

Chapter 16: The Affairs Of The Imam In Khurasan

It is necessary for us to pause in order to talk about some affairs of Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, when he resided in Khurasa’n; his affairs there are as follows:

Poets visit the Imam

A group of the eminent Arab poets in that time visited Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, blessed him, and congratulated him on his undertaking regency. Among them was the great poet, Di‘bil al-Khaza’i, who revolted against oppression and tyranny, expressed the sufferings of the oppressed and the deprived. One of them was the inspired poet, Ibra’him b. al-‘Abba’s al-Sawli, the unique poet and proser of the time.¹ And among them was the great poet Razin b. ‘Ali, the brother of Di‘bil al-Khaza’i.

Before they traveled to Khurasa’n, Di‘bil had said to Ibra’him: “I want to accompany you to Khurasa’n.”

“How nice a companion and accompanied one your are!” exclaimed Ibra’him, “surely we have followed the precondition of Bashsha’r.”

“What is his precondition?” asked Di‘bil.

He has said his statement:

The best brother whom I fraternize is he whose baggage I carry, and who carries my baggage when I ask him to carry them.

When a time turns away from him, I have confidence in him; and when the time turns away from me, he has confidence in me.

His property belongs to me and I do not fear his miserliness; my property belongs to him, and he does not fear my miserliness throughout the time.[2](#)

During their journey, they were robbed, so they were forced to ride donkeys carrying thorns, so Ibra'him composed, saying:

They have been loaded thorns instead of pottery; they are drunk not because of wine; rather because of intense weakness.

He asked Razin to complete this (poetry line), and he said:

So if you, in spite of that, come to playing and amusement, then your state concerning it is equal and will not persist in decrease.

Then he said to Di'bil: "Complete this (poetry line), O Abu' 'Ali." And he said:

If that has passed, so be witty and hasten to play and amuse (our selves), for surely I am going to sell my sandals.[3](#)

Then the caravan of these eminent figures began covering the desert paying no attention to anything until it arrived in Khurasa'n. Shortly after their arrival there, they hurried to meet the Imam, peace be on him, so Di'bil recited to him his poem called al-Ta'riya, which we will mention, and Ibra'him b. al-'Abba's composed before him a poem of which the historians have narrated nothing except this line:

The deaths of the children of the Prophet Muhammad have removed the pains of the heart after endurance.

As for the Imam, he warmly received them, honored and magnified them.

The Imam awards a Prize to Di'bil

The Imam gave to Di'bil a parcel in which there was ten thousands of the dirhams struck with his name.[4](#) It is worth mentioning that the dirhams had not been placed in the hand of anyone before Di'bil, so Di'bil

refused to take them and said: “No, by Allah, I have not wanted this (money); nor have I gone out for it. I have come to have the honor of him and to look at his face.” Then he asked the servant of the Imam to ask the Imam in order to give him one of his garments, so the Imam gave him a silk garment⁵ along with dirhams and said to him: “Take this parcel, for you will be in need of it.”

Di‘bil departed until he arrived at Qum and there a talk about the Imam’s garment was announced, so the Qummiis hurried to Di‘bil and asked him to sell them the garment for thirty thousand dirhams.⁶ He refused that and left the Qummiis, but a group of them followed him and said to him:

“You must take the money or you better know.”

“By Allah, surely I will not give it to you on my own accord,” retorted Di‘bil, “nor will it benefit you when you take it by force, for it is wanted only for Allah, the Great and Almighty, and it is forbidden for you to wear it.”

Then he swore by Allah that he would not sell it to them unless they gave him a piece of it, that it might be placed in his shroud. So they gave him one sleeve, and it was placed in his shrouds.⁷ The narrators have mentioned: “The most lovable slave–wife to Di‘bil became ill. So he bandaged her with what he had of the garment of the Imam, peace be on him, and she got well.⁸”

As for the dirhams, Di‘bil sold each one to the Qummiis for ten dirhams, so his share amounted one hundred thousand dirhams.⁹

[The Imam awards a Prize to Ibra’him](#)

The Imam, peace be on him, gave Ibra’him al–Sawli ten thousands of the dirhams struck with his holy name. Ibra’him did not sell them; rather they remained with him.¹⁰ So he spent some of them, and the rest remained with him until he died.

[The Immortal Poem of Di‘bil](#)

The poem which Di‘bil recited to the Imam, peace be on him, is regarded as one of the masterpieces of Arab literature and among the sources of Islamic legacy. It is the most famous of Di‘bil’s poems. It had a strong impression on the Imam, so he wept and fainted three times.¹¹ That is because Di‘bil has mentioned in it the painful tragedies which befell the members of the House (*Ahl al–Bayt*), peace be on them. Di‘bil wore a garment and wrote the poem. He performed the ritual consecration wearing the garment, and then he ordered it to be placed in his own shrouds.¹²

Di‘bil’s poem widely spread in that time. Al–Ma’mu’n heard of it, admired it, asked Di‘bil to recite it to him, and said to him: “It won’t do you any harm; I have given you security from all things. It had been narrated to me, but I want to hear it from your own mouth.” So he recited it, and al–Ma’mu’n wept to the extent that his beard became wet out of his tears.¹³

A joke has been narrated about this excellent poem; the joke is as follows: When Di‘bil and his companions departed Maru’, some highwaymen attacked them and took all that which they had. It happened that a highwayman robbed Di‘bil and recited a line of his poem which he had recited to the Imam, and the line is as follows:

I see that their *fayya’* [14](#) is divided among other than them,

and their hands is void of their *fayya’* .

So Di‘bil asked the highwayman: “Whose poetry line is this?”

“It belongs to a man called Di‘bil from Khaza’a,” replied the highwayman.

“I am Di‘bil!” was the answer.

Then Di‘bil recited the poem, so the highwayman became astonished, called to the rest of the highwaymen, and asked them to return what they had taken from Di‘bil and his companions as a sign of honor for the poet of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, and they returned it to them. [15](#)

As this poem is of great importance, some eminent figures have explained it. They are as follows:

1. Al-Sayyid Ni‘mat Allah al-Jaza’iry.
2. Kama’l al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Shira’zi.
3. Al-Hajj Mirza ‘Ali al-Tabrizi. [16](#)

The Text of the Poem

The late ‘Abd al-Sa’hib al-Dujayli has reported the text of the poem in the Divan of Di‘bil from a group of handwritten and printed sources; we have reported it from him; the text of the poem is as follows:

The doves whose utterance and speeches are not

understood answer each other through sounds and sighs.

They tell through breaths about the secret of souls captives

to past love and another coming.

So they will make happy or help (the lovers) until the

kinds of darkness are dispersed and defeated by dawn.

Peace be on the courtyards void of wild cows; (I am) a sad adorer yearning for the courtyards.

As far as I know that their familiar places were green because of the perfumed, white (ones) and the ashamed (ones).

Nights helped friendliness against abandonment, but after me they approached one another out of estrangement.

Then they looked through their unveiled eyes and covered their cheeks with their hands.

And then everyday I have, in my eye, drunkenness for which my heart spends the night drunk.

How many a regret excited by my standing at Mahsar and 'Arafa't¹⁷ on the Day of Gathering.

Do you not see what the days have brought upon the people through nullifying (the Imamate), long separation, the states of the reckless¹⁸, and those who sought light through them in the dark?

Just imagine how much more is he who has come to seek nearness to Allah through fasting, prayers, showing love for the children of the Prophet and his family, hating the Banu' of al-Zarqa" and al-'Abala't ¹⁹, Hind²⁰, what Sumayya²¹ had done, her son who showed unbelief and dissoluteness in Islam?

It was they who broke the covenant of the Book, religious

duties and clear verses therein through falsehood and
vague errors.[22](#)

And that is a mere trial which has exposed them through
a summons of error from among ugly things.

Legacy without nearness (to the Prophet), authority
without guidance, and government without consultative
council are among the rightly-guided ones.[23](#)

(These) misfortunes have made us see the greenness of the
horizon red and made sweet water tastes salt.

Nothing made easy those creeds among them except the
homage of the random errors.[24](#)

The Companions of the Shelter (*saqifa*) did not attain an
authority because of legacy; rather due to the affair of
(their) origin.[25](#)

If they had entrusted the reins of the caliphate to the
testamentary trustee[26](#), then they would have been regulated by him who was protected from stumbles.

(He) was the brother of the last of the messengers[27](#), the one
purified of uncleanness, and the one who killed the
heroes at the battles.

If they deny (that), then to him bear witness al-
Ghadir, Badr, and Uhd whose elevations are high[28](#),

Verses of the Qur'an are recited concerning his
excellence, his giving food during famines[29](#),

and his outstanding qualities he attained out of his preceding laudable deeds which none before him had

performed.

(These) laudable deeds were not attained by trickery; nor were they obtained by anything except by the sharp edge of the spear.

Gabriel, the trusted one, whispered to him while you devoted yourselves (to serving) both al-‘Izza’ and Mana’t.[30](#)

At ‘Arafa’t I wept over the traces of the house, and I shed the tears of my eyes (for them).

The traces of the deserted houses untied the handles of patience and exited my longing.

Schools of verses (of the Qur’an) are without recitation, and the place of inspiration is (like) courtyards without people.[31](#)

To the family of Allah’s Messenger belong (the houses) at al-Khif part of Mina’, al-Rukn, al-Ta’rif, and al-Jamara’t [32](#)

The houses belong to ‘Ali, al-Husayn, Ja’far, Hamza, and al-Sajja’d the one with calluses (*Dhu’ al-Thafana’t*) [33](#);

The houses belong to ‘Abd Allah and al-Fadl his full brother to whom Allah’s Messenger whispered in privacy;

The houses among which the inspiration of Allah came down to Ahmed (Muhammad), who has been mentioned in the verses, belong to the people through whose guidance (men) have become rightly guided and felt secure from their slip of stumbles.

The houses were (confined to) prayer, reverential fear, fasting, purity, and good deeds.

Gabriel, the trusted one, stopped at the houses carrying from Allah greetings and mercy;

The houses (were the place) of inspiration of Allah, the place of His knowledge, and the path of guidance through clear ways.

The houses have been effaced by the tyranny of

every opponent, not by days and years.

O inheritors of the knowledge of the Prophet, upon

you be peace with lasting perfumes.

Stop in order to ask the house whose inhabitants hastened:

When was your knowledge of fasting and prayers? Where
are those whom the loneliness of remoteness has wronged
(and made them like) branches separating in the horizons?

They are the people of the legacy of the Prophet when
they are ascribed; they are the best masters and protectors.

They are feeders during famine and every attitude; they
have become honorable through favor and blessings.[34](#)

As for people, they are either envier or liar or spiteful
harboring malice or one who is unable to avenge the blood
of his dead.

When they (the Qurayshi hypocrites and the people of the
Book) remember their dead at (the battles of) Badr,
Khaybar, and Hunayn, they shed tears. [35](#)

So how could they show love for the Prophet and his family while they split open their bowels?[36](#)

They were gentle to him through their statements but they
had hearts containing spites.[37](#)

So if it (the caliphate) is not undertaken except through nearness to Muhammad, then Ha'shim is worthier (of it) than those of bad lineage.

May Allah water the grave in Medina (with) His rain, for therein has rested the Security through blessings.

The Prophet of guidance upon whom his King has called down blessings and given to him as gift His repose.

Allah calls down blessings upon him as long as the sun rises and the night stars appear.

O Fa'tima, if you imagined al-Husayn, who was thrown to the ground and died thirsty by the Euphrates, then you, O Fa'tima, would strike your cheeks beside him and make the tears of your eye flow on your cheeks.

O Fa'tima, arise, O daughter of the good, and mourn for the stars of the heavens in a deserted land.

