradition contradicts itself? There is no escape from that he is either truthful or a liar. If he is truthful, then how did he come to know that? Through a revelation (whereas) the revelation has ceased? Or

through conjecture (while) the conjecturer is perplexed? Or through thinking (whereas) thinking (*nazar*) is a research? And if he was untruthful, then it is impossible for a liar to undertake the authority and precepts of the Muslims and to administer the prescribed punishments to them."

The Seventh Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'Abu' Bakr and 'Umar will be the masters of the old men of the Garden."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He said: "This tradition is impossible, for there will be no old men in the Garden; it is narrated that Ashhamiya visited the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and he said to her: 'No old woman will enter the Garden.' She wept, so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said to her: [Allah, the Most High says:] 'Surely We have made them to grow into a (new) growth. Then We have made them virgins, loving, equals in age.56' If you claim that Abu' Bakr will be a young man when he enters the Garden, then you have narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said concerning al-Hasan and al-Husayn: 'Surely they are the masters of the youths of the haven from among the first and the last; their father is better than them.'"

Al-Ma'mu'n's answer to the tradition is logical and not based on doctrinal caprices and trends.

The Eighth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet said: 'If I had not been appointed (as a prophet) among you, then 'Umar would have been appointed."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

Disproving this tradition, al–Ma'mu'n said: "This (tradition) is impossible, for Allah, the Exalted, says (to the Prophet): *Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh and the prophets after him.* 57 And He, the Most High, said: *And when We made a covenant with the prophets and with you, and with Nuh and Ibrahim and Musa and Isa, son of Maryam.* 58 Therefore, is it permissible for Allah to appoint as a prophet him with whom He had not made a covenant and to delay him with whom He had made a covenant for Prophethood?"

Al-Ma'mu'n's answer to the tradition is based on intellect and logic, and nothing therein deviates from them.

The Ninth Proof

Another traditionalist advanced an argument, saying: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family,

looked at 'Umar on the Day of 'Arafa, smiled (at him) and said: 'Surely Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, boasts of His creatures in general and of 'Umar in particular.'"

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

Disproving this tradition, al-Ma'mu'n said: "This is impossible, for Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, does not boast of 'Umar and leaves His Prophet; therefore, 'Umar is among the elite and the Prophet is among the populace.

"This tradition is not more wonderful than your tradition which says that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'I entered the Garden and suddenly I heard the beat of two sandals; (I came to know that) Bila'l, Abu' Bakr's retainer, had entered the Garden before me.' For this reason you have said: 'Abu' Bakr's retainer is better than the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, for the early is better than the late.'"

The Tenth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If the punishment came down, none would be safe from it except 'Umar b. al-Khatta'b."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He said: "This tradition also opposes the Book, for Allah, the Exalted, says to His Prophet: *But Allah* was not going to chastise them while you were among them. 59 So you have regarded 'Umar as an equal to the Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family."

The Eleventh Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, bore witness that 'Umar would enter the Garden before ten of his companions."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He said: "If 'Umar was as you have said, he would not say to Hudhayfa: 'I adjure you before Allah, am I among the hypocrites?' If the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, had said to him: 'You are among the inhabitants of the Garden,' and he did not believe him and Hudhayfa confirmed him, then he believed Hudhayfa and did not believe the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and this is (something) opposes Islam; if he had believed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, then why did he ask Hudhayfa? These traditions contradict each other."

The Twelfth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'I was placed in the

scale of a balance and my community was placed in the other scale, and I outweighed it; then Abu' Bakr was put in my place, and he outweighed it; then 'Umar (was put in his place), and he outweighed it; then the balance was raised."

Al-Ma'mu'n's Answer

He confuted this tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is impossible, for either their bodies or their deeds were placed in the balance. If their bodies (were placed in the balance), then every human being knows that their bodies do not outweigh the bodies of the community; if their deeds (were placed in the balance), then they have not been (weighed) yet. Just imagine how much more is that which has not been (weighed) yet?"

Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to the traditionalists and asked them: "Tell me: Through which thing do the people claim that they are superior to each other?"

"They claim that they are superior to one another through good deeds," replied a traditionalist.

Commenting on this statement, al-Ma'mu'n said: "Tell me about him who was more excellent than his companion during the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family: did the less excellent (*mafdu'l*) do after the death of the Messenger more than the most excellent (*al-fa'dil*) did in the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? Would he be equal to him? If you say 'yes', then I will make you find in this time of ours him who is the best of them in jiha'd, hajj, fasting, prayer, and alms."

"You are right," they all replied, "the most excellent (*fa'dil*) in our time is not equal to the most excellent in the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family."

So al-Ma'mu'n said to them: "Carefully consider what your Imams, from whom you have taken your doctrines, have narrated concerning the outstanding merits of 'Ali, peace be on him, and compare them with what it has been mentioned concerning the ten (persons) for whom they have borne witness that they will enter the Garden. If they ('Ali's outstanding merits) were part of numerous parts, then you are right; if they (your Imams) have narrated concerning 'Ali's excellences more (than they have narrated concerning the excellences of the ten persons), then take what your Imams have narrated and do not exceed (it)."

The traditionalists were perplexed, not knowing what to answer, for al-Ma'mu'n had closed before them all avenues of argument. Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to them and asked: "Why have you kept silent?"

"We have fully searched out (the matter)," they replied. That is because they had nothing to advance as an argument.

"I am going to question you," said al-Ma'mu'n, "tell me: which work was the best when Allah appointed His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family?"

"Priority in belief in Islam," they all answered, "for Allah, the Exalted, says: *And the foremost are the foremost, these are they who are drawn nigh* (*to Allah*).60"

"So did you know that there was anyone earlier than 'Ali (in belief) in Islam?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"He (Ali) was earlier but he was still young; there was no religious, obligatory duty on him. As for Abu' Bakr, he became a Muslim when he was an old man, and there was a religious, obligatory duty on him, so there is a difference between these two states," they answered.

Al-Ma'mu'n answered, saying: "Tell me about the Islam of 'Ali: Was it through an inspiration by Allah, the Exalted, or through the summons of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? If you say that it was through an inspiration, then you have preferred him to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for the Prophet had not been inspired; rather Gabriel came to him from Allah; he summoned him to Him and informed him of Him.

