

## Chapter 2: The Historical Perception

### Attitude towards the Early History of Islam

The most important factor in the formation of Sunni and Shi'ite political thought is their attitude towards the history of Islam. Indeed, the importance of this discussion is not that, with its help, we can find out about the fundamentals of political thought, rather, it is the religious perception of these two sects in their entirety under the effect of this attitude; although the effect of such an attitude in the formation of their political thought is stronger than its effect in other issues.

The problem, as it was said in the previous chapter, is that the early history of Islam, especially at the time of the Senior Caliphs [*khulafa-ye rashidin*] and the Companions [*sahabah*] and the Followers [*tabi'in*] is of key importance to the Sunnis while, in the Shi'ahs view, this part of history is not distinct from the other periods of the history of Islam. This is not merely a theoretical belief, i.e. it is not that the Sunnis show a special religious respect to it while Shi'ites fail to do so. Its importance is because such a view has strongly affected the religious perception of the followers of these two sects, so much so that the Sunnis look at Islam, in its entirety, through this part of history because they consider it to be the realization and manifestation of the teachings of Islam while Shi'ites, on the other hand, look at this part of history through Islamic values and, therefore, have a critical stance towards it. As a precise understanding of this is of the utmost importance for understanding the religious perceptions of these two groups and especially their political thought, let's first deal this subject.

Sunnism gives a special religious stature and even attaches a divine sacredness to the history of the early period, at least to the end of the Senior Caliphs. One has to see why, how and at what time this belief was formed and what effect it had on their religious perception and especially the political thought and their social and historical developments.

The fact is that the history of Islam—i.e. after the death of the Prophet (S) to the end of the reign of the fourth of the Early Caliphs, and Sunnis in general have a consensus that this period is of special religious value and importance—was not of special importance to early Muslims. Not only did they not

believe in such a value, but they did not even distinguish it from other periods. Events that occurred later resulted in the formation of such a view.

In other words, the history of this period was realized in a form which was otherwise looked at in the subsequent periods, and these two were very different. The religious perception of the Sunnis and their political thought also followed such an attitude rather than the realization. Now let's see what the story was, what its ups and downs are, where it ended and why it was so. To clarify the discussion, first let's study the quality of its realization and then the quality of the formation of this attitude and belief.

The main point here, as we said, was that, according to the Muslims at that time, there was no position or office and no individual, indeed with the exception of the position of prophethood and the person of the Prophet (S) that was sacred.<sup>1</sup> We will later say that a small group of Muslims at that time put Imam 'Ali ('a) in a high position appropriate to what the Prophet (S) had advised. However, the caliphate and the caliphs did not have any special stature either. A brief study of the events of that time takes us to this conclusion.

## Selection of Abu Bakr

After the death of the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr was chosen as caliph. He was chosen to be the caliph and to substitute the Prophet (S) in their worldly affairs—merely as the Prophet's (S) caliph and nothing more than that, i.e. to run the society and administer its affairs. Indeed, it shall not be noted that the worldly, social and political affairs of Muslims had a different meaning at that time from what it means today.<sup>2</sup>

Islam at that time had created developments in the society according to its principles, laws and values and had founded numerous socio-religious, socio-political and economic-religious institutions that existed in practice. Abu Bakr was chosen as caliph in order to undertake responsibility for running such a society, a society whose worldly and religious affairs could not be separated. All of these had an inseparable relation to each other. The important fact is that the Islamic society from the very beginning had been formed and had grown and its religious and worldly affairs had been intermingled with each other so that the Muslims of the time did not have certain conditions in mind for someone to take office in such positions. It was merely being Muslim and especially being at the top of a system that mattered.<sup>3</sup>

For example, the communal prayers and the Friday communal prayers comprised one of the socio-religious institutions of the newly-founded Muslim society. In the Prophet's (S) time, when he was present, whether in Medina, during a travel or a war, these two prayers were led by him. Whenever he was absent, they were led by someone whom the Prophet had appointed as the general or substitute. For example, during the war, the prayers were led by the army general and in Medina in the Prophet's (S) absence, by the substitute appointed by the Prophet (S).

In the same manner, as long as the Prophet was alive, the public treasury was controlled by the Prophet (S) while, in his absence, the army general or a substitute appointed by the Prophet would take charge.

The same applied in the case of judgments and arbitration and in the administration of the political and military affairs. However, the fact that a person would be in such positions in those times did not indicate to the Muslims that he was of any special religious stature or position. The Muslims' experience when they were in Medina induced the concept that the ruler has responsibility for such position only on the ground that he is a ruler, no matter if the scope of his responsibility is wide or limited. Therefore, there was never the thought that having such positions would promote the ruler to a higher religious position.