Graves are in Kufa'n (i.e. Ku'fa); others are in Tiba; others are in Fakh; blessings are called down upon them.[38](#)

Other (graves) are in the land of al-Jawza'n; a lonely grave is at Ba'khamra'.[39](#)

And a grave is in Baghdad; (it) belongs to a pure soul which the Merciful (Allah) has included in the Gardens.[40](#)

As for the painful misfortunes which have deeply hurt me

through the essence of qualities, (they are) the graves by the River Euphrates in the land of Kerbala'', where they (al-Husayn and his companions) stopped at the late night.

They died thirsty by the Euphrates, so would that I died

for them before the time of my death.

During my remembering them, I complain to Allah of pain which waters me with the cup of abasement and atrocities.

I fear that if I visit them, I will be exited by their death

(which took place) between the valley and the date-palms.

The events of time have divided them; just as you see that

they have a district with houses covered (with dust).

Except that in Medina is a group of them, throughout the

time, rawboned because of hardships.

None visits them except some visitors from among

hyenas, eagles, and vultures.

They are forever asleep in graves standing in various

districts of the earth.

In al-Hija'z and (among) its people were courageous ones from among them chosen as leaders.

Hard droughts kept away from neighboring them⁴¹,

and the pebble of the pebbles did not warm them.

(They were) hot, so comets did not visit them; and (their)

faces shone by the curtains in the dark.

If they (people) brought horses running very quickly (and

carrying) spears, they (the Prophet's Household) were the pokers of the embers of death and hardships.

If they prided themselves (upon their lineage), they brought Muhammad, Gabriel, the Furqa'n (Qur'an), and the Suras.

And they numbered 'Ali, possessor of laudable deeds and

exaltedness, Fa'tima al-Zahra" the best daughter, Hamza

possessor of guidance and piety, and Ja'far, who flies in

the Gardens.

Those, not the product of Hind and her party Sumayya
from among the foolish and the dirty.

Taym and 'Adi will be asked about them and their
homage which was the greatest sin.[42](#)

It was they who prevented the forefathers from taking
their own right, and it was they who left the children
hostage to separation.[43](#)

It was they who took it (the caliphate) from the
testamentary trustee of Muhammad, so their pledge of
allegiance was treacherous.[44](#)

Stop your blaming me for (my showing love for) the Household of the Prophet; they are my lovers and I
have confidence in them as long as they live.

I have chosen them as a guide to my own affairs, for
they are, any how, the most excellent choice.

I have sincerely shown love for my masters and willingly
submitted my own soul to them.

Therefore, O my Lord, increase me in the insight of my
sureness and add, O my Lord, my love for them to my
good deeds.

I will weep over them as long as a rider makes a pilgrimage to (the House of) Allah and as long as a
dove coos in the trees.

I will sacrifice my own soul for you; (your) middle-aged and youths release captives and collect blood-
money (for the people).

When death limits the steps of the horses, you release

them (and use) sharp spears and swords.

I love those far because of their love for you, and for you I abandon my family and my daughters.[45](#)

I conceal my love toward you out of fear of him who is
hostile, stubborn to the men of the truth and disobedient
to (them).

O my eye, weep over them and shed abundant tears;
it is time for you to shed tears.

Certainly the days have surrounded me with their own evil, and surely I hope for security after my
death.[46](#)

Do you not see that I have gone and come for thirty years,
and I am always in sorrows?

I see that their *fayya'* is divided among other than them,
and their hands are void of their *fayya'*.[47](#)

So how can I be cured of an intense sorrow, and the
intense sorrow is the Umayyads, the men of dissoluteness
and (bad) results?

The family of Allah's Messenger are thin-bodied, while
the family of Ziya'd are big-necked!

Ziya'd's daughters are protected in the palaces whereas the
family of Allah's Messenger are in the deserts!

I will weep for them as long as the sun shines on earth and the caller of good calls (men) to prayer;
(I will weep for them) as long as the sun shines and sets; and I will weep for them at night and in the
early morning.

The houses of Allah's Messenger have become a desert,
and the family of Ziya'd live in palaces.

The throats of the family of Allah's Messenger are bled,
and the family of Ziya'd are at ease.

The womenfolk of Allah's Messenger are taken as
captives, and Ziya'd's womenfolk (are respected).

When one of them is killed, they stretch out for the killers
palms of the hand and prevent them from taking blood money.[48](#)

Had it not for him whom I expect today or tomorrow, I
would be out of breath due to the sorrows for them.

Certainly an Imam will appear and rise in the name of
Allah and the blessings.[49](#)

He will distinguish among us everything right and wrong,
reward for favors and vengeance.

I will intensely withhold myself from arguing with them;
enough for me is what I find of the moral lessons.

So, O my soul, renounce (the world); then O my soul, be
delighted, for it is not far all that which will come;

Do not be impatient of the period of tyranny; surely I can
see that my strength shows signs of separating (from the
world).

So if the Most Gracious (Allah) brings near that period of
mine and delays my life span for prolonging my life, then

I will avenge (myself upon them), will not leave any
calamity for myself, make my sword and spear quench
their thirst with their blood.

For surely I hope for [9] from the Most Gracious (Allah),
through showing love for them [9] an uninterrupted life in
Paradise.

May Allah give shelter to this creature; surely He is
permanent in glances toward every people.

If I say something good, they deny it with something evil
and cover the realities with vague errors.

I try to remove the sun from its place and to make solid
stones hear.

So they are either a knower who does not make use of (my
statement) or a stubborn one who inclines to (his) caprices
and lusts.

I am negligent of them when I die of a pang
frequenting in my chest and in (my) epiglottis.

Although my own ribs are wide, they have become narrow because of the intense sighs they have
contained.[50](#)

This ode called al-‘Assma” has terminated. As for the Imam, he was satisfied with it and supplicated for
Di‘bil in order to be successful on the Day of the Greatest Fear.

The Imam was strongly moved by the poetry lines in which Di‘bil lamented for Imam al-Husayn, peace
be on him. He wept bitter tears and fainted more than one time, for the tragedy of Karbela” had melted
his heart, and he would say: “Surely the affair of al-Husayn has made our eyes sleepless, our tears
flow, and abased our dear one. O land of grief and tribulation (*karb wa bala*”), you have made us inherit
grief and tribulation until the Day of Resurrection! So the weepers should weep for al-Husayn, for
weeping for him erases great sins.[51](#)”

The sadness of the Imam became intense and his sorrow doubled when the month of Muharram came,
and he said: “None saw my father, the blessings of Allah be upon him, smile when the month of
Muharram came, and the tragedy would overcome him until ten days of it passed. When the tenth day
came, then that day was the day of his calamity, his sadness, and his weeping, and he would say: ‘This

is the day on which al-Husayn was killed.’[52](#)”

And he, peace be on him, said: “Surely the people who lived before Islam prohibited fighting in the month of Muharram, while therein (shedding) our blood was regarded as lawful, our sacredness was violated, our progeny and our womenfolk were taken as captives, fires were set to our tents, and our baggage were taken. They (the Umayyads) did not conform to the sacredness of Allah’s Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, with respect to our affair.[53](#)”

Al-Rayya’n b. Shabib has narrated, saying: “I visited al-Ridha’ on the first day (of the month) of Muharram, and he said to me: ‘O son of Shabib, are you fasting?’ ‘No,’ I replied.”

Then the Imam began making him aware of the sacredness of that day, saying: “This is the day on which Zakariya’ supplicated his Lord and said: ‘O Lord, give me from You a good progeny, surely You hear supplication!’ So Allah responded to him. He ordered the angels, and they said to Zakariya’ while he was standing and praying in the mihrab: ‘Surely Allah has given good news to you of Yahya.’ So he who fasts in this month and supplicates Allah, the Great and Almighty, He responds to him just as He had responded to Zakariya’.

“O son of Shabib, surely the people who lived before Islam prohibited wrongdoing and fighting in the month of Muharram because of its sacredness, but this community has not come to know of the sacredness of its month nor the sacredness of its Prophet. In this month they killed his progeny, took his womenfolk as captives, and took his baggage, so may Allah never forgive them that.

“O son of Shabib, if you weep for a thing, then weep for al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abu’ Ta’lib, for he was slaughtered just as a ram is slaughtered, and along with him was killed eighteen men from among his Household, of whom there is no like on earth; the seven heavens and the earth wept for murdering him; four thousand angels came down to earth in order to support him but they found that he had been killed, so they (will remain) by his grave while they are shaggy and covered with dust until the Qa’im, peace be on him, rises; they will be with him, among his supporters and Shi’ites; their slogan will be: ‘Let us avenge the blood of al-Husayn!’[54](#)”

The Tragedy of Karbela” has immortalized sadness and sorrow for the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, for they and their Shi’ites are in constant sadness; they do not forget the tragedies which befell the grandson of the Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, on the day of ‘Ashu’ra” when the sacredness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was violated. On that day, immortal in the world of sadness, the army of b. Marja’na paid no attention to the sacredness of Allah and of His Messenger through murdering the grandson of Allah’s Apostle in that terrible manner.

After this let us return to the affairs of the Imam in Khurasa’n:

The Imam spends all what he has

The Imam spent all what he had on the poor and the miserable in Khurasa'n, so al-Fadl b. SAhl censured him for that, saying: "Surely this is (a kind of) damage!"

So the Imam answered him with a strong argument, saying: "Rather it is a profit; do not regard as damage that which results in reward and generosity.[55](#)"

It is not an act of damage when the Imam spent all what he had on the poor and the deprived in order to save them from poverty and misery; rather the damage was the enormous properties which the 'Abba'sid kings spent on their desires and their red nights, while they spent nothing on the poor from among the Muslims.

The Imam's Sermon on Allah's Oneness

This sermon is regarded as one of the excellent sermons of the Imams from among the *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be on him, and among the marvelous sermons which have been transmitted from them regarding the matters of Allah's Unity. If Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, had had no legacy except this sermon, then it would have been a sufficient proof of his Imamate and his reaching an exalted rank of knowledge and excellence which none has ever reached except the infallible Imams, peace be on him. As this sermon is of great importance, his Eminence, the late Yahya' b. Muhammad 'Ali has explained it and mentioned in the introduction to it: "Surely the famous sermon which has been mentioned regarding Allah's Oneness belongs to His Excellence, Holy Presence, Purified Yard, the eighth of the Imams of the religion, the Imam of mankind, 'Ali b. Musa' al-Ridha', the greeting and praise be on him. That is because it is a deep see containing advantages and perceptions, including the techniques of science and kinds of knowledge which nothing can gather except it, and so on.[56](#)"

As for composing this sermon is that when al-Ma'mu'n desired to install the Imam as his successor, the Ha'shimites (the 'Abba'sids) envied the Imam and said to al-Ma'mu'n: "Do you want to appoint an ignorant man who has no insight to direct the caliphate? Therefore send for him. He will come to us and you will decide how his ignorance decides you against him." So he sent for him and he came. The Ha'shimites said to him: "O Abu' al-Hasan, ascend the pulpit and display for us a sign whereby we may worship Allah." So he ascended the pulpit and sat for a long time, his head bowed in silence. Then he trembled a great trembling and stood up straight, praised and lauded Allah, and asked His blessing for His Prophet and his Household. Then he said: "The first element in the worship of Allah is knowledge of Him, the root of knowledge of Him is to profess His Oneness, and the correct way to profess the Oneness of Allah is to negate attributes from Him. For the powers of reason testify that every attribute and everything possessing an attribute is created. Everything possessing an attribute testifies that it has a Creator which is neither attribute nor possesses an attribute. Every attribute and everything possessing an attribute testify to connection (between the attribute and that to which it is attributed).

Connection testifies to temporality. And temporality testifies that it accepts not the Beginningless, which accepts not the temporal.

“So it is not Allah whose Essence is known through comparison. It is not His Oneness that is professed by someone who attempts to fathom Him. It is not His reality that is attained by someone who strikes a similitude for Him. It is not He who is confirmed by him who professes an end for Him. It is not He to whom refers he who points to Him. It is not He who is meant by him who compares Him (to something). It is not to Him that he who divides Him into parts humbles himself. And it is not He who is desired by him who conceives of Him in his imagination.