"If you say (that 'Ali became Muslim) through the summons of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, then did he summoned him (to Islam) of his own accord or through the order of Allah, the Most High? If you say (that he summoned him to it) of his own accord, then this opposes the words through which Allah has described His Prophet, saying: *Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it; nor am I of those who affect* 61, and through these words of Him, the Exalted: *Nor does he speak out of desire. It is not naught but revelation that is revealed*.62 If he (summoned him) on behalf of Allah, then Allah had ordered His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to summon 'Ali (to Islam) from among the boys of the people and preferred him to them. Therefore, he (the Prophet) summoned him ('Ali to Islam) because he was trustworthy and Allah, the Exalted, supported him.

"Yet there is another quality. Tell me: Is it permissible for the Wise (Allah) to impose upon His creatures unbearable religious duties? If you say 'yes', then you are unbelievers; if you say 'no', then how is it permissible for Him to order His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to summon him who does not accept what he is ordered (to perform) because of his boyhood, minority, and his being weak to accept (Islam).

"Still there is another reason. Did you know that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, summoned any boy from among the boys of his family or other than them, and he was equal to 'Ali? So, if you claim that he had not summoned any other than him, then this is an excellence for 'Ali over the boys of the people."

Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to the traditionalists and asked them: "Which work is after the precedence to faith?"

"Jihad in the path of Allah," they all answered.

As a result al-Ma'mu'n continued establishing argument against them concerning that Imam 'Ali was the

most excellent one, saying: Do you think that any of the ten (persons) had any act during jihad as 'Ali had throughout the attitudes of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? (For example, at the Battle of) Badr more than sixty polytheists were killed; 'Ali killed more than twenty, and the rest of the people killed forty."

"Abu' Bakr was directing it (the battle) along with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, in his canopy," a traditionalist replied.

"You have brought a wonder through this," retorted al-Ma'mu'n, "was he (Abu' Bakr) directing it with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or without him? Did he make him as a partner? Was the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, in need of Abu' Bakr's opinion? Which of these three (viewpoints) is the most lovable to you?"

"I seek refuge in Allah," replied the traditionalist, "I do not claim that he (Abu' Bakr) directed it without the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or he (the Prophet) made him as a partner or the Prophet was in need of him."

"Then what is the excellence (of his being) in the canopy?" asked al–Ma'mu'n, "if the excellence of Abu' Bakr came through absenting himself from the battle, then all those who absented themselves (from it) must be more excellent than the muja'hideen, while Allah, the Great and Almighty, says: *The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury, and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons are not equal; Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a (high) degree, and to each (class) Allah has promised good; and Allah shall grant to the strivers above the holders back a mighty reward.63"*

Then al-Ma'mu'n addressed Isha'q b. Hamma'd b. Zayd, a leading traditionalist, saying: "Recite the Sura *Hal Ata'*."

Isha'q recited the Sura. When he reached these words of Him, the Exalted: *And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive....*, al-Ma'mu'n asked him: "Concerning whom these verses have been revealed?"

"Concerning 'Ali," answered the traditionalist.

"Have you heard that 'Ali, peace be on him, had said: 'We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks,' when he had given food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive?"

"No," replied the traditionalist, "surely Allah, the Most High, had known 'Ali's inner self and intention, so He has manifested that in His Book, that His creatures may recognize his ('Ali's) affairs."

"Did you come to know that Allah has described the Garden with a thing other than the (transparent)

glasses made of siliver (qawa'rir) as it is in this verse?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"No," came the answer.

"Therefore, this is another excellence," retorted al-Ma'mu'n, "What did Allah mean by the (*transparent*) *glass made of siliver* (*qawa'rir*)?"

"I do not know," was the answer.

"He meant that they were *made of silver* because of their clearness," commented al-Ma'mu'n, "what in them is seen just as what outside them is seen; this is like these words of him (the Prophet), may Allah bless him and his family: 'O Isha'q, your longing for the (transparent) glasses made of siliver (*qawa'rir*)' (must be) gentle, by this he meant the women who were as transparent as glasses made of siliver; (this is) like these words of him, may Allah bless him and his family: 'I rode the horse of Abu' Tallha and found it a sea,' namely, it was like a sea because of its abundant running; and like these words of Him, the Exalted: *And death will come to him from every quarter, but he shall not die; and there shall be vehement chastisement before him* 64, which mean that as if death came to him (from every quarter); and if it came to him from one quarter, he would die."

"O Isha'q, are you not among those who bear witness that the ten (persons) are in the Garden?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"If one says: 'I do not know whether this tradition is right or wrong,' do you regard him as an unbeliever?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"No," was the answer.

"If one says: 'I do not know whether this sura (belongs) to the Qur'an or not,' do you regard him as an unbeliever?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"O Isha'q," said al-Ma'mu'n, "tell me about the tradition of the grilled bird: Is it authentic in your view?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"By Allah, your obstinacy has appeared," retorted al–Ma'mu'n, "either this (i.e. 'Ali) is as the Prophet summoned him or he is rejected, or Allah had known the most excellent (*al–fa'dil*) of His creatures, but the less excellent (*al–mafdu'l*) was more lovable to Him, or you claim that Allah does not distinguish the most excellent (*al–fa'dil*) from the less excellent (*al–mafdu'l*); therefore, which of these three (views) is the most lovable to you?"

Isha'q became perplexed, did not find any answer, and remained thinking until he found a way to defend his viewpoint, saying: "O Commander of the faithful, surely Allah, the Exalted, says concerning Abu' Bakr: "He is the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Grieve not, surely Allah is with us.65 So Allah ascribed him to the companionship of His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family."

"Glory belongs to Allah!" exclaimed al-Ma'mu'n, "how little your knowledge of the language and the Book is! The unbeliever may be the companion of the believer. Therefore, which excellence is in this (companionship)? Have you not heard these words of Him, the Most High: *His companion said to him while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then He made you a perfect man?* 66 He made him a companion for him; and al-Hazali composed poetry, saying:

I left early in the morning and my wild companion

(which) was under the cloak was aware of the east.

"And al-Azdi has said:

I summoned the wild animal regarding it and my

companion has pure legs and body.