In a chapter of his famous book that deals in detail with the currents that were formed after the Prophet's (S) death, 'Ali 'Abdu'r-Razzaq says in a part of his analysis on the events that led to the selection of Abu Bakr as such, "... on that day—the day of the Prophet's (S) death—the Muslims discussed the country, the government and the state they had to form. This was why they used such words as state, statesmen, ministry and ministers and talked about power and the sword, respect and wealth, splendor and mastery. The reason for all this was merging into the ruling system and trying to form the government, thus rising to rivalry with the Immigrants [*muhajirin*], the Helpers [*ansar*] and the senior Companions. The outcome was allegiance to Abu Bakr and making him the first king of Islam.

If we take a careful look at the conditions in which allegiance to Abu Bakr occurred and how he was installed as caliph, we will see that it was a political and state allegiance while having all the characteristics of new governments; like other governments have done: based on power and the sword.

This was the new government that the Arabs founded. It was an Arab state and an Arab government. However, Islam, as you know, belongs to the entire humanity. It is neither exclusively for Arabs nor for non-Arabs. However, this was an Arab state that had been founded based on religious invitation. Its motto was supporting the invitation and rising for it. Perhaps it has a great effect in the progress of the invitation. Certainly, it had a role in developing Islam. However, despite all these, it was still an Arab state that would reinforce the power of the Arabs and protect their interests. It made others show deference to them on the earth, like the other powerful conquering nations... The perception of the Muslims at that time was that, by selecting him, they would establish an earthly civil state. This was why they deemed it permissible to disobey and oppose it.

They knew that their difference in this respect is a difference in earthly rather than religious affairs. They quarreled over a political issue that had nothing to do with their religion and would not shake their faith. Neither Abu Bakr nor any other of the elite thought that leading the Muslims is a religious position or opposing it would be opposing the religion. Abu Bakr explicitly said, "Oh people, I am a person like you and I do not know. Perhaps you define for me as duty things that the Prophet (S) could bear. God selected the Prophet (S) from among the people and preserved him from harm and gave him innocence. I am a follower not a leader."

## The New Rendering

Later, however, for numerous reasons, Abu Bakr's selection was given a new interpretation. It was depicted to the people as if he had a religious position and represented the Prophet (S). Thus, the thought was formed that ruling the Muslims had a religious concept and position as representative of the Prophet (S). One of the most important reasons based on which this thought appeared among Muslims was the title given to Abu Bakr, i.e. the Prophet's caliph.[4](#)

It was based on such an interpretation of the ruler that the Muslims chose Abu Bakr as caliph. To them, he was an individual like others and had been chosen to a position that, in their view, lacked any religious stature.

Although this position and its duties and principally the new form of the newly founded Islamic society and its institutions were determined and defined by religion, this current meant to the Muslims of the time only that God wished the Muslims to live in such a society and conditions and it never meant that those appointed to such positions had to have certain religious qualifications. Here indeed the talk is about the image and perception that the Muslims had in this respect and not what, for example, the Prophet (S) had asserted. To comprehend the developments of those days, one mainly has to study this understanding and perception and the way it was formed and the influence it had.[5](#)

The best witness to what was said is the way Abu Bakr was selected and settled as caliph. Although his selection was generally accepted later and especially after pledging allegiance to 'Ali, on the first days it was subject to much controversy. His opponents, on one hand, were the Helpers, who did not want to accept the rule of the Immigrants[6](#) and, on the other hand, the Qurayshis, on top of them Abu Sufyan, who considered Abu Bakr's clan to be too low to rule the superior clans of Quraysh and, therefore, sought to select 'Ali or 'Abbas, the Prophet's paternal uncle.[7](#)

Another group was the Bani Hashim and the faithful devoted advocates of 'Ali, who opposed the selection [of Abu Bakr] merely on religious grounds.[8](#) This was the only current that existed in Medina. Many Muslim clans outside Medina opposed the selection and were later known as the Rejecting Party [*ahlu raddih*]. Although some of the tribes really turned to apostasy and turned away from Islam, a group of them only objected to the way Abu Bakr was chosen as caliph, although the expediency of the time and, later, of the history required that they should be accused of apostasy as well.[9](#)

What is of the utmost importance, however, is the controversial discussions between those who agreed and those who disagreed on the Abu Bakr issue. Other than a small minority that advocated 'Ali ('a) and emphasized the Prophet's ('a) advices and 'Ali's ('a) religious merits for the position and basically the importance of this position, what others said focused on a different argument. The argument was not what the Prophet's ('a) succession meant and what characteristics and qualifications it required and who could and should succeed him. Every group supported their own candidate. In other words, the issue had been reduced to a mere political and tribal competition with no religious element.[10](#)