“Everything that can be known in itself is fashioned. All that stands apart from Him is an effect. Allah is inferred from what He fashions, the knowledge of Him is made fast by the powers of reason, and the argument for Him is established by (man’s) primordial nature.

“Allah’s creating of the creatures is a veil between Him and them. His separation from them is that He is disengaged from their localization. That He is their origin is proof for them that He has no origin, for none that has an origin can originate others. That He has created them possessing means (of accomplishing things) is proof that He has no means, for means are witness to the poverty of those who use them.

“So His names are an expression, His acts are (a way) to make (Him) understand, and His Essence is reality. His inmost center separates Him from creation, and His otherness limits what is other than He. Therefore ignorant of Allah is he who asks for Him to be described! Transgressing against Him is he who seeks to encompass Him. Mistaken is he who imagines to have fathomed Him! Whoso says ‘how?’ has compared Him (to something). Whoso says ‘why?’ has professed for Him a cause. Whoso says ‘when?’ has determined Him in time. Whoso says ‘in what?’ has enclosed Him. Whoso says ‘to what?’ has professed for Him a limit. Whoso says ‘until what?’ has given Him an end. Whoso gives Him an end has associated an end with Him. Whoso associates an end with Him has divided Him. Whoso divides Him has described Him. Whoso describes Him has deviated from the straight path concerning Him.

“Allah does not change with the changes undergone by creation, just as He does not become limited by delimiting that which is limited. He is One, not according to the explanation offered by number; Outward, not according to the explanation of being immediate (to the senses); Manifest, not through the appearance of a vision (of Him); Inward, not through separation; Apart, not through distance; Near, not through approach; Subtle, not through corporealization; Existent, not after non-existence; Active, not through coercion; Determining, not through the activity of thought; Directing, not through movement; Desiring, not through resolution; Willing, not through directing attention; Grasping, not through touch; Hearing, not through means; and Seeing, not through organs.

“Times accompany Him not, places enclose Him not, slumber sizes Him not, attributes delimit Him not, and instruments are of no use to Him. His being precedes times, His existence non-existence and His beginninglessness beginning.

“By His giving sense to the sense organs it is known that He has no sense organs. By His giving substance to substances it is known that He has no substance. By His causing opposition among things it is known that He has no opposite. By His causing affiliation among affairs it is known that He has no affiliate. He opposed darkness to light, obscurity to clarity, moisture to solidity, and heat to cold. He joins together those things which are hostile to one another and separates those which are near. They prove (the existence of) their Separator by their separation and their Joiner by their junction. That is (the meaning of) these words of Him, the Great and Almighty: *And of everything created We two kinds; haply you will remember.*[57](#)

“So through them He separated ‘before’ and ‘after’ that it might be known that He has no before and after. They testify with their temperaments that He who gave them temperaments has no temperament. They prove by their disparity that He who made them disparate has no disparity. They announce through their subjection to time that He who subjected them to time is not subject to it Himself.

“He veiled some of them from others so that it might be known that there is no veil between Him and them other than them. His is the meaning of lordship when there was none over whom He was Lord, the reality of godhood when there was nothing for whom He was God, the meaning of Knower when there was nothing to be known, the meaning of Creator when there was nothing created and the import of hearing when there was nothing to be heard. It is not because He created that He deserves the meaning (of the term) ‘Creator’ and not because He brought the creatures into being that the meaning of ‘making’ is derived.

“How (should it not be so)? For *mudh* (‘ever since’) conceals Him not, *qad* (‘already’) brings Him not near, *la’alla* (‘perhaps’) veils Him not, *mata’* (‘when’) limits Him not in time, *hin* (‘at the time of’) contains Him not, and *ma’a* (‘with’) brings Him not into association. Instruments limit only themselves and means allude only unto their own like. Their activities are found only in things. *Mudh* withholds things from being eternal, *qad* shields them from beginninglessness, and *law la’* (‘if only’) wards off perfection. Things become separate and prove (the existence of) their Separator. They become distinguish and prove their Distinguisher. Through them their Maker manifests Himself to the powers of reason. Through (these powers) He becomes veiled to sight, to them imaginations appeal for a decision, in them is substantiated (only) other than Him, from them is suspended the proof and through them He makes known to them the acknowledgment.

“Confirmation of Allah is made fast by the powers of reason, and faith in Him reaches perfection through acknowledgment. There is no religiosity except after knowledge, no knowledge except through sincerity, and no sincerity along with comparison. There is no negation of comparison if there is affirmation of attributes.

“So nothing in creation is found in its Creator. All that is possible in it is impossible in its Maker. Movement and stillness do not affect Him. How should that which He effects (in others) have effect upon Him, or that which He has originated recur for Him? Then His Essence would be disparate, His inmost

center divided, His signification prevented from eternity. How would the Creator have a meaning different from the created?

“If something from behind limited Him, then something in front would limit Him. If perfection were seeking Him, imperfection would be upon Him. How should that which does not transcend temporality be worthy of (the Name) ‘Beginningless’? How should that which does not transcend being produced produce the things (of the world)? There then would have arisen in Him a sign of having been made and He would become a proof after having been the proven.

“There is no argument in absurd opinions (such as the above), no answer when it (absurdity) is asked about, no glorification of Him in its meaning. Nor is there any ill in distinguishing Him from creation, unless it be that the Eternal accepts not to be made two, nor the Beginningless to have a beginning.

“There is no god but Allah, the All-high, the Tremendous. They have cried lies who ascribe equals to Allah! They have gone astray into far error and suffered a manifest loss! And Allah bless Muhammad, the Prophet, and his Household, the good, the pure.[58](#)”

This great sermon contains vague philosophical and theological researches; it shows the scientific abilities of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him; it clearly indicates that the 'Abba'sids were mistaken when they thought that the Imam was incapable of discussing scientific researches. It is certain that most of those who listened to the sermon of the Imam did not understand these philosophical matters, which the Imam, peace be on him, has presented, and which has dealt with the most important matters of Allah's Oneness.

[The Sermon which the Imam has written to al-Ma'mu'n](#)

Al-Ma'mu'n asked Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, to write him a sermon in order to recite it to the people when he led them in prayer, so he, peace be on him, wrote him the following great sermon:

“In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

“Praise belongs to Allah, Who from nothing was, nor from making a thing He sought help, nor from a thing He created (the creatures), nor from it He formed the things; rather He said to it, “Be,” and it is.

“And I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, Who is unique and without partners, far above resisting rivals, vying with opposites, taking consorts and children. I also bear witness that Muhammad is His chosen servant and his distinguished, trusted one. He sent him with the detailed Qur'an, His connected revelation, and His pure Distinguisher (*Furqa'n*), so he gave good news of His reward and warned against His punishment, may Allah bless him and his family.

“I recommend you, O servants of Allah, to fear Allah, Who knows your secret and open (deeds), and knows what you hide, so surely Allah will not leave you wandering without an aim; nor did He create you

in vain; nor will He enable you to guidance. Beware! Beware, servants of Allah! For Allah has made you cautious of (retribution from) Himself, so do not subject (yourselves) to regret, calling for wrath, and arriving at the torture of the Hellfire, *surely the torture thereof is a lasting evil, surely it is an evil abode and (evil) place to stay*; it does not go out; eyes do not sleep; souls neither die nor live; (they are) in chains and shackles, (subjected to) punishments and exemplary punishments, *so oft as their skins are thoroughly burned, We will change them for other skins, that they may taste the chastisement; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise; a fire, the smoke of which shall encompass them about*, so their call shall not be heard, their supplication shall not be responded, and there shall be no mercy upon their weeping. So flee, O servants of Allah, to Allah through these perishing souls, in the successive outcry, in the bygone days, before death befalls you, usurps your souls from you, distresses you in your hearts and be between you and the return. How far! So there will be no way to the return and no arrival to the residence. May Allah protect you and me through what He has protected His righteous friends, guide you and me to what He has guided His good servants.[59](#)”

This sermon summons men to do good, to refrain from the unlawful, and to renounce the world; it warns them against Allah’s punishment and chastisement.

[Al-Ma’mu’n asks the Imam for good Poetry](#)

Al-Ma’mu’n asked the Imam, peace be on him, to recite to him the best poetry lines which he had narrated on clemency. So he, peace be on him, said: “These are the best lines which I have narrated:

“If I am tried by the ignorance of those inferior to me,

“then I prevent myself from returning in kind through ignorance.

“If those like me are similar to me in intellect,

“then I escape due to my clemency, that I may be far

“above the like.

“If I am inferior to him in excellence and intellect,

“then I recognize his right of superiority and

excellence.”

Al-Ma’mu’n admired these poetry lines and asked: “Who composed them?”

“One of our boys,” replied the Imam.

“Recite to me the best poetry you have narrated regarding silence toward the ignorant,” demanded al-

Ma'mu'n.

So he, peace be on him, recited these lines:

“The friend may abandon me and turn aside (from me),

“so I make him see that there are reasons for his

“abandonment.

“I see that if I admonish him, I will urge him, so I see

“that leaving admonition is an admonition toward him.

“If I am tried by an ignorant one showing clemency and

“finding impossible things as correct, then I keep silent.

“Perhaps silence is an answer to the answer.”

Al-Ma'mu'n was astonished and asked: “How good this (poetry) is ! Who composed it?”

“One of our youths,” answered the Imam.

Then al-Ma'mu'n said: “Recite to me the best (poetry) you have narrated concerning attracting enemy, that he may be a friend.”

So the Imam recited to him these lines:

“I make peace with the possessor of malice, so I

“overcome and deafen him because of the favor of

“endurance from me.

“He who does not repel the evil deeds of his enemy

“through his kindness (to him) does not take graciousness

“from a lofty place.

“I see that nothing destroys old malice

quicker than immediate friendliness.”

So al-Ma'mu'n said: “How good this (poetry) is! Who composed it?”

“One of our young men,” replied the Imam

“Recite to me the best (poetry) you have narrated regarding keeping things secret,” demanded al-Ma’mu’n.

So the Imam recited to him the following:

“Surely I forget secret lest I should announce it. O he

“who wants secret to be kept, I forget it lest it should

“come to my mind and my heart reveals it to him who

“has colic in his bowels.

“So he who does not reveal secret and it comes to his

mind is about to be unable to keep it.”

As a result al-Ma’mu’n admired the marvelous poems which the Imam had memorized.

The Imam’s Letter to his Son al-Jawa’d

Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, sent from Khurasa’n a letter to his son al-Jawa’d mentioning in it:

“In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

“May my soul be sacrificed for you, I have heard that when you ride, the retainers make you go out of the small door of the garden; this is a sign of miserliness in them lest anyone should attain good from you. So I ask you though my right against you that you should go out and come in through the big door, and if you ride, Allah willing, let gold and silver be with you. When someone asks you for something, you give him. When one of your uncles asks you to give him, then do not give him less than fifty dinars; as for more than this amount, that is up to you. When one of your aunts asks you to give her, then do not give her less than fifty dinars; as for more than this amount, that is up to you. And when one of Quraysh asks you (to give him), then do not give him less than twenty-five dinars; as for more than this amount, that is up to you. Surely I want Allah to give you success, so fear Allah. Give and do not fear miserliness from the Possessor of the Throne.[60](#)”

Have you ever seen such an angelic soul clinging to kindness to men in general? Generosity was one of the qualities of the Imam, so he urged his son to tighten the bonds of kin and to show kindness to the miserable.

This letter gives an account of a kind of exalted education practiced by the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, who brought up their children to cleave to honor and virtue, planted in their

own souls high noble moral traits and good qualities, that they might be an example of good and a good model of the community.