"Therefore, he regarded his own horse as his companion. As for these words of Him: *surely Allah is with us*, Allah is with the pious and the sinful. Have you not heard these words of Him, the Most High: *Nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them; nor (between) five but He is the sixth of them; nor less than that nor more but He is with them <i>wherever they are.* 67 As regarding these words of Him: *Grieve not*, tell me about the grief of Abu' Bakr: Was it obedience or disobedience? If you claim that it was obedience, then you have regarded the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, as one who prohibits obedience, and this opposes the attribute of the Wise (Allah); and if you claim that it was disobedience, then the disobedient have no excellence. Tell me about these words of Him, the Exalted: *Allah send down His tranquillity upon him.* Upon whom (did He send tranquillity)?"

"He sent down tranquillity upon Abu' Bakr," replied Isha'q, "for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was free from the quality of tranquillity."

Then al-Ma'mu'n demanded: "Tell me about these words of Him, the Exalted: *Certainly Allah helped you in many battlefields and on the Battle of Hunayn, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating. Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Apostle and upon the believers.68 Do you know the believers whom Allah has meant in this verse?"*

"No," was the answer.

Then al-Ma'mu'n explained the meaning of this sacred verse, saying: "Surely the people turned their backs in flight at the Battle of Hunayn, so none stayed with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, except seven Ha'shimites: 'Ali, peace be on him, was striking (the polytheists) with his sword; al-'Abba's took hold of the bridle of the mule of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and five persons were surrounding the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, lest he should be wounded by the weapon of the unbelievers until Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, granted His Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, a victory. The believers whom Allah meant in this verse were 'Ali and the Ha'shimites who were present. So who was more excellent he who was with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and the tranquillity was sent down upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and upon him or he who was in the cave with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and was not entitled to sending it upon him? O Isha'q, who is more excellent he who was in the cave with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or he who slept on his bed and protected him with his own soul until the determined emigration went well with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family?

"Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, ordered His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to order 'Ali to sleep on his bed and to protect him with his own soul. So he ordered 'Ali to do that, and he said: 'Will you be safe, O Allah's Prophet?' 'Yes,' he said. 'I listen and obey,' he retorted. Then he ('Ali) wore the Prophet's garment, and slept on his bed. As for the polytheists, they surrounded him; they were sure that it was the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, who was on bed. They had unanimously agreed that each man from each Qurayshi tribe should strike him one time, lest the Ha'shimites should demand his blood. As for 'Ali, peace be on him, he heard of the order of the people which would destroy his own soul, but he was not as impatient as Abu' Bakr was in the cave while he was with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. 'Ali was still alone with patience and fore—thought, so Allah sent His angels to protect him from the polytheists of Quraysh. When he entered upon morning, he got up. The people looked at him and asked: 'Where is Muhammad?' 'I do not know,' he answered. 'Then you have deceived us,' they retorted. Then he followed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

Therefore, 'Ali was still the most excellent due to his (brave) attitudes; he increased himself nothing except good until Allah, the Exalted, took him to Himself while he was praiseworthy and forgiven."

"O Isha'q, do you not narrate the tradition of authority (hadith al-wila'ya)?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"Narrate it," ordered al-Ma'mu'n.

He narrated it to al-Ma'mu'n, and he asked him: "Do you not see that it (the tradition) has made obligatory his right against Abu' Bakr and 'Umar whereas it has not made obligatory their rights against him?"

"The people say that the Prophet said this tradition concerning Zayd b. Ha'ritha," answered Isha'q.

Denying this answer, al-Ma'mu'n asked: "Where did the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, say it?"

"He said it at Ghadir Khum," replied Isha'q, "after he had finished the Farewell Pilgrimage."

Al-Ma'mu'n hastened to disprove that, asking: "When was Zayd b. Ha'ritha killed? Was he not killed before Ghadir Khum?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Tell me: If you came to know that your own son became fifteen years of age and said: 'My master is the master of my cousin, O people accept (him),' would you hate that?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes," came the answer.

Denying these words of Isha'q, al-Ma'mu'n asked: "Do you deem your son far above what you do not deem the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, far above?"

Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to him in order to establish an argument against him, saying: "Do you narrate the statement of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to 'Ali: 'Your position with me is as Ha'ru'n had with Musa'.'?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Did you not know that Ha'ru'n was the brother of Musa' on side of his father and mother?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes." came the answer.

"So did 'Ali have such a position?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"No," was the answer.

"Ha'ru'n was a prophet," retorted al–Ma'mu'n, "but 'Ali was not a prophet, so the third position is nothing except the succession (*khila'fa*). The hypocrites said: 'He (the Prophet) was displeased with him ('Ali); he appointed him as a successor in order to soothe him.' This is just as Allah has given an account of Musa' when he said to Ha'ru'n: *Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief–makers*.69"

Commenting on these words of al-Ma'mu'n, Isha'q said: "Surely Musa' appointed Ha'ru'n as successor among his people while he was alive, and then he went to the appointed place and time of his Lord; surely the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, appointed 'Ali when he went out to make

campaigns (ghazawa't)."

Al-Ma'mu'n answered him, saying: "Tell me about Musa': Was there with him any of his companions when he appointed Ha'ru'n as successor and went to the appointed place and time of his Lord, the Great and Almighty?"

"Yes," answered Isha'q.

"Did he not appoint him as a successor over them all?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"So such was 'Ali," explained al-Ma'mu'n, "when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, went out to make campaigns, he appointed him as a successor over the weak, the women, and the boys, for most of his people were along with him; he appointed him as a successor over them all; the proof of that he appointed him as a successor over them all during his lifetime, his absence, and after his death is this statement of him, may Allah bless him and his family: 'Ali's position with me is as Ha'ru'n had with Musa', except that there will be no prophet after me.' According to this statement, he was also the helper of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for Musa' supplicated Allah, the Exalted, and said in his supplication: *And give to me an aider from my family, Ha'ru'n, my brother. Strengthen my back by him, and associate him (with me) in my affair*.70 Therefore, if 'Ali had a position with the Prophet as Ha'ru'n had with Musa', then he was his aider just as Ha'ru'n was the aider of Musa' and was his successor just as Ha'ru'n was the successor of Musa'."

Al-Ma'mu'n debates with Theologians

After al-Ma'mu'n had debated with the traditionalists and overcome them through discussing the traditions which they produced as evidence in support of their beliefs, he turned to the theologians and asked them:

"Shall I question you or you question me?"

"Rather we shall question you," they replied.