As we said, only the opposition of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and his advocates had a religious element in itself. Their point, which was in the later periods explained by Imam ‘Ali himself in greater detail—especially during his caliphate, an example of which is the *Shiqshiqiyyah* Sermon [*khutbah Shiqshiqiyyah*]*—was, first of all, why the repeated advices of the Prophet (S) were ignored and, secondly, the person to be appointed to such a position required qualifications that could only be found in Imam ‘Ali (‘a). Therefore, any person other than him lacked such qualifications.* [11](#)

Addressing those who had surrounded Abu Bakr to pledge allegiance to him, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said, “I swear by God, o’ the Immigrants! Do not take power and reign out of the Prophet’s house to put in your own houses. Do not prohibit the right persons from caliphate or what they deserve. O’ Immigrants! I swear by God, we are the most rightful of the people thereto. We are the Prophet’s Household and deserve it more than you. Is it not true that he who recites the Book, he who is a jurisprudent in God’s religion and aware of the Prophet’s tradition and aware of the people’s affairs and turns away the bad and divides equally is among us? I swear by God that he is among us. Do not be capricious or else you will lose the God’s way and deviate from the truth.” [12](#)

## **Tribal Rivalry**

This was a word with a different tone. Others, while defending themselves, pointed to things other than the necessary qualifications and merits for such a position. Inter-tribal competition had been revived and everybody talked of and emphasized it. On the one hand, there was rivalry between the Immigrants and the Helpers and, on the other hand, there was competition within the Immigrants, each of whom had sought a certain person’s support. The Umayyad had surrounded ‘Uthman while Bani Zuhrah had gathered around ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf and Bani Hashim around ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. [13](#)

Abu Sufyan, who was not satisfied with Abu Bakr’s caliphate, well depicts the conditions at that time in a brief sentence, “I swear by God, I see a cloud of dust—which means the cloud of dust that is created during the war and attack under hooves of animals—which will be settled only by blood. O’ the children of ‘Abd Manaf! Why should Abu Bakr be in charge of your destiny? Where are the two who were held weak and humiliated? Where are ‘Ali and Abbas?” [14](#)

Nevertheless, in those days, the situation was such that ‘Ali’s (‘a) opposition was outshone by that of Fatimah (‘a), because, if ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib had insisted on his opposition, he would have been attacked—as he was frankly told, “If you express opposition, you will be killed.”—while the special position of Fatimah Zahra’ (‘a), who was a woman as well as the Prophet’s (S) only child, had some sort of security. Therefore, Imam ‘Ali swore allegiance after his wife [Fatimah] testified. Naturally, the other members of Bani Hashim and his special companions followed him in doing this. [15](#)

Such were the conditions in which Abu Bakr was installed as caliph. The quality of this selection and the nature of the speeches for approving or rejecting it indicate the mentality of the Muslims at that time about the issue of caliphate. Although Abu Bakr was a well-known person, what led to his appointment

as caliph was not his religious characteristics or stature, which was later much elaborated on and on which much was forged for different motivations. Rather, it was the simple perception of the Muslims about the Prophet's succession. To them, the Muslims did not attach any special religious status to this position. [16](#)

In the meanwhile, there were indeed other factors that were involved, the most important ones of which were probably the threats from outside the society in Medina, including the revolts by the Rejecting Party and the subsequent tensions among the southern and central Arabian tribes, which had for a while seriously threatened Medina. The Rejecting Party here means those who actually rejected Islam and intended to attack Medina not those who were thus named because of rejecting Abu Bakr's caliphate. The second danger was Rome and Iran [formerly Persia], the former being very serious, thus attracting attention to the outside and causing the internal differences to be forgotten, at least temporarily, and making the Muslims devote their attempts to protecting their existence.

To clarify the disorderly suspenseful conditions of those days, it will suffice to say that, only in the suppression of the apostates, more than 1,200 Muslims, some of whom could recite and had memorized the Qur'an, [17](#) were killed. [18](#) Considering the limited population of Medina and the entire Muslims at that time, this figure can well indicate how disorderly and worrying the situation was at the time. [19](#)

During Abu Bakr's caliphate, the Rejecting Party's revolt was suppressed and the internal conditions in Arabia became peaceful. Yet, the foreign threats were still in place and worried the Muslims, especially because the vassals of the two great powers of that time were in the neighborhood of the Muslims and might attack them at any time. [20](#)