The letter of Praise and Condition

This letter has been ascribed to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him; it flows with praising al-Fadl b. SAhl and lauding his great efforts in establishing the kingdom of al-Ma'mu'n, defeating his opponents such as his brother al-Amin, Abu' al-Sara'ya', and others. He spared no effort to suppress those violent revolts. So al-Ma'mu'n rewarded him for that through giving him great wealth and enormous properties; likewise, he gave the like of that to his brother al-Husayn b. SAhl as a prize to them for their loyalty to him. The letter says:

“In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

“Now then, praise belongs to Allah, the Originator, the Exalter, the Powerful, the Dominator, the Watcher over His servants, the Feeder over His creatures, toward whose dominion all things are humble, before whose might all things are lowly, through whose power all things are submissive, before whose force and tremendousness all things are humble, whose knowledge encompasses all things and counts their number, so no great thing makes Him tired, no small thing is distant from Him; beholders' eyes attain Him not; describers' description encompasses Him not; His are creation, command, the loftiest attribute in the heavens and the earth; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

“And praise belongs to Allah, Who has legislated Islam as religion, preferred it, magnified it, honored it, ennobled it, made it the valuable religion other than which is no (religion) accepted, the straight path to which he who clings does not go astray, from which he who turns away is not rightly guided, placed therein the light and the proof, cure and explanation, sent with it him whom He chose from among His angels to him whom He distinguished from among His messengers in the bygone communities, and the past centuries until His message reached Muhammad, the chosen one, may Allah bless him and his family, so He sealed through Him the prophets, made him follow the tracks of the messengers, sent him as mercy for people, bringer of good news to those believers who believed (in his message) and warner to those unbelievers who denied (it), *that His is the conclusive argument, and that he who would perish might perish by clear proof; and most surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*

“And praise belongs to Allah, Who has made his Household inherit the legacies of the prophethood, deposited in them knowledge and wisdom, made them the source of the Imamate and the caliphate, made their authority (over Muslims) obligatory, and ennobled their rank, so He ordered His Messenger to ask his community to show love for them, for He says: *Say I demand not, of you any reward for it (the toil of preaching) except the love of my relations.*⁶¹ And that through which He has described them such as keeping off from them every kind of uncleanness and His purifying them in these words of Him: *Verily Allah intends to keep off from you every kind of uncleanness and to purify you, people of the House, with a thorough purification.*⁶²

“Then surely al-Ma’mu’n has been kind to Allah’s Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, with respect to his family, and tightened the bonds of his Household. So he has returned friendliness to them, brought them together, reconciled them, put an end to the division among them; and Allah through him has driven away enmities and spites from them. So through his felicity, his protection, his blessing, his devotion, and his gifts their hands have become one, their word is inclusive, and their desires are harmonious. He has kept the rights for their owners, put the legacies in their places, rewarded with the kindness of the good doers, safeguarded those who have been stricken by tribulation, brought near (those far) and sent far (those close) because of the religion. Then he has singled out him whose efforts have given priority to him (over others) with preference, giving precedence (over others), and honoring. Such (a person) is Dhu’ al-Riya’satayn al-Fadl b. SAhl, for he (al-Ma’mu’n) has seen that he (al-Fadl) supports him, undertakes his right, speaks of his argument, heads his chiefs, leads his horses, directs his wars, governs his subjects, summons (them) to him, rewards him who responds to obedience to him, opposes him who opposes him, helps him only, cures the malady of hearts and intentions. Neither paucity of wealth nor lack of men prevents him from that; greediness does not make him partial; and no fear turns him aside from his intention and his insight. Rather, when the terrified terrify (him), and when threateners, menacers, many dissenters and opponents from among the *mujahidin* and the deceivers threaten him, he is the most resolute of them, the most steadfast of them, the most powerful of them in scheming, the best of them in direction, the strongest (of them) in establishing the right of al-Ma’mu’n and in summoning (men) to him, to the extent that he has broken the teeth of the errant, blunted the edge (of their sword), clipped their finer-nails (lit. wings), reaped their thorn (i.e. killed them), struck them down (just as he struck down) those unbelievers who broke his covenant, flagged in his command, made little of his right, felt safe from his influence and his courage; in addition to the (other) works of Dhu’ al-Riya’satayn toward all kinds of the communities from among the polytheists; (for example) through him Allah has increased the boundaries of the country of the Muslims; you have heard of their news, regarding which the letters have been read on your pulpits, which the people have transmitted to you (and) to other than you. As Dhu’ al-Riya’satayn strove earnestly for the Commander of the faithful, undertook his right, sacrificed for him his own soul and the soul of his brother Abu’ Muhammad al-Hasan b. SAhl, whose nature is blessed and whose policy is praiseworthy, he (the Commander of the faithful) thanked him to the extent that he surpassed the first and triumphed over the successful.

“The Commander of the faithful has rewarded him to the extent that he has attained properties, country estates and jewels, though this reward does not equal one of his days and attitudes. Yet, he (al-Fadl) has left this reward out of renouncing it, disdaining it, securing it for the Muslims, casting away the world, making little of it, preferring the hereafter (to it), and competing (with others) for it (the hereafter).

“And he has asked the Commander of the faithful about abdicating and renouncing (the office of ministry). So he and we have regarded that as great because of our knowledge of what Allah, the Great and Almighty, has put in his place in which he is of might for the religion and authority, strength for setting the Muslims right, waging jiha’d against the polytheists, and what Allah has shown through him of his truthful intention, his blessed soul, his correct direction, his strong view point, his successful request,

his helping (him) with the truth and guidance, kindness and reverential fear. So when the Commander of the faithful has become confident of him, we have (also) become confident of him according to the view of the religion and that in which is his righteousness; we have given him his demand, which is equal to his rank; we have written to him a letter of *haba*” and *shart* (praise and condition), which has been copied at the bottom of this letter of mine; we called to witness to it Allah, those who were present with us from among our household, the (military) commanders, the companions, the judges, the jurists, the personal entourage, and the populace.

“The Commander of the faithful has ordered the letter to be announced in the regions, spread among their inhabitants, read on their pulpits, established with their governors and their judges. So he has asked me to write about that and to explain its meanings, which are in three parts:

“The First Part: Explaining all his (al-Fadl’s) works through which Allah has made his right incumbent upon us and the Muslims.

“The Second Part: Explaining his rank in removing his reason concerning all that which he has directed, in which he has entered, and there is no objection against him concerning that which he has left and hated. That is because the creatures should not pledge allegiance to anyone except to him and his brother. Part of removing the reason (for his abdicating the office) is hiding it from all those who have wronged them (al-Fadl and his brother), strive through corruption against us, them, and our friends, lest one should crave after a difference against them or after an act of disobedience to them or after a trickery concerning an entry between us and them.

“The Third Part: Explaining our gifts to him if he has to choose between abdicating and renouncing (the office), and the proof of accomplishing (that) because of the reward of the hereafter regarding which he has striven through that which (must) be established in the heart of him who has doubt about him regarding that, and that which obligates us such as dignity, might, the *haba*” (praise) which we have given to him and his brother regarding protecting them both from that from which we protect ourselves. And that encompasses all that through which the cautious takes precautions with respect to the affairs of religion and the world.”

This statement has terminated; it lauds the great efforts which al-Fadl b. SAhl made for strengthening the government of al-Ma’mu’n and establishing his state. It also praises his honesty, his refusing to accept many prizes and gifts, and his asking for abdicating the office of ministry. Moreover it shows that this request of him was refused. This statement is a preface to the letter of *al-Haba*” *wa al-Shart* (the Praise and Condition), which says:

“In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. This is a letter on *al-Haba*” *wa al-Shart* (the Praise and Condition) from the servant of Allah al-Ma’mu’n, the Commander of the faithful, and his heir apparent ‘Ali b. Musa’ al-Ridha’, to Dhu’ al-Riya’satayn al-Fadl b. SAhl; (the letter was written) on Monday, the seventh of the month of Ramada’n, in the year 201 A. H. This is the day on which Allah has

completed the state of the Commander of the faithful, appointed his heir apparent, made the people wear green uniform, (made the Commander of the faithful) achieve his hope of setting right his friend and overcoming his enemy. We have summoned you to that in which is some of rewarding you, for you have fulfilled the right of Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, the right of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, the right of the Commander of the faithful and of his heir apparent, 'Ali b. Musa', the right of the Ha'shimites through whom (we) hope to set right the religion and to settle the enmity among the Muslims, until he establishes his favor upon us and upon the populace through that; and through that with which has helped the Commander of the faithful such as establishing the religion and the Sunna, manifesting the second summons (to the religion) and preferring the first (summons to the religion to it), in addition to suppressing the polytheists, breaking the idols and killing the tyrants; in the cities are still standing the rest of his works in respect of the deposed one (i.e. al-Amin) and Qa'bil, regarding the one called al-Asfar (the yellow one) and the one nicknamed Abu' al-Sara'ya', concerning the one called al-Mahdi Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Ta'libin and the Hawli Turks, regarding Tabrista'n and its kings to the Port (*Bandar*) of Hurmuz b. Sharwin, in respect of Daylam and its king Mahors, concerning Cabul and its king Harmos then its king Asfahid, regarding Ibn al-Barm, the mountains of Bida'r Benda, 'Arshista'n, al-Ghour, and the like, in regard with Khurasa'n, and Bloun the leader (*sha'hib*) of the mountain of al-Tibtt, regarding Kayma'n and Tagharghar, concerning Armenia and al-Hija'z, the Leader of the Throne (*sa'hib al-Sarir*), and the Leader of al-Khazar (*sa'hib al-Khazar*), regarding al-Maghrib (Morocco) and the wars wherein; the explanation of that is in the Divan of Biography (*sira*).

"These (works of yours) have summoned us to aid you with one million dirhams, a crop of ten million jewel dirhams, feudal estates had been given to you by the Commander of the faithful before that; in our viewpoint, you deserve more than one hundred million jewel dirhams. You had left the like of that when it was given to you by the deposed one (i.e. al-Amin). You have preferred Allah and His religion (to that). You have thanked the Commander of the faithful and his heir apparent, secured all of that to the Muslims, and you have generously given it to them.

"You have asked us to respond to your request, for which you have yearned, and which is abdicating and renouncing (the office of the ministry), that you may set right him who has doubt about your striving for the next world apart from this world and your renouncing the world. (We) cannot manage without the like of you and cannot refuse the request of the like of you. If your demand took us out of the bliss (conferred) upon us, then how would we order? Through it you have raised provision and made argument obligatory on him who claims that your summoning (the people) to us is for the world, not for the hereafter. We have responded to what you have asked from us and given it to you, confirmed by Allah's promise and covenant which do not change; nor do they alter; we entrusted the matter to you in that time. If you intend to keep to (your office), then your are dear, the reason is removed from you, any kind of work you hate to practice is driven way from you, and we protect you from that from which we protect ourselves in all circumstances. If you intend to abdicate (the office), then you are honorable, (and only your) body is removed. Then the right of your body (against you) is that you give rest to it and honor it. Then we will give you of that which you take and of that which we have given to you in this letter, but

you have left it today.

“And we have given to al-Hasan b. SAhl the like of that which we have given to you, so the half of the gift we have given to him and his household is for you, and for that he sacrificed his own life for waging jihad against the tyrants, conquering Iraq twice, scattering the gatherings of Satan, and entering the fires of war, so the religion has become strong. Through his own soul, his household, those whom ruled from among the friends of the truth, he protected us from the torture of the simoom. We have called to witness Allah, His angels, His good creatures, and all those who had given their pledge of allegiance to us and the applause of their right hand regarding what is in this letter on this day and after it. We have made Allah as surety over us for it, made it incumbent upon us to fulfill the conditions without excluding anything which decreases them secretly or openly. The promise is a religious duty (about which we shall be) questioned; the best of the people in fulfilling (promise) is he who asks the people to fulfill (it). Allah, the Exalted, said: ***And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have made a covenant, and do not break the oaths after making them fast, and you have indeed made Allah a surety for you; surely Allah knows what you do.***⁶³”

This document called *al-Haba' wa al-Shart* has terminated, and it has been signed by al-Ma'mu'n and Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him.