A theologian turned to al-Ma'mu'n and asked him: "Wasn't the Imamate of 'Ali, peace be on him, (decided) by Allah, the Great and Almighty? Was it reported from Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, by him who reported the religious duties such as the four-*rak'a* noon prayer, one dirham per five dirhams, and the hajj to Mecca?"

"Yes," replied al-Ma'mu'n.

"Why have the people not differed over all religious duties and differed over the Imamate of 'Ali only?"

"Because they do not compete and desire for the religious duties as they do for the succession (*khila'fa*)," answered al–Ma'mu'n.

Another theologian asked: "Have you not denied that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, ordered the people to elect a man from among them in order to take his place as a sign of mercy and gentleness toward them, without that he himself did not appoint anyone as a successor lest his successor should be disobeyed, so the punishment would befall them?"

Al-Ma'mu'n replied: "I have denied that, for Allah, the Exalted, is more merciful to His creatures than the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and He already sent His Prophet to them and knew that there were obedient and disobedient among them; still that did not prevent Him, the Most High, from sending him.

"Yet there is another reason: If he (the Prophet) had ordered them to elect a man from among them, then either he would have ordered them all or some of them. If he had ordered them all, who would have been the elected one? And if he had ordered some of them, then there would have been a sign for this meaning. If you say that (the sign) is the jurists, then there is no escape from specifying the jurist and his qualities."

Another theologian said: "It has been narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If the Muslims regard something as good, then Allah regards it as good; and if they regard something as ugly, then Allah regards it as ugly."

Al-Ma'mu'n disproved this corrupt statement which requires correction (*taswib*) which is generally regarded as void, and which is that when Allah decrees a certain event, some people rectify Him and others accuse Him of mistake; and this is the answer of al-Ma'mu'n: "There is no escape from that this statement either concerns all the believers or some of them. If it concerns all (the believers), then this is impossible, for it is not possible for the whole (believers) to be in agreement; and if it concerns some of them, then each (sect) narrates something good concerning its leader (*sa'hib*) just as the narration of the Shi'ites concerning 'Ali and the narration of the Hashawiya concerning other than him, so when do you establish what you want regarding the Imamate?"

Another theologian asked: "So is it permissible for you to claim that the companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, were mistaken?"

Al-Ma'mu'n answered him, saying: "How do we claim that they were mistaken and were in agreement on error while they knew neither a religious duty nor a tradition (*sunna*), for you have claimed that the Imamate is not a religious duty from Allah nor a tradition from the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family? So how is the Imamate wrong while it is neither a religious duty nor a tradition in your viewpoint?"

Another theologian said to al-Ma'mu'n: "You claim that the Imamate belongs to 'Ali and not to other than

him, then produce evidence in support of what you claim."

"I do not claim that," explained al-Ma'mu'n, "but I acknowledge that; the claimer is he who claims that appointment, deposition, and choice belong to him. As for evidence, it is entrusted to his partners, for they are opponents, or it must be produced by other than them, and the others are not available, so how is evidence produced in support of this (matter)?"

Another theologian asked: "What had 'Ali, peace be on him, to do after the death of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family?"

"He had done it," replied al-Ma'mu'n. (i.e. 'Ali had done what was obligatory on him).

"Was it not obligatory on 'Ali to tell the people that he was an Imam?" asked the theologian.

Al-Ma'mu'n retorted: "Surely the Imamate does not occur through an act from him concerning himself; nor does it occur through an act from the people concerning him such as choice or preference or the like; rather it occurs through an act from Allah concerning him just as He said to Ibra'him: *Surely I will make you an Imam of men.*71 And just as He, the Most high, said to Da'wud: *O Da'wud We have made you a ruler in the land.*72 And just as He, the Great and Almighty, said to the angels: *I am going to place in the earth a vicegerent (khalifa).*73

"Therefore the Imam becomes an Imam on the part of Allah, the Exalted, and through His choosing him through good deed in beginning, nobility in ancestry, purity in childhood, and infallibility in the future. If the Imamate occurs through an act from him concerning himself, then he who performs such an act is worthy of it; if he performs an act opposite to it and resigns, then he is a vicegerent (*khalifa*) on the part of his deeds."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu'n, saying: "Why have you regarded the Imamate as obligatory for 'Ali after the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family?"

Al-Ma'mu'n answered: "Because he was faithful when a child just as the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family was; he renounced the error of his people and refrained from polytheism just as the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did, for polytheism is oppression, and the oppressive cannot be an Imam; he ('Ali) was not among those who worshipped the idols according to the unanimous resolution (of the Muslims). He who becomes a polytheist takes the place of the enemies of Allah, the Exalted, so the decision concerning him ('Ali) is the witness to him through that on which the community has unanimously agreed until another unanimous resolution like it comes, and for it is not permissible for one convicted even one time to be a ruler; if the ruler is convicted one time, then there is no difference between him and the convicted."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu'n: "Why did 'Ali, peace be on him, not war against Abu' Bakr and 'Umar just as he did against Mu'a'wiya?"

"The matter is impossible," replied al–Ma'mu'n, "for the 'why' (*lima*) is requirement, and 'did not do' is denying, and there is no cause for denying; rather the cause is for positiveness; it is obligatory to think about the authority of 'Ali, peace be on him, was it (decided) by Allah or by other than Him? If it is correct that it (was decided) by Allah, then doubt of His direction is unbelief because of these words of Him, the Most High: *But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission.74 So the deeds of a doer are a link clinging to him; therefore, if his undertaking (the authority) was from Allah, the Exalted, then his deeds from Him, and it is obligatory on the people to be content and submissive. And Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, left a warring against the polytheists on the Day of al–Hudaybiya, on the day when the polytheists prevented his animals for immolation (<i>haddyahu'*) from (going to) the House (i.e. the Ka'ba). However, when he found helpers and became strong, he warred (against them) just as Allah, the Most High, has said concerning the first (attitude): *So turn away with kindly forgiveness*.75 Then He, the Great and Almighty, said: *Then slay the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush*.76"

Another theologian asked him, saying: "If you claim that the Imamate of 'Ali, peace be on him, (was decided) by Allah, the Exalted, and obedience to him was obligatory, then why it was not permissible for the prophets, peace be on them, to leave delivering (their messages) and summoning (men to their Lord), while it was permissible for 'Ali to leave what he was ordered to do such as summoning the people to obey him?"