Apart from this, on the last days of his life, the Prophet (S) equipped an army led by Usamah bin Zayd for fighting the Romans. Although the main intention of the Prophet (S) had probably been to keep away from Medina those who were likely to prepare the ground from deviating from his will on the issue of caliphate and Imamate, there was, however, danger from Rome's side that threatened the Muslims even during the Prophet's (S) lifetime. After releasing himself of the Rejecting Party, Abu Bakr sent an army led by Usamah to fight the Romans. This event, as he himself declared, was mainly an act to follow the Prophet (S) rather than to fight a real threat, although such a threat existed and had been a disturbing one. [21](#)

## **'Umar's Time**

Abu Bakr died in such conditions. 'Umar was selected as caliph following Abu Bakr's will. Caliphate was established for him for the same reason as it had been for his predecessor. The people expected him to undertake their worldly affairs and just that. 'Umar accepted to fulfill such a role and was thus accepted. There were many reasons why he was accepted peacefully and without any objection. It was partly because of the conditions in those days and the experience of Abu Bakr's succession while also partly due to his personal characteristics. [22](#) There was yet no religious stature although much was said in this

respect later. He neither considered himself to have any religious stature nor provided any proof to this end.

The people of his time also did not consider such stature for him and did not consider his rise to power to be due to such reasons although, as a ruler, 'Umar enjoyed the most religious and worldly advantages that a ruler could enjoy due to his position. However, this did not yet have anything to do with his religious stature. These advantages were due to ruling in a government rather than to the religious capacities of the ruler. Doubtless, 'Umar's personal characteristics had a much more important and effective role in his ascension to and continuation of his powerful ruling than his religious position.[23](#)

His acceptance was in fact the continued acceptance of Abu Bakr and the product of recognizing the same method although Abu Bakr had been selected and 'Umar's caliphate was a result of the former one's will. Yet, what is important is that, while selecting Abu Bakr, the issue of the Prophet's (S) succession was set forth in a way as to leave the way open for 'Umar's caliphate. Apart from this, Abu Bakr's caliphate was in fact the caliphate of three persons at the top of whom was Abu Bakr. The other two persons were 'Umar and Abu 'Ubaydah Jarrah. Interestingly, in the last moments of his life, 'Umar was sorry why Abu 'Ubaydah was not alive and said that, had he been alive, he would have selected him to the position.[24](#)

His personal characteristics indeed had a critical role. He was a man that knew the Arabs very well and knew how to lead them. After being appointed to caliphate, he said to the people, "An Arab is like a tamed camel that follows his guide. Wherever the guide takes him, he will follow. However, I swear by the God of Ka'bah that I will take you to the way I want."[25](#)

A more important fact to consider is that he entered the scene exactly at a time when the society needed an individual with his characteristics. No doubt, had he ascended to power at a sooner or a later time, he would have either been defeated or at least would have not have been in such a position. He was lucky because he stepped on to power at the right time, at a time when the conditions were proportionate to and harmonious with his mental and ethical characteristics. He was not one who could rule other than the way he did. His rule was the natural outcome of the realization of his characteristics. It was his nature that was in harmony with his zeitgeist and, since his politics were a creation of his nature, it was in harmony with the needs of his time. His strict spirit left no place for political maneuver and the latter was actually not much needed. Neither the Muslim society nor the Arabs at that time had any interest in such a method. The caliph was mentally and ethically a man like the mass of the people of his time and this was the key to his success.[26](#)

## Extraterritorial Threats

The extraterritorial threats were still in place at this time, and perhaps more strongly so. If there was no opponent within Arabia, Iran and Rome had become sensitive to the increasing power of the new religion and system. Iran showed more sensitivity in the meanwhile and the Muslims were seriously threatened.

In such conditions, public opinion was naturally focused on nothing but how to eliminate such threats. Again, the eyes were focused on the outside rather than the inside and there was no room for internal conflicts. The threats were so serious that 'Umar decided several times to go to war with Iran to promote morale of the soldiers, but each time Imam 'Ali stopped him. Apart from this, the wars of Muslims with Iranians or Romans in these days were mainly for eliminating the threats from the side of the latter rather than for any conquest and the prevailing feeling was based on reality rather than delusion. Such threats really existed and they considered themselves to be too weak to resist such great powers let alone defeat them, especially because the stories of punishments by the two powers, especially the Sassanid kings and their vassals in the region, were still vividly remembered and their dazzling splendor meant infinite power. A precise study of the historical documents relating to this period and the doubts as to take such action proves the latter statement.[27](#)

The first military clashes between them and their neighbors were limited. However, they made them aware of the vulnerability, fragility and internal weakness of their opponent's system. What accelerated this current was the adventurousness of some of the local commanders who were willing to wage and continue wars. In fact, it was they who encouraged and even forced them to wage an open all-out war with Iran and Rome. However, to the last moment of victory, he and many Muslims were concerned about a crushing defeat.[28](#)