Al-Ma'mu'n's Signature

It has been mentioned in it: “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The Commander of the faithful (i.e. al-Ma'mu'n) has made it incumbent on himself (to fulfill) all that which is in this letter, to call Allah to witness and to make Him as a Summoner and Surety for it.” He wrote it in his own handwriting in (the month of) Safar, (in the) year 202, (as a sign of) honoring *al-Haba'* (praise) and confirming *al-Shart* (the condition).

Imam al-Ridha's Signature

It has been mentioned in the signature of the Imam, peace be on him: “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. ‘Ali b. Musa' al-Ridha' has made it incumbent on himself (to fulfill) all that which is in this letter, to what he has confirmed wherein on his day and tomorrow as long as he is alive and to make Allah, the Exalted, as a Summoner and Surety for it; and enough for a witness is Allah.” He wrote it in his own handwriting in this month (of Safar), in this year (202). Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, may Allah bless him and his family, ***Allah is sufficient for us and Most excellent is the Protector.***⁶⁴”

This document has come to an end. It gives an account of the terrible pictures of the political disturbance by which Islamic country was afflicted, for popular revolts spread in it and discords became general wherein. Some sources emphasize that the time of al-Ma'mu'n was the time of discords and disorders, that these revolts were suppressed and uprooted by al-Fadl b. SAhl, who was expert in suppressing

revolts, while rivers of blood flowed, sadness and mourning spread in most Islamic countries. Of course, those revolts resulted from the oppression and tyranny which dominated that time at the hands of the 'Abba'sids, who ruled Islamic world with a policy void of just and fairness. Any how, both the parts of the document do not belong to the composition of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him; rather they belong to the organ of government and its helpers; and they have attributed them to Imam al-Ridha', that they might be religious and unbroken; this can be supported by the following:

Firstly, this document grants millions of properties to al-Fadl b. SAhl and enormous wealth as a reward for the services he rendered to al-Ma'mu'n and his suppressing the revolts against him. Of course, these properties belong to the central treasury of all Muslims. Without doubt it is not permissible to misuse even the least property of the Muslims or to give it as a reward or the like to any person; rather it is obligatory to spend it on the interests of the Muslims, improving their standard of living, refreshing them, and spreading welfare among them. So how was it possible for the Imam to make that permissible and to decide giving these properties to al-Fadl?

Secondly, this document contains signs of praise and laudation toward al-Fadl b. SAhl, and, in the meantime, it defames the revolt of Abu' al-Sara'ya' and of Ja'far b. Muhammad, the two Ta'libi ones. Such a praise does not belong to the morals of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, for he did not praise anyone unless he was worthy of praise and laudation; nor did he dispraise anyone unless he was entitled to dispraise and slander; this was his behavior and method in life. So how did he give this praise to al-Ma'mu'n? And how did he laud al-Fadl with this laudation? It is worth mentioning that he harbored hatred and detest against them, for he was aware that they had wicked and spiteful souls. Generally speaking, al-M'mu'n honored the Imam and appointed him as a heir apparent after him for a political maneuver of which the Imam was fully aware.

Thirdly, this document contradicts what the Imam, peace be on him, made as a condition on al-Ma'mu'n when he agreed to assume the position of heir apparent. In other words he agreed to assume the position of heir apparent on the condition that he would not interfere in any of the affairs of the state and would be far from all political events. So how did he interfere in the affair of al-Fadl and reward him for his loyalty to al-Ma'mu'n?

These are some criticisms which face ascribing this document to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him.

With his Brother Zayd

Zayd joined the revolt declared by Abu' al-Sara'ya', the summoner to Muhammad b. Ibra'him al-Hasani. He was appointed by Abu' al-Sara'ya' as a governor over the province of al-Ahwa'z, so he went to it in order to undertake the tasks of his job. When he passed through Basrah, which was under the domination of the 'Abba'sid government, he burnt the houses of the 'Abba'sids, so he was given the nickname of *Zayd al-Na'r* (the Zayd of fire). When the revolt of Abu' al-Sara'ya' was suppressed, Zayd disappeared. However, al-Hasan b. SAhl, looked for him, found him, and imprisoned him. He was still in

prison until Ibra'him, the Shaykh of the singers, better known as Ibn Shakkla, took the reins of government. Then the inhabitants of Baghdad broke into the prison and released Zayd. As a result he went to Medina (Yathrib), summoned the people there to pledge allegiance to Muhammad b. Ja'far. But al-Ma'mu'n sent an army and the army could suppress the revolt, captured Zayd, and brought him to al-Ma'mu'n, who said to him: "O Zayd, you revolted (against us) in Basrah and refused to start with the houses of our enemies from among the Umayyads, Thaqif, Ghina', Ba'hila, and the family of Ziya'd, and you intended (to burn) the houses of the children of your uncle (i.e. the 'Abba'sids)."

So Zayd said to him with joy: "O Commander of the faithful, I made a mistake in all the situations; if I return to revolt, I will start with our enemies."

Al-Ma'mu'n smiled at him, sent him to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and said to him: "I have entrusted you with his crime, so educate him in a good manner.[65](#)"

Zayd was brought before the Imam, and he said to him: "Woe unto you Zayd! You did toward the Muslims in Basrah what you did, while you claim that you are the son of Fa'tima, daughter of Allah' Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. By Allah, Allah' Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, will be the severest of all people toward you! O Zayd, he who takes through Allah's Messenger should give through him."

When al-Ma'mu'n heard of the Imam's statement, he wept and said: "The Household of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, must follow this manner.[66](#)"

With His Sister Fa'tima

When Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was in Khurasa'n, he wrote to the pure lady Fa'tima, better known as lady Ma'su'ma; he asked her to come to him, for she was a favorite with him and dear to him. When the letter came to her, she prepared herself and traveled to him.[67](#) When she arrived at Sa'wa, she fell ill. So she asked about the distance between Sa'wa and Qum, and it was said to her: "Ten leagues." So she ordered the people to carry her to Qum, and they carried her to it. She stopped at the house of Musa' b. Khazzraj while she was holding the reins of her she-camel. He brought her to his house, and she stayed in it for seventeen days. Then she died, and Musa' prepared her for burial. He buried her in his own land and built over her holy grave a shelter of reed mats. (Such was her grave) until a dome was built over it by lady Zaynab, daughter of Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Jawa'd.[68](#) Her Holy Shrine have become one of the dearest places of worship and one of the Holy Shrines in Islam; likewise, that Sacred City has become one of the universities of knowledge and among the cultural centers in Islam.

Al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Qummi says: "I was (sitting) with Imam al-Sa'diq, peace be on him, and he said: 'Surely Allah has a sacred city, and it is Mecca; His Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, has a sacred city, and it is Medina; the Commander of the faithful has a sacred city, and it is

Ku'fa; we have a sacred city, and it is Qum wherein a woman called Fa'tima from among my children will be buried; whoever visits her, the Garden is obligatory for him.⁶⁹” Imam al-Sa'diq had announced that before she was born.

The 'Id Prayer

Al-Ma'mu'n asked Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, to say the 'Id prayer before the people and to deliver a sermon after the prayer, that the hearts of the populace might become assured through that and recognize his excellence, but the Imam refused to respond to him and said to him: “You have come to know about the conditions made between us; I do not interfere in this affair; therefore, exempt me from saying the prayer before the people.”

“I only intend by that that the people's heart should be assured and that they should know your great merit,” replied al-Ma'mu'n.

Al-Ma'mu'n insisted on that, so the Imam was forced to respond to him, but he made it a condition that he should go out just as Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and his grandfather the Commander of the faithful, 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib, peace be on him, did.

“Go out as you wish,” replied al-Ma'mu'n. Then he ordered the military commanders and the rest of the people to receive Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him.

The people went out waiting for the Imam in the roads and on roof-tops. As for the military commanders, they were ready and wore the best uniform. When the sun rose, the Imam washed and put on a white turban. One end of it he made hang on his holy breast and the other between his shoulders. He took his staff in his hand and said to his retainers: “Do whatever I do.” Then he went out in that humble state, raised his head towards heaven, and exclaimed four times: “Allah is great (*Allahu' akbar*)!” Then he stood at the door and exclaimed four times: “Allah is great (*Allahu' akbar*)!” Then he said: “Allah is great, for He has guided us! Allah is great, for He has given to us of the cattle quadrupeds! Praise belongs to Allah, for He has tried us!”

The earth shook with saying 'Allah is great!' The people walked like waves and said at the top of their voices: “Allah is great!” The appearance of the Imam, peace be on him, reminded them of that of his grandfather the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who developed the intellectual life on earth. So they understood the deviation of those kings who ruled them with oppression and tyranny.

The great Imam, the peace of Allah be on him, walked bare-foot, stopped after each ten steps, and said four times: “Allah is great!” The people imagined that the sky, the earth, and the walls were answering him. As for Maru', it shook with weeping and clamor. Al-Ma'mu'n heard of that and he became frightened and terrified. So al-Fadl b. SAhl hurried to him and said to him: “O Commander of the faithful, if al-Ridha' reaches the place of prayer for the festival, the people will break out in rebellion. So send

instructions to him to go back.”

Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n sent one of his policemen to the Imam to ask him to go back, so he, peace be on him, called for his boots and put them on. Then he went back without saying the prayer before the people.⁷⁰ This action demonstrates the spirituality of the Imam, his renouncing the world, his rejecting the pleasures of the kingdom and authority. Al-Bahri has described the coming out of the Imam, peace be on him, in this way, saying:

When you came out of the ranks, they mentioned the

Prophet, said, “There is no god except Allah,” and exclaimed: “Allah is Great,” till you reached the place of prayer wearing the light of guidance appearing and manifesting on you.

You walked with the walking of one submissive and

humble before Allah, does not show pride nor haughtiness.

If a longing one affected other than what he could do, then

the pulpit would walk toward you.⁷¹

The narrators have said: “Surely the going out of the Imam in this way was one of the most important factors which motivated al-Ma'mu'n to harbor malice against the Imam and then to assassinate him.”

The Imam's Supplication in Asking for Water

Rain was withheld from the people, so some of those who harbored malice against the Imam, peace be on him, ascribed that to his assuming the position of heir apparent. They began announcing and spreading that among the popular circles in order to defame the personality of the Imam, peace be on him. Al-Ma'mu'n heard of that and became displeased with it. Then he told the Imam about that, asked him to supplicate Allah for sending down rain to the people. The Imam answered him, saying: “Surely, I will do that on Monday.”

“Why?” asked al-Ma'mu'n.

He, peace be on him, replied: “Surely, Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, came to me yesterday nigh, and there was along with him the Commander of the faithful, 'Ali, peace be on him, and he said to me: ‘My son, wait until Monday (comes). Go to the desert and ask for water, for surely Allah shall water them (with rain), and tell them of what will Allah make you see of what they do not know of their state, that they may be increased in knowledge of your excellence and position with your Lord, the Great and Almighty.’”

So al-Ma'mu'n and the rest of his personal entourage waited until Monday came. Meanwhile he ordered

all the popular classes to go to the desert on Monday. When this day came, the people went in a hurry to the desert. The Imam, who was in the appearance of the prophets, went to the desert. When he arrived in the desert, a pulpit had been installed for him. The people surrounded him and said at the top of their voices: “There is no god but Allah! Allah is great!”

The Imam’s Supplication

The Imam ascended the pulpit, praised and lauded Allah, and then he said: “O Allah! O Lord! It is You who have magnified our right, the *Ahl al-Bayt!* So they have sought access through us (to You) as You have commanded, hoped for Your bounty and mercy, expected Your kindness and favor. So give them water with a watering which is useful, general, neither slow nor harmful! And let their rain start after their leaving this view of them to their houses and their abodes!”

The Imam added, saying: “So by Him who sent Muhammad with the Truth as prophet, the wind wove clouds in the air, and it thundered and lightened.”

When the people heard of the Imam’s statement, they intended to go to their houses, lest the rain should befall them. So he, peace be on him, said: “That cloud which has towered over you is not for you; rather it is for another city.” And he mentioned to them the name of the city.