Al-Ma'mu'n answered: "We do not claim that 'Ali, peace be on him, was ordered to deliver (a message) in order to be a messenger, but he was placed as an Emblem between Allah and His creatures, so he who followed him was obedient, and he who opposed him was disobedient. If he ('Ali) had found helpers through whom he would be strong, he would have waged jihad (against those who deprived him of authority); if he had not found helpers, then the people would have been blamed, not him, for they had been ordered to obey him in all circumstances; he had not been ordered to wage jihad against them except through a force; he was of the same rank with the House (i.e. the Ka'ba), to which it is obligatory on men to make a pilgrimage; if they make a pilgrimage (to it), then they will fulfill what is against them; and if they do not do, they will be blamed, not the House."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu'n: "If it is obligatory that there is no escape from that there should be an Imam to whom obedience is due through compulsion, then how is it obligatory through compulsion that he was 'Ali apart from other than him?"

He disproved this vague error, saying: "Surely Allah, the Most High, does not impose (something) unknown; the imposed (i.e. the Imamate and other religious duties) is not impossible, while the unknown is impossible, for Allah, the Exalted does not impose (something) unknown, and the imposed is not impossible; therefore, there is no escape from that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family,

had to demonstrate divine command in order to put an end to the excuse between Allah and His servants. For example, if Allah, the Most High, imposed on the people fasting a month and they did not know which month it was, and the month was not marked with a mark, and it was obligatory on them to find that out through their intellects in order to find what Allah, the Exalted, had willed, then they would be in no need of the Messenger who would explain (it) to them, and of the Imam who would convey to them the tradition of the Messenger."

Another theologian questioned al-Ma'mu'n, saying: "Where did you make it obligatory that 'Ali was adult when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, summoned him (to faith)? The people claim that he was a boy when he was summoned to (faith), that it was not permissible for him to perform (the religious) precepts, and that he was not an adult."

He replied: "Surely it cannot be thought that in that time he was among those for whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, sent in order to summon (them to faith). If he was so, then it would possible that he was responsible and strong enough to perform the religious duties."

The Traditionalists and the Theologians keeps silent

The traditionalists and the theologians kept silent, for al-Ma'mu'n confuted them, established argument against them, and produced evidence in support of the Imamate of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, and then he asked them the following questions:

"Has the community not narrated unanimously that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'He who fabricates lies against me, then let him occupy his place in the Fire.'?"

"Yes, O Commander of the faithful," they replied.

Then al-Ma'mu'n presented another Prophetic tradition before them, saying: "Any they have narrated on his authority that he said: 'He who disobeys Allah through an act of disobedience, whether small or great, then he adopts it as religion and follows it with insistence is immortal among the layers of the Hellfire."

The traditionalists and the theologians confirmed and admitted the tradition, so al-Ma'mu'n said to them: "Tell me about a man whom the community chooses: Is it permissible to call him the successor (*khalifa*) of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and (appointed) by Allah, the Great and Almighty, whereas the Messenger had not appointed him as a successor? If you say 'yes', then you have stubbornly contended. And if you say 'no', then it is obligatory that so-and-so is not the successor of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family."

After a talk took place between him and the traditionalists and the theologians concerning this matter, al-Ma'mu'n began preaching to them, saying: "Fear Allah; consider your own souls carefully; leave imitation; avoid vague errors. By Allah, Allah does not accept (any deed) except from a servant who

does not do (anything) except through that which he understands and does not enter (anything) except concerning that which he regards as true. Suspicion is doubt, and clinging to doubt is unbelief in Allah, the Most High, and its owner (i.e. the doubter) is in the Fire."

After this rebuke, al-Ma'mu'n turned to them and asked: "Tell me about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family: Had he appointed (anyone) as a successor before he died or not?"

"He had not appointed (anyone) as a successor," they all replied.

"Was his leaving that (i.e. the succession) guidance or error?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes, it was guidance," they answered.

So al-Ma'mu'n produced evidence in refuting their beliefs, saying: "Isn't it incumbent on the people to follow guidance, to leave falsehood and to avoid error?"

"They have done that (i.e. they have followed guidance)," they replied.

Then al-Ma'mu'n established wonderful argument and proof against their false statement, saying: "Why did the people appoint (Abu' Bakr) as a successor after him (i.e. the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family) while he left it (i.e. the succession)? So leaving his practice is error, and it is impossible that guidance is the opposite of guidance. And if leaving succession is guidance, then why did Abu' Bakr appoint (someone) as a successor, while the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did not do that? And why did 'Umar regard the authority after him as a consultative council among the Muslims in contrast with his companion (i.e. Abu' Bakr)? That is because you have claimed that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did not appoint (anyone) as a successor, whereas Abu' Bakr appointed (someone) as a successor, and 'Umar did not leave appointing (someone) as a successor just as Abu' Bakr did, and he brought a third meaning, which is the consultative council which he nominated in order to appoint the successor after him. So tell me which of that do you regard as right? If you regard the practice of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, as right, they you have regarded the practice of Abu' Bakr as wrong, and such is (my) view concerning the rest of the statements. Then tell me: Which is better according to your claim@leaving the succession which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did or the succession which a sect did?"

"Tell me: Is it permissible that leaving it (the succession) by the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, is guidance and doing it by other than him is guidance? Is there any guidance the opposite of guidance? So where was then the error?

"Tell me: Has anyone become a ruler through being chosen by the companions since the death of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, up to this day? If you say 'no', then you have made it obligatory that all the people have made error after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

"If you say 'yes', then you have accused the community of lying, and your statement has disproved the

existence which cannot be refuted. Then tell me about these words of Him, the Great and Almighty: *Say: To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?*⁷⁷ Is this true or false?"

"Yes, it is true," they replied.

"Isn't that which apart from Allah belongs to Allah if He has created and possessed it?"

"Yes," was the answer.

Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n became exited and said: "So this disproves your obligatory choosing a successor, your making obedience to him obligatory, and your calling him the successor of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. It is you who appoint him as a successor, remove him (from office) when you become angry with him and he works in contrast with your love, and you murder him when he refuses to resign."

After this speech, he spoke to the people with violence. Then he turned to the 'qibbla (the direction to Mecca), raised his hands, and said: "O Allah I have guided them! O Allah I have explained to them everything obligatory on me!