This was the fact of the first half of 'Umar's life. What was later written about the background of his decision and that of the other Muslims to wage a war and *jihad* with Iran and Rome was mainly intended to depict their heroes as great and as powerful as possible. The fact is that the situation was different although things were different after conquering Mada'in (Tisfun) and Bayt al-Muqaddas (Jerusalem) and doubts and worries faded away and, from then on, they went on without fearing the two powers. Nevertheless, things changed in the second half of 'Umar's caliphate because both Mada'in and Bayt al-Muqaddas had been conquered, Iran and the Byzantine Empire had collapsed and the religious heroism and the social zeal had settled.

In the meanwhile, one has to mention the infinite plunder that no Arab had seen so far. This much wealth and the numerous captives who were of a higher culture and a more advanced civilization all of a sudden entered the plain primitive Arabian life and covered everywhere. Although the effects of such a massive sudden entrance appeared later at the time of 'Uthman, the second half of 'Umar's period was not unaffected by the consequences of this explosion. Despite 'Umar's strict attitude, many events are seen at the end of his reign that indicate dissatisfaction caused by the changes and developments, to which he reacted sharply.[29](#)

He was killed at the best time of his reign. If his caliphate had gone further, his power and influence would have been reduced because of the rapid developments that were taking place and he would not have achieved such a distinguished heroic position later given to him by Sunnis.

'Umar left power in conditions that were different from when he took power. At that time, the society was

a simple one with no view of the outside world and the foreign threats left no room for competition or opposition. However, in this time, neither was the society the same as the previous one nor were such threats in place. The Muslims had gathered wealth as well as power and had become a great empire while being on the threshold of experiencing a new world.[30](#)

This change and these developments had been very effective. Meanwhile, the elite, who were mainly from the Quraysh tribe, had been especially affected. In the last years of his life, ‘Umar complained to them and even asked God for his death. Once, addressing a group of Qurayshis, he said, “I have heard that you have separated yourselves from others and hold private meetings, so much so that once often hears that such and such person is a companion of such and such. I swear by God this is not to your benefit and to the benefit of your religion, prestige and respect. I see that your next generation will say it is the decision of such and such person and Islam will be divided. Gather together and meet each other as this will contribute to friendly relations and will give you a higher position in the eyes of the people. O’ God, they upset me and I upset them. They are tired of me and I am tired of them. I do not know which of us will leave this world sooner but I know that one of them will take charge. O’ God, call me to Thyself!”[31](#)

## The New Situation

In his last years, ‘Umar had to deal with such problems. His influence had been reduced, which was not only due to him in the new situation, but also because the society had been changed and the changes had entailed certain expectations and dissatisfactions, which he neither could respond to nor could bear. On his way back to Medina from his last *hajj* pilgrimage, he addressed the people, saying, “I have been told that such and such a person—he meant ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf—has said that if ‘Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to a certain person... Be careful not to be cheated by being said that ‘allegiance to Abu Bakr took place despite being sudden and not being planned for.’ Yes, that allegiance was like that but God saved the Muslims from its evils. Yet, there is no person among you whom everybody would obey...”[32](#)

The best evidence for what was said is the nature of ‘Umar’s will compared to that of his predecessor. Abu Bakr appointed ‘Umar and this was accepted but ‘Umar did not and could not do so. Abu Bakr ruled a uniform society and could easily have the final say and others would obey him, not because he had said so, but because there were so many things to worry about. Secondly, taking power in that time did not entail any advantages in their view. The caliph was an individual like the others. Everyone had a job and responsibility and his was the caliphate. In addition, in a limited poor society like that of Abu Bakr’s time, the ruler did not benefit from any material advantages. Therefore, neither was there a war for power nor could there be such a war.

This was not the story, however, when ‘Umar died. Neither the dangers nor the poverty or limitations were in place. It was natural that the influential individuals and groups would rise for taking power

exclusively for themselves. If the caliph did not have any special advantages on grounds of being caliph, yet he would be in a position that could benefit from many things, therefore, everybody looked at the position.<sup>33</sup>

The reason that ‘Umar, unlike his predecessor, did not mention anyone in his will is most probably because of this. Otherwise, he was neither weaker than Abu Bakr nor could speak less effectively. The problem was that the situation did not have such a requirement and he had cleverly found this out. Therefore, he was forced to make the exceptional will, an action in which no one imitated him nor could anyone have done so,<sup>34</sup> in spite of the fact that he had such a powerful character in the eyes of his supporters that they tried to imitate him in many cases.