Then ten successive clouds towered over the people, and the Imam told them that each cloud would rain in a certain city, and he mentioned the names of the cities. As a result the eleventh cloud towered over them, so he, peace be on him, said: “O People, that is the cloud which Allah, the Great and Almighty, has sent for you, so thank Allah for His favor toward you; go to your abodes and houses, for it has been sent for you. It has been prevented from raining on your heads until you enter your abodes. Then some good suitable for the munificence of Allah, the Great and Almighty, will come to you.”

Then he descended the pulpit, and the people went in a hurry to their houses. When they arrived at their houses, it began raining heavily. So the valleys, the basins, the streams, and the deserts were filled with water.

The people believed in the miracles of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, and their remarkable rank with Allah, the Most High, and said: “We congratulate the children of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, on the miracles of Allah, the Great and Almighty, toward them.”

The Imam’s Sermon

In the wake of the miracle, the Imam, peace be on him, delivered a sermon before a large crowd of people, saying: “O men, fear Allah with respect to the favors of Allah toward you, so repel them not from you through disobeying Him; rather make them continue through obeying Him and thanking Him for His

blessings and favors. And know that you do not thank Allah for a thing after faith in Him, and after professing the rights of the friends of Allah from among the family of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family more lovable to Him than helping your believing brethren with their world, which is a bridge for them to the Gardens of their Lords. So surely, he who does that is among the special friends of Allah, the Blessed and Exalted; Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, already said concerning that a statement. The believer should not turn away from Allah's bounty toward him in the statement if he carefully considers it and put it into practice.

“It was said: ‘O Allah's Messenger, so-and-so has perished, for he has committed sins so-and-so.’ So Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, said: ‘Rather, he has saved himself (from Allah's punishment), and Allah will not end his work except with a good final result; He will erase his evil deeds and change them into good ones. Surely, one day he passed through a road and found a believer's pudenda uncovered while the believer was not aware (of that). He covered it on his behalf without telling him (of that) lest he (the believer) should be ashamed. Then that believer recognized him in a valley and said to him: ‘May Allah reward you generously, honor your return, and He may not discuss with you on the Day of Resurrection.’ So Allah has responded to him concerning him; therefore, Allah will not end (the work of) this servant except with a good final result because of the supplication of that believer. This man heard of the statement of Allah's Messenger, so he repented, turned to Allah in repentance, and practiced the acts of obedience to Allah, the Great and Almighty. Only seven days ago, Median was attacked, so Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, sent a group of people to war against them (the attackers). This man was among them, so he died a martyr.”

The Imam's sermon has ended; it flows with summons to fear of Allah, the Most High, cooperation and friendship among the Muslims. The Imam has regarded that as the best act of obedience and nearness to Allah, the Exalted.

Admonition and Warning

The clubs and the assemblies talked about the Imam's supplication in asking for water and the heavy rain because of his supplication. The 'Abba'sids and their hirelings were so displeased with this miracle which showed the excellence of the 'Alawides and their great rank with Allah, the Exalted, that a wicked one of them admonished al-Ma'mu'n and warned him against entrusting regency to the Imam and against the appearance of this miracle, saying: “O Commander of the faithful, I seek refuge for you with Allah from that you will be the history of the caliphs⁷² through your taking this general honor and great pride out of the house of the sons of al-'Abba's (and handing it over) to the house of the sons of 'Ali.

“You have helped (the 'Alawides) against your own soul and your own family. You have brought this magician, the son of the magicians. He was unknown, but you have made him known. He was weak, but you have exalted him. He was forgotten, but you have reminded (men) of him. He was hidden, but you have hinted at him. He has filled the world with sorcery and longing through this rain which came down

during his supplication. So I fear that this man (i.e. Imam al-Ridha') will take this authority out of the sons of al-'Abba's (and hand it over) to the sons of 'Ali. I fear that he will through his magic be able to remove your blessing and to dominate your kingdom. Has anyone harmed himself and his kingdom as you have done?"

This statement gives an account of the foolish logic of those people who lived before Islam and claimed that the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was a magician because of the miracles and the signs which happened through his hand. Accordingly, such a kind of people claimed that the grandson of the Prophet was a magician. Now, let us listen to al-Ma'mu'n's answer:

"This man (i.e. Imam al-Ridha') was hidden from us and was summoning (the people) to himself. So we have intended to make him our heir apparent, that he may summon (men) to us, admit that the kingdom and the caliphate belong to us, those who have admired him may believe that he has not been truthful in what he has claimed, and that this authority belongs to us apart from him. We feared that if we had left him in that state, we would have faced unbearable difficulties. Now, if we have done toward him what we did, made a mistake in his affair, and we are about to be destroyed out of honoring (him), then it is not permissible to neglect his affair. But we must disparage him gradually, that we may picture him in the picture of him who is not worthy of this affair. Then we will scheme against him to turn his tribulation away from us.[73](#)"

Al-Ma'mu'n has uncovered the motives which prompted him to appoint the Imam as a heir apparent after him as follows:

1. The Imam secretly summoned the people to himself, so if al-Ma'mu'n had entrusted regency to him, he would have summoned the people to him, recognized his kingdom and his caliphate.
2. Al-Ma'mu'n intended to show the people that the Imam, peace be on him, did not renounce authority; nor did he seek the next world.

Any how, he finally admitted that he made a mistake when he nominated the Imam for this office and asked him to supplicate in asking for water and the like which displayed his spirituality and his great rank with Allah, the Most High. Accordingly, he decided to seek evil deeds and scheme against him in order to put an end to him.

Al-Ma'mu'n fears the Imam

Al-Ma'mu'n feared the Imam, was terrified by the surrounding of the people around him, and feared for his kingdom from disappearance, for the people came to know that the Imam, peace be on him, was virtuous and spiritual, that he would be able to establish political and social justice in their regions, and that the 'Abba'sids were not entitled to the leadership of the community and the authority over the Muslims.

Important Decisions

Al-Ma'mu'n reflected for a long time on (this affair) and summoned his advisers in order to get rid of the Imam, so he took the following decisions:

Firstly, he held scientific conferences which included the greatest scholars of the world in order to test the Imam and to render him incapable of answering their questions, that he might use that as means to defame the personality of the Imam and disprove the creed of the Shi'ites who maintained that the Imam should be the most learned of the people of his time. Meanwhile, if the Imam had been unable to answer their questions, al-Ma'mu'n would have been able to remove him from regency.

But this plan came to nothing, for the Imam answered all the questions of the scholars who afterwards admitted his huge scientific abilities and his excellence over them.

Secondly, he surrounded him by dense forces of security in order to keep an eye on him. This task was entrusted to Hisha'm b. Ibra'him al-Ra'shidi al-Hamada'ni. The narrators say: "Ibra'him was a scholar and an author. He undertook all the affairs of al-Ridha', peace be on him, before he was sent to Khurasa'n. He received all the properties which were sent to the Imam. When the Imam was sent to Khurasa'n, Ibra'him communicated with Dhu' al-Riya'satayn. Dhu' al-Riya'satayn enticed Ibra'him with an office and money. So Ibra'him followed his caprice, abandoned his religion, deviated from the truth, and spied on the Imam. He transmitted all the stories and affairs of the Imam to al-Fadl and al-Ma'mu'n. He was appointed by al-Ma'mu'n as a chamberlain for al-Ridha'. So he thoroughly straitened the Imam, prevented all the people from reaching him except those whom he loved, and reported all his words to al-Ma'mu'n and his minister al-Fadl.⁷⁴"

Thirdly, he prevented the Shi'ites from attending the assemblies of the Imam and listening to his talks. He entrusted this task to his chamberlain Muhammad b. 'Amru' al-Tu'si, and he prevented them from meeting the Imam. He treated the Imam rudely, and he, peace be on him, became angry with him. So the Imam rose, performed two *rak'as*, and said in his personal prayer (*qunu't*): "O Allah! O Possessor of inclusive power, wide mercy, uninterrupted kindnesses, successive boons, beautiful benefits, and overflow grants! O He who is not described by description; nor is compared to any like! O He who creates (men) and provides (them), inspires (them) and makes (them) speak, originates and legislates, has risen high and become lofty, ordains and does well, shapes and masters, provides arguments and makes them conclusive, grants and bestows lavishly upon (men)! O He who is exalted in might, so He escapes swift eyes! O He who is close in subtlety, so He passes through thoughts! O He who takes care of the kingdom by Himself, so there is no rival in the kingdom of His authority! (O He who) is One in magnificence, so there is no opposite in the invincibility of His station! O He by whose magnificence of awe the intricacies of the subtlest of imaginations are bewildered, before whose tremendousness the swift eyes of mankind fail! O He who knows the thoughts of the hearts of those knowers and sees the glances of beholders' eyes! Faces are humble in awe of Him; necks are lowly before His majesty; hearts

are afraid out of fear of Him; limbs shake with fright of Him! O Originator! O Innovator! O Powerful! O Invincible! O All-high! O Exalter! Bless him through whom prayer is honorable when blessing is called down upon him (i.e. the Prophet)! Take vengeance upon him who has wronged me, made little of me, and dismissed the Shi'ites from my own door! Let him taste the bitterness of abasement and disgrace; make him ousted among the dirty and homeless among the unclean![75](#)”

Allah responded to the Imam's supplications, for the mobs revolted against al-Ma'mu'n and were about to put an end to him, and he faced terror and disgrace which none can describe.

Al-Ma'mu'n dismissed the Shi'ites again and tried to annoy the Imam. When the Imam came to know of that, he washed, performed two *rak'as*, and said in his personal prayer (*qunu't*): “O Allah! You are Allah, the Living, the Self-subsistent, the Creator, the Provider, the One who gives life (to the dead), the One who makes (men) die, the Originator, and the Innovator. To You belongs munificence; to You belongs praise; to You belongs kindness; and to You belongs the command. You are One with no associate with You. O One, O Unique, O Single, O Eternal Refuge! O He who has not begotten; nor has been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one! Bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad!”

Then he supplicated Allah to drive away that which concerned him, and He removed from him al-Ma'mu'n's trickery and oppression.[76](#)

The Imam does not praise al-Ma'mu'n

The Imam, peace be on him, did not praise al-Ma'mu'n; nor did he flatter him. Rather he adopted toward him an attitude distinguished by earnestness, frankness, and bitter criticism for some of his works. As for al-Ma'mu'n, he burst with anger and hid that in order to follow the Imam, peace be on him. The following are some of the Imam's attitudes toward al-Ma'mu'n:

1. When al-Ma'mu'n presented the caliphate to the Imam and said to him: “I want to rid myself of the caliphate, vest the office in you, and pledge allegiance to you.”

Now, reflect on this frankness of the Imam in his response to al-Ma'mu'n. He, peace be on him, said to him: “If this caliphate belongs to you and Allah has made you possess it, then it is no permissible for you to take off the garment in which Allah has clothed you and to give it to other than you. If the caliphate does not belong to you, then it is not permissible for to give me that which does not belong to you.[77](#)”

Have you reflected on this profluent logic and undeniable argument which flows with truth and truthfulness? So al-Ma'mu'n lost his mind; he did not know what to say, and then he sought refuge with silence.

2. When the Imam refused to accept the caliphate, al-Ma'mu'n presented regency to him, so he answered him with this decisive answer, saying: “Through that you want the people to say: ‘Surely ‘Ali b. Musa’ (al-Ridha’) has not renounced the world; rather it is the world which has renounced him. Do you

not see that he has accepted regency and craved for the caliphate?”

As a result al-Ma'mu'n was indignant with the Imam and shouted at him, saying: “You always face me with what I hate! You have felt safe from my penalty! I swear by Allah, you should accept regency or I will force you to (accept) it! You should do that; otherwise, I will strike off your head![78](#)”

Through all his steps and works, the Imam, peace be on him, preferred Allah's good pleasure (to the worldly pleasures); he did not praise anyone; nor did he flatter any creature. If he had flattered al-Ma'mu'n, sought nearness to him, and satisfied his feelings, al-Ma'mu'n would not have assassinated him.