"O Allah, I believe in seeking nearness to You through preferring 'Ali, peace be on him, to the creatures after Your Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, just as Your Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, has ordered us (to do).78"

The people kept silent; they did not find any way to defend their beliefs. Most al-Ma'mu'n's indications concerning the Imamate of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, were based on logic and proof. I (i.e. the author) think that the Imamate of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, is as clear as the sun, for it has been made obligatory by his talent and geniuses, his strong clinging to Allah, his asceticism, and his renouncing the world. All these qualities made him worthier of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, than other than him. None of the companions or the relatives of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, had such creative qualities of knowledge, honesty, honor, and the like from among the noble qualities and great tendencies; and through this sense he was more entitled than the rest of the people to the office and rank of the Prophet. As for his relationship to the Prophet, it does not make him preferable to the rest of the Muslims, for it is incorrect to give relationship as proof of his right to undertake the caliphate.

Any how, al-Ma'mu'n gave all proofs of the Imamate of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, in order to seek nearness to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and to find favor with him; this has been demonstrated by Isha'q b. Hamma'd, who said: "Al-Ma'mu'n preferred Imam 'Ali, peace be on him, to all companions (of the Prophet) in order to seek nearness to Imam Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha', peace be on him, who himself would say to his trustworthy companions: 'Do not be deceived by his (al-Ma'mu'n's) statement. By Allah, none will kill me except him, but it is necessary for me to be patient until the moment of death comes.'79"

His Entrusting the Imam with Regency

Yet another proof depended by those who believed that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite is that he entrusted regency to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, that he subjected to danger the caliphate the 'Abba'sids undertook and hand it over to the 'Alawides.

These are the most important proofs given by those who say that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite and had 'Alawide thought and opinion.

His Shiism is false

Through abundant consideration and research, I (i.e. the author) have come to know that al-Ma'mu'n was not a Shi'ite; nor did he show love for the members of the House *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on them. He took the previous measures for political considerations, not for summoning the people to adopt the Shi'ite doctrines, and this can be proved through the following:

1. Al-Ma'mu'n belonged to the 'Abba'sid family, who is famous for showing detest and enmity toward the members of the House *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on them. This family begot none except tyrannical persons who wreaked their wrath upon the family and the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. They killed them, made them homeless, and punished them severely. They committed crimes toward them, to the extent that even the Umayyad family did not commit them. Rather the Umayyad family thought famous for violent enmity toward the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family did not treat them as the 'Abba'sid did; the Umayyads had excellences better than those of the 'Abba'sids. In this book we have explained that the 'Abba'sids persecuted the 'Alawides.

Any how, it is very unlikely that al-Ma'mu'n turned away from the line of his fathers, that he changed their program and behavior overnight, that he became an 'Alawide, that he showed love for the opponents of his fathers and subjected his state to danger.

2. As for his disparaging Mu'a'wiya and the rulers before him, and preferring Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, to them, it was not earnest; rather it was formal and for political purposes, for al–Taghlubi, a contemporary of al–Ma'mu'n, has narrated: "Al–Ma'mu'n said: 'And they have thought that it is not permissible to prefer 'Ali except through disparaging the predecessors; I seek sanctuary in Allah from disparaging (anyone) even al–Hajja'jj b. Yusuf, so just imagine how much more are the good predecessors?80"

He refused to disparage al-Hajja'jj b. Yusuf, the criminal terrorist, who drowned Iraq in the blood of the innocent.

The following poetry lines which confirm that have been ascribed to him:

Love for 'Ali after the Prophet has become my religion in

which I believe and because of which I shall not make an

apology tomorrow.

I shall not curse (Abu' Bakr) al-Sidiq nor 'Umar.

Then Ibn 'Affa'n, who was unjustly killed, is in the

Gardens along with the righteous.

Yet I shall curse neither al-Zubayr nor Talha when a sayer

treacherously says.

And I shall not curse 'A'isha, the mother; we shall disown

him who fabricates lies against her.81

Yet there are other examples and proofs which indicate that his Shiism was false, and that he had not any relationship with the members of the House *Ahl al–Bayt*, peace be on them.

3. He assassinated Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, after he had achieved his political aims; he was not satisfied with that, so he ordered his governor over Egypt to wash the pulpits on which he delivered speeches concerning the regency of Imam al-Ridha'82, peace be on him; this procedure shows that he had harbored malice against the Imam.

The 'Alawide family fully understood that the friendship al–Ma'mu'n showed toward them was false, formal, and unreal. The narrators said that al–Ma'mu'n wrote to 'Abd Allah, Imam al–Ridha''s brother, to grant him security and to guarantee him regency after him just as he did toward his brother Imam al–Ridha'. It has been mentioned in his letter: "I do not think that any of the family of Abu' Ta'lib will fear me after what I had done toward al–Ridha'."

So 'Abd Allah answered him in a letter and disclosed therein al-Ma'mu'n's intentions as follows:

"I have received your letter and understood it. You want to deceive me with regard to my own soul just as the hunter does, and you want to trick me with the trick of the assassin intending to shed my blood.

"I have wondered at regency and my undertaking it after you. You think that I have not been informed of what you had done toward al-Ridha'; how have you come to know that I crave after kingdom? Do you think that (I crave after) the kingdom whose bloom and sweetness have deceived you? By Allah, if I was thrown into a flaming fire while I was alive, it would be more lovable to me than undertaking an authority over the Muslims or drinking unlawful drink during intense, deadly thirst.

"Or (do you think that I crave after) the poisoned grapes through which you had killed al-Ridha'? Or do

you think that hiding has tired me, and my chess has become strait out of it? By Allah, for that reason I have become tired of life and detested the world. If my religion permitted me to put my hand in yours in order to take your purpose from me, I would do that. However, Allah has made it prohibited for me to risk my blood. Would that you were able, without sacrificing my soul for you, to kill me, and I met Allah, the Great and Almighty, (stained) with my own blood, and I met Him while killed and wronged, so I would get rid of this world.

"Know that I am one who seeks salvation for his own soul; I have done my best concerning that which makes Allah pleased with me and concerning a work through which I seek nearness to Him; I have found no opinion to guide me to any of that, so I have returned to the Qur'an in which is guidance and cure; I run over it sura by sura, and verse by verse, but I have found nothing closer to one than martyrdom in seeking His good pleasure.