‘Umar’s son, Abdullah, thus recounts the story of his father’s will, “Just before the death of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali and ‘Abdu’r-Rahman, Zubayr and Sa’d ibn Waqqas entered his room. Talhah was in Iraq at that time. He looked at them for a while and then said, ‘I thought about you ruling the people and found no difference other than the one among you have among yourselves. So, if any division takes place, it will be from you. The ruler can be any of the six, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, Zubayr ibn ‘Awwam, Talhah and Sa’d. Your people have to choose from among you. Then you ‘Uthman, if the power will be yours, do not give Bani Abi Ma’it domination over the people. If you, ‘Abdu’r-Rahman, are given power, do not give your relatives domination over the people. If you are in power, ‘Ali, do not make Bani Hashim dominant over the people.’ Then he told them, ‘Rise to consult to select one from among yourselves.’ Then they rose and consulted...”<sup>35</sup>

All of these indicated that the conditions had dramatically changed. There were more people who claimed caliphate and they claimed it more strongly while their supporters saw the benefits in defending them. Although such problems existed at the time when ‘Umar took power, they were not so acute, dangerous and critical.

It has been quoted that Imam ‘Ali rejected ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf’s request to follow the way of the two former caliphs if selected, saying, “Time has changed.”<sup>36</sup> Even if this is not a true story and has been made up, it at least shows the turbulent conditions at that time because every story that has been made up bears an element of truth. Otherwise, it would not be mistaken for truth.

## **‘Uthman to Take Power**

Finally, ‘Uthman took power. His victory was not that of a person, it was, rather, that of a faction who had introduced him because he was the weakest and the least worthy for the position from among the six-man group that ‘Umar had appointed. To prove this, it would suffice to say that, from among the virtues that were later forged to attribute to the caliphs and for him for reasons that we will talk about later, none relate to his personal capabilities. They were entirely based on his relation to the Prophet (S) or his psychological experiences.<sup>37</sup>

Although 'Uthman was an unworthy and weak person, the problem is that the situation had changed even where it did not relate to his power and merits. Lack of a foreign threat, easily obtained massive wealth and the consequences thereof in a retarded tribal society that suffered chronic intertribal disputes, increasing factional influence which the caliph represented or was a puppet of and which only considered but their own personal interests. Lack of a powerful centrality that was accepted and respected by all, self-interest and recklessness of the state governors had created a complex situation.

The weakness of the caliph was an addition to this because the other claimers of caliphate were looking at the position greedily while considering themselves worthier and more rightful to the position. The situation had become so difficult that even the mass of the people felt themselves in difficult conditions and, after several times objecting, came to Medina to object to the caliphate openly, which did not work until all this ended with the caliph's murder.

It would be appropriate here to quote Ibn Khaldun on the same changes and developments. Knowing his views contributes to the understanding of the early Islamic developments, especially from the middle of 'Umar's period onwards and especially 'Uthman's caliphate and that of Imam 'Ali. Although this would be lengthy, we have to quote a major part of it.

## Deep and Rapid Developments

“... thus they were away from material comfort and pleasures whether because of their religion, which called them to avoid worldly pleasures or because of their Bedouin life and the violence and difficulty with which they lived and to which they were used to, as in the case of the Mudir tribe, which was in shortage of food and in living conditions worse than any other people in the entire world because they lived in Hijaz, which was void of any farm or means of animal husbandry and were away from the cultivated areas and the crops that were obtained in the lands because they lived in remote areas. Apart from these, the crops of these areas were exclusive to tribes that had control of the areas, such as Rabi'ah and the tribes in Yemen. Therefore, they never reached for those prosperous areas and often ate scorpions and *khabzduk*—a stinking dirty animal—and were proud of eating *'ilhiz*, which is the camel wool mixed on stone with blood and then cooked. In terms of food and housing, Quraysh lived in conditions similar to those of Mudir until the Arabs united under the flag of religion because God respected them because of Muhammad's (S) prophethood.”

“Therefore, they led military expeditions to Iran and Rome and claimed lands that God had granted them based on His true promises and took the throne by force and dealt with their worldly affairs.

Consequently, they achieved welfare and power, so much so that the share of a single cavalryman from the booties in some wars amounted to 30,000 gold coins or something close to that. Therefore, they reached an unlimited wealth. Nevertheless, they were still violent on life, as 'Umar made his clothes out of patches of animal skins and 'Ali said, “O' you gold and silver, go and cheat another person.” Abu Musa avoided eating chicken because it was not a custom among Arabs to eat chicken because of its

rarity. Therefore, they would eat wheat flour with bran yet they were considered to be the most powerful people in the world because of the wealth they had acquired”.