3. Yet another example of that the Imam, peace be on him, was frank with al-Ma'mu'n and did not praise him is that al-Ma'mu'n said to him: “O Abu' al-Hasan I thought about a thing and concluded correctness from it. I thought about our ancestry and your ancestry, so I have found that they have the same excellence and that our Shi'ites have differed over that because of caprice and fanaticism.”

So the Imam said to him: “There is an answer to this statement. If you like (it), I will mention it to you; if you dislike (it), I will keep silent.”

“I did not say it except to know what you have regarding it,” retorted Al-Ma'mu'n.

The Imam established an argument that the 'Alawides were more entitled to the Prophet than the 'Abba'sids and nearer to him than them, saying: “O Commander of the faithful, I adjure you before Allah! If Allah, the Exalted, resurrected His Prophet Muhammad, and he came out to us from behind one of those hills and asked you for your daughter's hand, would you marry her to him?”

“Glory belongs to Allah!” replied al-Ma'mu'n, “is there anyone who turns away from Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family?”

“Do you think that it is permissible for him to ask me for my daughter's hand?” asked al-Ridha'.

Al-Ma'mu'n kept silent and did not find any way to justify his closeness to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. That is because the Imam established an undeniable argument which is that he was among the children of Fa'tima al-Zahra", peace be on her. Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n said: “By Allah, you are closer to Allah' Messenger (than us).[79](#)”

The members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, were entitled to the caliphate not because of their nearness to Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, but because of their abilities, their talents, and their knowledge of what the community needed in administrative and economic fields.

The Imam refuses to appoint Governors

Al-Ma'mu'n asked Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, to choose and appoint some governors over some Islamic regions, but he refused to respond to this request, saying: "Surely I have entered in what I entered on the condition that I should not command, nor order, nor dismiss, nor counsel until Allah advances me before you (in death). By Allah, the caliphate is a thing about which I have not told myself. I was in Medina and frequented through its streets riding my own mount. The people of Medina and other than them asked me to accomplish their needs and I did. So they were like uncles to me; my letters are valid in the cities. If you increase me in favor, then my Lord has bestowed it upon me.[80](#)"

The Imam vigorously refused to interfere in any of the affairs of the state in order to indicate that the state of al-Ma'mu'n was illegal, and that he was forced when he joined it.

The Imam predicts that he will not enter Baghdad

Al-Ma'mu'n told Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, that he would enter Baghdad and told him about what he would do in it, so he asked him: "Shall we enter Baghdad?"

"You will enter Baghdad," the Imam, peace be on him, replied.

A Shi'ite heard this statement and became frightened, for he came to know that the Imam would not enter Baghdad. He was alone with the Imam and said to him: "I have heard a thing which has saddened me." He mentioned the statement, so the Imam, peace be on him, said to him: "I will not go to Baghdad. I will not see Baghdad; nor will it see me.[81](#)"

This is one of the proofs of his Imamate, for he did not leave Khurasa'n for Baghdad until al-Ma'mu'n assassinated him.

The Imam and al-Fadl Bin SAhl

As for al-Fadl b. SAhl[82](#), he was the most remarkable personality in the state of al-Ma'mu'n. He enjoyed wide-range powers, for he dominated all the organs of the government. So his role in the state of al-Ma'mu'n was like that of the Bara'mika during the days of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid. He was very skillful with political affairs, so concerning him, Ibra'him b. al-'Abba's says:

And if the battles become hot, I will send for them an opinion through which their phalanxes will be defeated.

When the swords become blunt, a resolution is carried out

by the opinion, so it quenches the thirst of their edges.

It (the opinion) will establish for a group (of people) its state and install in another (state) its mourners.[83](#)

These poetry lines give an account of the skill of al-Fadl at political affairs; they show that he through his own opinion could put an end to a state and establish another in the place of it, just as he did when he overthrew the state of al-Amin and established the state of al-Ma'mu'n.

Any how, al-Fadl was one of those who negotiated with Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, about regency. He threatened the Imam when he vigorously refused to accept it. We will mention some of the Imam's affairs with him as follows:

A false Suggestion for assassinating al- Ma'mu'n

Al-Fadl b. SAhl and Hisha'm b. Ibra'him tried to deceive Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and to destroy him. They came to him and asked him to ask the people to leave his assembly, that they might secretly negotiate with him. The Imam asked the people to leave his sitting-place, then al-Fadl took out an oath written in release and divorce and that for which there was no religious expiation, saying: "We have come to you to say the truth. We have come to know that the authority belongs to you, and the right is yours, O son of Allah's Messenger. Our consciences bear (witness) to what we say through our tongues. What we possess will not be released; our wives will be divorced; we will make thirty pilgrimages (to Mecca) on foot, on the condition that we should kill al-Ma'mu'n and make the authority pure for you, that the right may return to you."

The Imam was fully aware of their deception and their false statement. If they had been honest in their statement, they would have carried that out before their negotiations with the Imam, for they had come to know that he refused to accept all those attempts which Islam did not adopt, of which was assassination. Any how, he scolded them, saying: "You are ungrateful for the blessing; if I accept what you have said, then neither you nor I will be safe (from al-Ma'mu'n's punishment)."

Then they went to al-Ma'mu'n and told him about the statement of the Imam, and he rewarded them well. As for the Imam, he went in a hurry to al-Ma'mu'n and informed him of the matter. Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n came to know that the Imam did not harbor evil against him.[84](#) It is more likely that it was al-Ma'mu'n who made this plan in order to know the Imam's intentions toward him.

His informing against the Imam

The researchers who are aware of Islamic history say that al-Fadl was not a 'Alawide in thought[85](#), for he took against Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, terrible steps of which is that he informed al-Ma'mu'n of him, saying: "Surely you have entrusted regency to Abu' al-Hasan (al-Ridha') and taken it out of the children of your father. The populace, the scholars, the jurists, and the family of 'Abba's are not satisfied with that, and their hearts have turned away from you.[86](#)" Have you seen how al-Fadl provoked al-Ma'mu'n against the Imam and informed him against him? Surely he made al-Ma'mu'n harbor malice

and hatred against the Imam, peace be on him.

His Opposing the Imam

Al-Fadl vigorously opposed the Imam. He opposed the Imam when he suggested a certain idea and summoned al-Ma'mu'n to cancel it. The narrators have mentioned that al-Ma'mu'n visited the Imam and recited to him a letter regarding that some of his (military) forces had conquered some villages in Cabul. So the Imam asked him: "Are you pleased with conquering one of the villages of the polytheists?"

"Isn't there any pleasure in that?" retorted al-Ma'mu'n.

The Imam turned to him and guided him to the place of the pleasure which he had to follow, saying: "O Commander of the faithful, fear Allah with respect to the community of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, this authority which Allah has entrusted to you and singled you out with it, for surely you have wasted the affairs of the Muslims and vested them in other than you, while he has ruled them with something other than the rule of Allah. You have resided in this country (i.e. Khurasa'n), left the land of immigration and revelation. The Muha'jirin and the Ansa'r have been wronged besides you. The believers have badly been treated. The wronged will someday overexert themselves, but they will be unable (to earn) their expenses, to find someone to complain to him of their conditions, and to reach him.

"So, O Commander of the faithful, fear Allah regarding the affairs of the Muslims, return to the house of the Prophet and the source of the Muha'jirin and the Ansa'r. Do you not know that the ruler of the Muslims is like the pole in the middle of a tent, whoever wants it takes it?"

These words give an account of the Imam's frankness and sincere advice; in them there is neither praise nor complying with al-Ma'mu'n's feelings and inclinations. Al-Ma'mu'n turned to the Imam and asked him: "O my master, what do you think?"

The Imam advised him to follow the truth whereby was his salvation, saying: "I think that you must leave this country for the place of your fathers and grandfathers, take care of the affairs of the Muslims, and do not entrust them to other than you, for Allah will question you about your followers."

Al-Ma'mu'n responded to the Imam's view and said to him: "Excellent is your saying, O my master! This is the viewpoint."

Then he ordered the armies to prepare themselves to leave (Khurasa'n) for Medina (Yathrib). When al-Fadl heard of that, he became sad, went in a hurry to al-Ma'mu'n, and said to him: "What is this view which you have been ordered to follow?"

Al-Ma'mu'n told him about the Imam's view concerning taking Medina as a capital for his government. As a result al-Fadl spared no effort to disprove this view advising him to follow the opposite of what the

Imam had suggested, saying: “O Commander of the faithful, this is not the correct (view); yesterday you killed your brother and removed the caliphate from him; the children of your father, all Iraqis, your household, and the Arabs are your supporters. Then you have done this second event; surely you have entrusted regency to Abu’ al-Hasan (al-Ridha’) and taken it out of the children of your father. The populace, the jurists, the scholars, and the family of al-‘Abba’s are not satisfied with that, and their hearts have turned away from you.

“I think that you must reside in Khurasa’n, that the hearts of the people may relay on this (situation) and forget what was regarding the affair of your brother. In this country there is a group of shaykhs who have praised (your father) al-Rashid and come to know of the affair; therefore, consult them regarding that. If they advise (you to follow) that, then you carry it out.”

“Who are they?” asked al-Ma’mu’n.

“Such as ‘Ali b. Abu’ ‘Umra’n, Abu’ Yunus, and al-Julu’di,” answered al-Fadl.

It is worth mentioning that it was these persons who were indignant at the pledge of allegiance to Abu’ al-Hasan (al-Ridha’) and were not satisfied with it.

At last al-Ma’mu’n responded to al-Fadl’s viewpoint and turned away from the Imam’s in respect of taking Medina (Yathrib) as a capital for the kingdom.[87](#)

- [1.](#) We have mentioned his biography in the research on the Companions of the Imam and the Narrators of his Traditions.
- [2.](#) Ibn ‘Asa’kir, Ta’rikh, vol. 5, p. 331.
- [3.](#) ‘Uyu’n Akhba’r al-Ridha’, vol. 2, pp. 141–142.
- [4.](#) Al-Agha’ni, vol. 18, p. 29. Mu’jam al-‘Udaba”, vol. 4, p. 194. In al-Kashi’s Rijal, p. 314, it has been mentioned: “He (al-Ridha’) gave him six hundred dinars.” In al-Ittha’f it has been mentioned: “He have him one hundred dinars.” The latter narration is unlikely, for the Imam was famous for generosity and munificence.
- [5.](#) Muqaddamat Diwa’n Di’bil, p. 52.
- [6.](#) In al-Naja’shi’s Rijal, p. 197, and in al-Biha’r, vol. 12, p. 71, it has been mentioned: “The Imam gave Di’bil a green shirt and a ring whose stone was agate, and he said to him: ‘Keep this shirt, for I wore it and performed one thousand rak’as during one thousand nights and completed the Qur’an one thousand times.’”
- [7.](#) Abu’ al-Faraj al-Asfaha’ni, al-Agha’ni, vol. 18, p. 29. Mu’jam al-‘Udaba”, vol. 4, p. 194.
- [8.](#) Al-Biha’r, vol. 12, p. 71.
- [9.](#) Al-Murtada’, Ama’li, vol. 1, p. 484.
- [10.](#) Ibid.
- [11.](#) Abu’ al-Faraj al-Asfaha’ni, al-Agha’ni, vol. 18, p. 42.
- [12.](#) Mu’jam al-‘Udaba”, vol. 4, p. 194.
- [13.](#) Abu’ al-Faraj al-Asfaha’ni, al-Agha’ni, vol. 18, p. 42.
- [14.](#) Fayya’ is a war booty gained without fighting.
- [15.](#) Nu’r al-Absa’r, p. 147. Al-Ittha’f, vol. 163. Al-Biha’r, vol. 12, p. 71. Muqaddamat Diwa’n Di’bil, p. 53.
- [16.](#) Al-Dhari’a.
- [17.](#) Mahsar and ‘Arafa’t are two places in Mecca.
- [18.](#) The states of the reckless were those of the Umayyads and the ‘Abba’sis who made little of all the Islamic customs and values.
- [19.](#) The Banu’ of al-Zarqa” were the children of Marwa’n whom Allah’s Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family,

dismissed. As for al-Zarqa” she was Marwa’n’s mother and was among those dissolute women who lived before Islam. Al-‘Abala’t was one of Quraysh tribes.