"I ran over it again considering which kind of jihad was the best and for which class (of people), so I have found Him, the Great and Almighty, say: *Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness*. 83 I asked myself: 'Which kind of the unbelievers is more harmful to Islam and nearer to my place, so I have found that none is more harmful to Islam than you, for the unbelievers have shown their unbelief, and the people have understood their affair, recognized them, and are careful of them. You have deceived the Muslims through (showing) Islam and hiding unbelief; you have killed (people) through doubt and punished them through accusation; you have illegally taken the property of Allah, openly drunk unlawful wine, spent the property of Allah on the amusers, given it to the singers, and deprived the Muslims of it; therefore, you have cheated (them) through (adopting) Islam; you have encompassed Islamic regions just as the Muslims have done; you have decided for the polytheist through Islam, disobeyed Allah and His Messenger just as the stubborn opponent has done.

"As a result if the time makes me happy and Allah helps me against you through the supporters of the truth, I will sacrifice my own soul for struggling against you with a struggle which He accepts from me, but if He gave you a respite and delayed you in order to punish you through what you deserved in your return (to Him) or the days chose me before that, then sufficient unto me would be my efforts and my intention which Allah, the Great and Almighty, had known. Greetings!"

This letter displays al-Ma'mu'n's falseness, deception, and unreal friendship toward the members of the House *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on them.

As for the last paragraphs of the letter, they have added al-Ma'mu'n to the caravan of the unbelievers against whom jihad is obligatory, and whom should be toppled. They have also demonstrated that al-Ma'mu'n used a certain policy to kill the people out of doubt and punished them due to accusation, and that he was sinful, for he drank wine and spent the properties of the Muslims on amusement centers, singers, the mischievous, and the dissolute.

This letter was a thunderous outcry in the face of al-Ma'mu'n, the criminal, and it is among the brilliant

pages on resisting oppression and tyranny.

It is worth mentioning that another part of this letter or of another letter was sent to al-Ma'mu'n by this great Sayyid. It is as follows: "Let me avenge myself on you and your fathers, who regarded our blood as lawful, took our right, openly declared concerning our affair, and of whom we are cautious; you are the subtlest of them in stratagem toward us through your satisfying us and concealing the ordeals we have received (through you); you have deceived us one by one, but jihad is lovable to me just as it is lovable to everyone you have wronged. I have sharpened my own sword, installed my own spearhead, and chosen my own horse.

"I do not know which enemy is the most harmful to Islam, but I have come to know that Allah's Book contains all things; I have read it and found in it: *O you who believe, fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness.*"

Yet another paragraph of this letter is the following: "I had reflected (on you) and suddenly (found) that you were the most harmful enemy to Islam and the Muslims. For the unbelievers have turned aside from it and opposed it, so the people have become cautious of them and warred against them, but you have apparently entered it, so the people have refrained (from fighting against you), and you have begun destroying its handles one by one; therefore you are the most harmful enemy to Islam.84"

These paragraphs give an account of some sides of the 'Abba'sid policy which was based on wronging the 'Alawides and punishing them severely. Similarly, they give an account of this great Sayyid, the son of Imam Musa', peace be on him, who was eager for waging jihad against the government of al–Ma'mu'n, the mortal enemy of Islam, for he 'demolished its handles one by one,' as it has been mentioned in the letter.

4. Having assassinated Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, al-Ma'mu'n destroyed the 'Alawides. He ordered his intelligence and his security forces to pursue and uproot them, and they assassinated a group of the children of Imam Musa', peace be on him. He used poison as a weapon in order to put an end to the progeny of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. For example, he assassinated with poison the great, noble 'Alawide Ibra'him, the son of Imam Musa', peace be on him. When Ibra'him died, Ibn al-Samma'k buried him and composed, saying:

Al-Imam al-Murtada' has died of poison, and the time has

concealed his excellence and knowledge.

He unjustly died at al-Zawra" just as his forefather was

unjustly killed at Karbela".

So the yellow sun is mourning for him, and the sad moon

Surely his assassinating the 'Alawides and pursuing them, to the extent that they escaped out of fear of him and hid themselves in the countries and the cities, disproves his summons to Shiism and indicates that he had no relationship with friendship to the members of the House *Ahl al–Bayt*, peace be on them, namely, he was like his fathers, who were the mortal enemy of the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

The Reasons for his Pretending Shiism

It is necessary for us to pause in order to discuss the reasons for al-Ma'mu'n's showing friendship toward the members of the House *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on them, and for his announcing his Shiism in the official gatherings. I (i.e. the author) think that he pretended Shiism for the following reasons:

A. He was in disagreement with his 'Abba'sid family, who inclined to his brother al-Amin, whose mother was Mrs. Zubayda, who belonged to the 'Abba'sid family and spent generously on the 'Abba'sids. As for the mother of al-Ma'mu'n, she was Mara'jil, who was among the female-slaves in the palace. The 'Abba'sids disdained al-Ma'mu'n because of his mother, and he intended to abase them through his showing friendship to the 'Alawides and his designating Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, as a successor after him.

- B. Through his pretending Shiism, al-Ma'mu'n intended to please the commanders of his army, who showed tendencies and friendship to the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them.
- C. Al-Ma'mu'n intended to display sympathy with the 'Alawides and to announce the outstanding merits of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, that he might attract the feelings of the pious people whose sentiments and hearts were full of love and friendship toward the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, so he was able to use them as a weapon during his war against his brother, al-Amin.
- D. He pretended Shiism and entrusted the office to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, in order to suppress the violent, Shi'ite revolt headed by the great Sayyids from among the children of Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, peace be on him. It is worth mentioning that this revolt extended to most regions of Islamic world and was about to put an end to the 'Abba'sid government, but with unique slyness al-Ma'mu'n was able to suppress it; that was when he appointed Imam al-Ridha' as a successor after him, for the latter was the master and leader of the 'Alawides, and large part of this community believed in his Imamate.

As a result, al-Ma'mu'n was able to suppress and uproot the revolt through his artificial sympathy with the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, his designating Imam al-Ridha' as his successor, and minting the currency in his name.

D. He pretended Shiism because he wanted to discover the Shi'ites and to make the authorities know their names and places, for they were hidden groups. It is worth mentioning that the previous 'Abba'sid governments were unable to know of them, their secret activities, and their groups. Accordingly, through his kindness to the 'Alawides, his disparaging the caliphs, and his dispraising Mu'a'wiya, and the like, al-Ma'mu'n intended to discover the Shi'ites, that his security forces and his police might pursue them; this can be indicated by some official documents issued by him. These are some reasons for al-Ma'mu'n's showing love for the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them.