“Mas’udi says, “In ‘Uthman’s times, the Prophet’s Companions acquired a large amount of property and land. When ‘Uthman himself was killed, there were 150,000 *dinars* and 1,000,000 *dirhams* in his treasury and the price of his landed property in Wadi al-Qura—an area close to Medina—and Hunayn—an area between Ta’if and Mecca—and other areas was worth 200,000 *dinars* while he had a large number of camels and horses. 1/8 of one item of the Zubayr’s properties after he left was 50,000 *dinars* while he left, after his death, 1,000 horses and 1,000 female slaves. Talhah each day acquired 1,000 *dinars* worth of products from Iraq and more than this amount from the area of Sharat”.

“There were 1,000 horses, 1,000 camels and 10,000 sheep in ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf’s stable. One quarter of his inheritance amounted to 84,000 *dinars*. Zayd ibn Thabit left so many gold and silver ingots that an ax was used for breaking them. This was in addition to the property whose price amounted to 100,000 *dinars*. Zubayr built himself a house in Basrah and other houses in Egypt and Kufah and Alexandria.”

“In addition, Talhah built a house in Kufah and another house in Medina, for which he used plaster, bricks and teakwood—which grew only in India and whose wood is black and hard and does not rot in soil. Sa’d ibn Waqqas built himself a house in ‘Aqiq—an area in Medina, Yamamah, Tahamah, Ta’if, Najd, etc.—which had a high ceiling with large premises with crenellated walls. Miqdad built himself a house in Medina that was plastered on the interior and the exterior. Waya’li ibn Minbah left some land, water, and the like while the price of his other property was 300,000 *dirhams*.”

“As we saw, the property and wealth acquired by the Arabs were thus and they cannot be religiously blamed for this because their wealth was property that they obtained as booties and *fay’* and they were not extravagant in spending it. Rather, they chose the middle way in their manners and lifestyle. Therefore, having much wealth was not blamed on them. If acquiring a great deal of wealth can be blamed, it is because the owner chooses the extravagant way and deviates from the middle path.”

“Nevertheless, if the powerful go on the middle path and spend their wealth for the good and charitable purposes, increase in their wealth will contribute to doing good things throughout the world. As the simple and Bedouin life of that people was gradually forgotten and, as we said, they were influenced by statesmanship and power and their statesmanship contributed to their wealth, yet their domination over the conquered countries was not put at the service of doing bad things and they did not go beyond the limits prescribed by the principles of the right religion...”<sup>38</sup>

## [The Great Crisis](#)

These were the conditions at the time of ‘Uthman—and later inherited by ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. As we have already mentioned, these conditions were mainly caused by the rapid consecutive conquests of civilized

and wealthy lands of that time. However, 'Uthman himself had an effective share in making further severe this great crisis. Shahrestani, who is an ardent supporter of 'Uthman, thus sets forth the story of his becoming the caliph, his numerous mistakes, the people's withdrawing support from him and finally his murder, "Everybody swore allegiance to 'Uthman. The affairs of the society were put in order and, the call to Islam continued at his time as well. Many conquests were made and the Public Treasury [*bayt al-mal*] was filled. He treated the people well and generously until his relatives from the Umayyad put him on the verge of collapsing. They suppressed the people and he was suppressed as well. In his time, there were many disputes, all from the side of the Umayyad.

"Among these were returning ibn Umayyah to Medina, whom the Prophet had rejected and was known as "*Tarid Rasul Allah*" [rejected by the Prophet]. 'Uthman interceded on his behalf during Abu Bakr's caliphate, but it was of no avail. 'Umar exiled him to 40 *farsangs* [almost 240 km] away from his residence. Also exiling Abudhar to Rabdhah and marrying his daughter to Marwan ibn Hakam and giving to him 1/5 of the booties from Africa, which amounted to 200,000 *dinars*.

He also returned and gave shelter to his foster brother 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Sarh, whose killing was allowed by the Prophet. 'Uthman gave Egypt to him and Basrah to 'Abdullah ibn 'Amir. Then, there happened what happened and other things took place by which he was troubled. His army generals were Mu'awiyah, the governor of Syria, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amir, the governor of Basrah, and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, the governor of Egypt. All of them disrespected and left him until his destiny of being killed in his own house came true."<sup>39</sup>

The story of acceptance and killing of 'Uthman compared to the two previous caliphs clearly indicates that neither the acceptance of the caliphs shows that the people of the time believed in a higher religious position for them nor that such a position had any religious significance at that time. He was accepted because 'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, who had been made the arbitrator of the six-man group, chose him for the position and was killed because he did not listen to what the objectors said and he ignored his obligations and promises to them.