[20.](#) Hind was the mother of Mu’a’wiya, the claimed companion of the Prophet, who created events and offenses in Islam.

[21.](#) Sumayya was the mother of Ziya’d, the criminal terrorist.

[22.](#) Di’bil means the Umayyad government who broke the covenant of Allah and made little of all the Islamic values.

[23.](#) He means that Umayyad government did not depend on a consultative committee nor on nearness to Allah’s Messenger.

[24.](#) He hints at the pledge of allegiance to Abu’ Bakr about which ‘Umar has said: “The pledge of allegiance to Abu’ Bakr was a random error from whose evil Allah has protected the Muslims.”

[25.](#) The Shelter (saqifa) which Di’bil has meant was that of the Banu’ of Sa’ida where they had plotted against the caliphate while the Prophet was shrouded had not been buried yet. This meeting resulted in removing Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, from the office of the caliphate, and this matter has brought upon Muslims afflictions and destruction.

[26.](#) The testamentary trustee was Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful. He was the testamentary trustee of Allah’s Messenger and the gate of the city of his knowledge. If he had undertaken the caliphate, he would have protected the Muslims from the stumbles.

[27.](#) The brother of the last of the messengers is Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, for the Prophet said to him: “O ‘Ali, you are my brother in this world and the next.”

[28.](#) Al-Ghadir is the famous place where the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, made the pledge of allegiance to Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful. The homage of al-Ghadir is part of Islam. So he who denies it denies Islam, as some great figures of the time say.

[29.](#) The verses which have been revealed regarding Imam ‘Ali are numerous, of which are: Ayat al-Muba’hala, Ayat al-Mawadda, Ayat al-Tathir, Ayat al-Tasaddiq bi al-Kha’tam, and others from among the verses which have praised and lauded the hero of Islam.

[30.](#) Al-‘Izza’ and Mena’t were two idols belonged to Quraysh, who served them apart from Allah.

[31.](#) He hints at the houses of the Sayyids from among the children of the Prophet who were killed by the swords of the Umayyads, to the extent that their house became void of those stars shone with the light of faith and monotheism.

[32.](#) The ‘Alawi Sayyids lived in these places which Di’bil has mentioned; wherein they spent the night through serving Allah and reciting His Book.

[33.](#) The one with calluses (Dhu’ al-Thafana’t) was the nickname of the master of worshippers, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, who had calluses like those of a camel in the places of his prostration due to his abundant prostration for Allah.

[34.](#) Di’bil hints at the generosity of the Household of the Prophet and that they gave food to the poor and the deprived during famines.

[35.](#) He hints at those anti-Ahl al-Bayt persons who were killed by the sword of ‘Ali, so when they remembered their dead they shed bitter tears.

[36.](#) How could the forces who deviated from the Ahl al-Bayt show love for the Prophet and his family?

[37.](#) Di’bil means that the opponents of Islam were gentle to the Prophet through their speech, but their hearts contained enmity against him.

[38.](#) Di’bil hints at the Holy Shrines of the ‘Alawi Sayyids; the first of their Holy Shrines is that of Imam ‘Ali, peace be on him, at Najaf, which is at the outskirts of Ku’fa, and the grave of the martyr Muslim b. ‘Aqil. In Tiba are the graves of al-Baqi’ Imams, peace be on them. In Fakh are the grave of al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. al-Hasan and the graves of other ‘Alawis.

[39.](#) At al-Jawza’n is the grave of the great martyr Yahya’ b. Zayd, who died as a martyr during the days of al-Walid, the Umayyad (caliph). Ba’khamra’ is a place (in Iraq) between Ku’fa and Wa’sit; wherein died as a martyr Ibra’him b. ‘Abd Allah b. al-Hasan during the days of the tyrannical (caliph), (al-Mansu’r) al-Dawa’niqi.

[40.](#) As for the grave which is in Baghdad, it is the grave of Gate to needs, Imam al-Ka’zim and of his grandson Imam al-Jawa’d. Many books have mentioned: “When Di’bil reached this poetry line, Imam al-Ridha’ asked him: ‘Shall I add two lines (to your ode) in this place?’ ‘Yes, O son of Allah’s Messenger,’ replied Di’bil. So he, peace be on him, has said:

“And a grave is at Tu’s. What a misfortune is that which has pressed the bowels through sighs!

“To the Mustering (or) until Allah sends al-Qa’im who will remove grief and distress from us.’

“So Di‘bil asked him: ‘Whose grave is at Tu’s?’ ‘It is mine,’ answered the Imam, peace be on him.” This (narration) has been mentioned in al–Mana‘qib (vol. 3, p. 450) and others.

[41.](#) For they had renounced the world.

[42.](#) By Taym, he meant Abu‘ Bakr; and by ‘Adi, he meant ‘Umar b. al–Khatta‘b. Di‘bil think that they are responsible for the distresses and tragedies which befell the Ahl al–Bayt. It was they who removed Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, from the office of the caliphate and brought upon the Prophet’s family various kinds of bitter misfortunes.

[43.](#) Di‘bil hints at the previous kings who prevented the ‘Alawi Sayyids from taking their own right and left the Sayyids from among their children hostage to separation.

[44.](#) The testamentary trustee was Imam ‘Ali the Commander of the faithful; the testamentary trustee of Allah’s Messenger and gate of the city of his knowledge. As for Di‘bil, he has condemned those who swerved the caliphate from him and entrusted it to other than him.

[45.](#) Di‘bil means that he loves and is sincere to him who loves and is sincere to the Household (of the Prophet) even if they are far from him in lineage; he shows enmity toward those who show enmity toward them even if they are his family and his daughters.

[46.](#) In a narration: “I am fearful in the world and the days of its effort.” In another narration: “When Di‘bil recited this line, the Imam, peace be on him, raised his hands in supplication and said: ‘May Allah make you secure, O Khaza‘i, on the Day of the Greatest Fear!’”

[47.](#) In a narration: “When Di‘bil reached this line, Imam al–Ridha‘ began turning over his palm of the hand and said: ‘Yes, by Allah, they are contracted.’”

[48.](#) In a narration: “After Di‘bil had finished reciting this line, Imam al–Ridha‘, peace be on him, began turning over his palm of the hand and said: ‘Yes, by Allah, they are contracted.’”

[49.](#) When Di‘bil had finished this line and the one after it, the Imam said to him: ‘O Khaza‘i, the Holy Spirit has spoken through your tongue.’”

[50.](#) Di‘bil, Divan.

[51.](#) Al–Anwa‘r al–Nu‘ma‘niya, vol. 3, p. 238.

[52.](#) Ibid.

[53.](#) Ibid.

[54.](#) Ibid., p. 239.

[55.](#) Biha‘r al–Anwa‘r, vol. 12, p. 29.

[56.](#) Sharh Khutbat al–Imam al–Ridha‘ fi al–Tawhid, a manuscript available in Imam Amir al–Mu‘minin’s Library, no. 1728.

[57.](#) Qur’an, 51, 49.

[58.](#) Al–Tawhid, pp. 34–41.

[59.](#) Al–Durr al–Nazim, p. 215.

[60.](#) Ibid., pp. 215–216.

[61.](#) Qur’an, 42, 20. Al–‘Alla‘ma has said: [The consensus (of scientists) in the two authentic books, Ahmed b. Hanbal in his Musnad, al–Tha‘labi in his Tafsir have narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abba’s, may Allah have mercy on him, who said:] “When Say I demand not, of you any reward for it (the toil of preaching) except the love of my relations was revealed, they asked: ‘O Apostle of Allah, who are your relations whose love you have made obligatory on us?’ ‘They are ‘Ali, Fa‘tima, and their two sons,’ he replied.”

[62.](#) Ibid., 33, 33. Al–‘Alla‘ma has said: “The interpreters (of the Qur’an) have unanimously agreed that this verse was revealed regarding ‘Ali, Fa‘tima, al–Hasan, and al–Husayn, peace be on them. Similarly, the consensus (of scientists) such Ahmed b. Hanbal, and the like, has narrated that it was revealed concerning them.”

[63.](#) Qur’an, 16, 91.

[64.](#) ‘Uyu‘n Akhba‘r al–Ridha‘, p. 2, 154–159.

[65.](#) Tanqih al–Maqa‘l, vol. 1, p. 471.

[66.](#) Mir‘a‘t al–Jina‘n, vol. 2, p. 13.

[67.](#) Jawharat al–Kala‘m, p. 146.

[68.](#) Haya‘t al–Imam Musa‘ b. Ja‘far, vol. 2, p. 439.

- [69.](#) Tuhfat al-'Alam, p. 36. Al-Biha'r.
- [70.](#) Usu'l al-Ka'fi, vol. 1, p. 189–190. 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, pp. 150–151. Al-Mana'qib, vol. 4, pp. 371–372. Kashf al-Ghumma.
- [71.](#) Al-Mana'qib, vol. 4, p. 372.
- [72.](#) His statement 'that you will be the history of the caliphs' is an allusion to the greatest event, namely entrusting regency to Imam al-Ridha', and that it will be the point of history for the people. Perhaps he wanted to say that you would be the last caliph.
- [73.](#) 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, pp. 169–170.
- [74.](#) Ibid., p. 153.
- [75.](#) Ibid., pp. 172–173.
- [76.](#) Ha'mish al-Musba'h, p. 293.
- [77.](#) 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 139.
- [78.](#) Ibid., p. 140.
- [79.](#) Kanz al-Fawa'id, p. 166.
- [80.](#) 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, pp. 166–167.
- [81.](#) Ibid., pp., 224–225.
- [82.](#) Al-Fadl b. SAhl al-Sarkhasi became a Muslim at the hand of al-Ma'mu'n in the year 190 A. H. He was the most knowledgeable of the people in astrology. Al-Ma'mu'n asked the mother of al-Fadl to send him what her son had left behind him. She sent him a sealed box. When he opened the box, he found in a silk piece of clothe in which al-Fadl had written in his handwriting: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. This is what al-Fadl b. SAhl has decided against himself. He has decided that he will live for forty years and will be killed between Ma' and Na'r." He lived for this period, then he was killed by Gha'lib, al-Ma'mu'n's uncle, at Sarkhas. An example of the marvelous poetry which Ibra'him al-Sawli has composed regarding praising him are the following:
- Fadl b. SAhl has a hand of which the like fall short.
 So its giving is for riches; its power is for the moment of death;
 Its inside is for generosity; and its outside is for kissing.
 Praising al-Fadl, Abu' Muhammad 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad says:
 By your life, though the noblemen in every city are great, they are (nothing) but creatures for al-Fadl.
 You see the great men are lowly before al-Fadl when he appears, and al-Fadl is lowly before Allah.
 He has become humble when Allah has increased him in exaltedness, and every great person with him is humble.
 Al-Fadl lost a son called al-'Abba's and became very impatient for him. So Ibra'him, the son of Imam Musa' b. Ja'far visited him, comforted him, and composed before him:
 Your reward after al-'Abba'ss is better than him,
 And Allah is better than you for al-'Abba'ss.
 "You are right," al-Ma'mu'n said. This has been mentioned in Wafaya't al-A'ya'n, vol. 3, pp. 209–211.
- [83.](#) Abu' al-Faraj al-Asfaha'ni, al-Agha'ni, vol. 9, pp. 31–32.
- [84.](#) 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 167.
- [85.](#) Ibid.
- [86.](#) Sayyid Ja'far Murtada', in his book entitled al-Imam al-Ridha', has mentioned that al-Fadl was not a Shi'ite, while Ibn Khulaka'n, in his book entitled Wafaya't al-A'ya'n (vol. 3, p. 209), and the like have mentioned that he was a Shi'ite.
- [87.](#) 'Uyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 160.

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