His Policy

During the days of his rule, al-Ma'mu'n followed the policy of Mu'a'wiya b. Hind. The historians mentioned that he was asked to follow the policy of Abu' Bakr and 'Umar, but he refused to accept it. As a result he insisted on following the policy of Mu'a'wiya, the wicked pagan, who took money and spent it according to his desires. Al-Ma'mu'n said: "There is no escape for me from (following) this (i.e. Mu'a'wiya's policy).86" Any how, he followed Mu'a'wiya's example, so he intended to kill the innocent through giving them poison to drink, and in this manner he was able to put an end to them just as Mu'a'wiya did toward his opponents when he said: "Surely Allah has soldiers (made) of honey." Cunning and deception were the most prominent of his qualities just as they were of Mu'a'wiya's.

- 1. Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha', p. 119.
- 2. Al-Tamaddun al-Isla'mi, vol. 5, p. 118.
- 3. Al-Ta'jj, pp. 40-42.
- 4. Tazyeen al-Aswa'q. Fawa't al-Wafaya't, vol. 4, p. 225.
- 5. Abu' al-Farajj al-Asfaha'ni, al-Agha'ni, vol. 5, pp. 69-70.
- 6. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 64.
- 7. Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 32.
- 8. A'ya'n al-Shi'a, 4/Q2/97.
- 9. Ibid.
- 10. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 226.
- 11. Al-Itha'f bi Hub al-Ashra'f, p. 59.
- 12. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 225.
- 13. Ibid. Biha'r al-Anwa'r.
- 14. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 161. Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 49, p. 166.
- 15. Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, pp. 55-57, quoted from al-Dimyari's Haya't al-Hayawa'n, vol. 2, p. 188.
- 16. Haya't al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 284.
- 17. Ma'a'thir al-Ana'qa fi Ma'a'lim al-Khila'fa, vol. 1, p. 285. Roudat al-A'ya'n, p. 99, it has been mentioned wherein that he (al-Amin) bought 'Arabiya, the songstress, for one hundred thousand dinars.
- 18. Al-Siyu'ti, Ta'rikh al-Khulafa", p. 134. Mukhtasar Ta'rikh al-Diwal, p. 134.
- 19. Al-Magrizi, al-Silu'k li Ma'rifat Diwal al-Mulu'k, vol. 1, p. 16.
- 20. Al-Tanbih wa al-Ishra'f, p. 302.
- 21. 'Uyu'n al-Tawa'rikh, vol. 3, p. 212.
- 22. Al-Ada'b al-Sulta'niya, p. 212.
- 23. Al-'lqa'b was one of the ships which were prepared for al-Amin.
- 24. Ibn Manzu'r, Abu' Nu'a's, pp. 103-104.
- 25. Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 309.

- 26. Al-Tabari, Ta'rikh, the Events of the Year 186 A. H.
- 27. Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 310.
- 28. Ibid., p. 316.
- 29. Ibid., p. 317.
- 30. Roudat al-A'ya'n fi Akhba'r Masha'hir al-Zama'n, photographed, available at al-Sayyid al-Hakim Library, serial no. 3902, p. 103.
- 31. 'Uyu'n al-Tawa'rikh, vol. 3, p. 211.
- 32. Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, pp. 225-226.
- 33. Al-Dimyari, Haya't al-Hayawa'n, vol. 1, p. 72.
- 34. 'Asr al-Ma'mu'n, vol. 1, p. 210.
- 35. Al-Dimyari, Haya't al-Hayawa'n, vol. 1, p. 72.
- 36. 'Asr al-Ma'mu'n, vol. 1, p. 210.
- 37. Al-Ada'b al-Sulta'niya, p. 212.
- 38. Asma" al-Mughta'lin, p. 200.
- 39. Ibid., p. 199.
- 40. Ibid.
- 41. Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha'.
- 42. Al-Mustatraf, vol. 2, p. 306.
- 43. Haya't al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 233.
- 44. Jack C. Rislar, Arab Civilization, p. 108.
- 45. Subh al-A'sha', vol. 2, p. 420.
- 46. Al-Tuhaf wa al-Hada'ya', p. 105.
- 47. Ibid.
- 48. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 1, pp. 88-93.
- 49. Tadhkirat al-Khawa's, p. 366.
- 50. Al-Bayqahi, al-Maha'sin wa al-Masa'wi', vol. 1, p. 105.
- 51. Tadhkirat al-Khawa's, p. 367.
- 52. Ibid., 366.
- 53. Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 329.
- 54. Tadhkirat al-Khawa's, p. 367.
- 55. Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 361.
- 56. Qur'an, 56, 35-37.
- 57. Ibid., 4, 163.
- 58. Ibid., 33, 7.
- 59. Ibid., 8, 33.
- 60. Ibid., 56, 10-11.
- 61. Ibid., 38, 86.
- 62. Ibid., 53, 3-4.
- 63. Ibid., 4, 95.
- 64. Ibid., 14, 17.
- 65. Ibid., 9, 40.
- 66. Ibid., 18, 37.
- 67. Ibid., 58, 7.
- 68. Ibid., 9, 25-26.
- 69. Ibid., 7, 142.
- 70. Ibid., 20, 29-32.
- 71. Ibid., 2, 124.
- 72. Ibid., 38, 26.

- 73. Ibid., 2, 30.
- 74. Ibid., 4, 65.
- 75. Ibid., 15, 85.
- 76. Ibid., 9, 5.
- 77. Ibid., 6, 12.
- 78. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, pp. 184-199. Biha'r al-Anwa'r.
- 79. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 185.
- 80. Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha', quoted from 'As al-Ma'mu'n, vol. 1, p. 369.
- 81. Al-Bida'ya wa al-Niha'ya, vol. 10, p. 277.
- 82. Al-Kindi, al-Wila't wa al-Quda't.
- 83. Qur'an, 9, 123.
- 84. Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin, pp. 630-631.
- 85. Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, p. 48, quoted from Mukhtasar Akhba'r al-Khulafa".
- 86. Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha', p. 181, quoted from al-Maha'sin wa al-Masa'wi' by al-Bayqahi, p. 295.

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