## Public Perception

Now let's see who the objectors were and why they objected. They were Muslims from various areas who were fed up with the irreligious and reckless behavior and oppression of their rulers and took their complaints to the caliph while the latter did not pay attention to such facts. They called the caliph to religion and to protect the religious rules and regulations because they believed that the caliph had made his non-pious and reckless relatives and friends the rulers of the Muslims. This was actually the fact in practice.<sup>40</sup>

The other trend of this objection indicates the perception of the Muslims at that time about the caliph and even the position of caliphate. Their objection, in the first place, meant that the caliph deviated from the right path and he had to be reminded of this. Their subsequent insistence meant that the caliph insisted

on his wrong way and, therefore, had to be resisted. This resistance went so far as to result in surrounding and finally murdering him. However, this was not yet the end of the story. ‘Uthman had lost his position as a Muslim to such an extent that he was not buried for three days and, after this, he was buried somewhere inappropriate.[41](#)

If the judgment of the next generations about him was to be affected by the way the Muslims treated him, he would be put in a position much lower than a regular Muslim. However, subsequent actions by Mu‘awiyah for exculpating him and giving him sanctity were so that he was given a status equal to that of the two previous caliphs. This point has always been a weak one in Sunni theological and ideological arguments. What practically put ‘Uthman in a status equal to the other of the Senior Caliphs was the propaganda by Mu‘awiyah and his successors. Those who have a critical attitude towards the early history of Islam have blamed him for the basis of the propaganda and the forged information as well as the unallowable actions of ‘Uthman. In the past, the Mu‘tazilite were mainly so and, in the contemporary times, religious intellectuals and those with revolutionary and especially military tendencies are among such critics. We will later talk in greater detail in this respect.[42](#)

Nonetheless, the Muslims’ attitude towards ‘Uthman is the best example of their perception of the position of caliphate and the person in such a position. When he was chosen to this position, nobody objected. He practically received general acceptance similar to that of ‘Umar[43](#) Therefore, subsequent objections were not due to lack of primary acceptance. Rather, they were because of his mistakes, which put him in such a low position that everybody, even his friends and former allies, opposed him.

The best reason is what Zahri, a first-century scholar, says in this respect, “‘Uthman was the caliph for twelve years. In the first six years, nobody objected to him. The Quraysh loved him more than they had loved ‘Umar because ‘Umar had been strict while ‘Uthman treated them gently. Then, ‘Uthman managed things loosely and assigned the affairs to his relatives and friends and gave away a great deal to them. The people condemned this and opposed him.”[44](#)

If the caliph and the caliphate meant to the Muslims of those days what was later said they did, they must have not risen against him in that way, especially since ‘Uthman was one of the Senior Caliphs, i.e. he was among those who were later attached the highest spiritual and religious position. The story of ‘Uthman is the best witness to the fact that it was the Muslims in the later periods that otherwise depicted the position of caliphate and the caliph and especially those of the Senior Caliphs while attributing this to the early Muslims or even to Islamic beliefs and they elaborated on this so much that it would hardly be doubted.[45](#)

## **[‘Ali and Accepting the Caliphate](#)**

In such a difficult situation, the unsatisfied masses went to ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) and chose him to caliphate despite his initial refusal. In fact, this was the first time that the mass of the people decided on their own to pledge allegiance to the worthiest person. ‘Umar and ‘Uthman took to power because of the

wills of the previous caliphs. The case of Abu Bakr was not like that of ‘Ali (‘a). A limited number initially pledged allegiance to him and the events that occurred rapidly—because of the covert and overt competition between the Immigrants and the Helpers and between the tribes of Aws and Khazraj as well as because of the foreign threats—stabilized his situation. It was perhaps because of this that later ‘Umar said on different occasions, “Allegiance to Abu Bakr was a sudden action not thought about and God saved Muslims from the evils of it. So, kill whoever wants to repeat the same.”[46](#)

Imam ‘Ali took power in the worst conditions possible and had to bear problems in the causes of which he had no share. Basically, the people who went for allegiance to him in great numbers sought solutions to the problems. In their view, ‘Ali was the only person that was capable of solving them. Almost all of those who swore allegiance had such an intention.[47](#) The number of those who did so with the claim of ‘Ali’s inherent merits for the position of caliphate and for following the Prophet’s advice was small although ‘Ali could overcome the problems later even with this small group.

The fact is that none of the previous caliphs took power in such difficult conditions. After a while, the claimers, who were considering taking the position in the later times of ‘Umar’s period and had prepared themselves at the time of ‘Uthman, began expressing their opposition. Delay in opposition was due to fearing the large masses of people who had encircled Imam ‘Ali (‘a). If someone other than ‘Ali took power, they would still oppose him because the society had been torn apart. It was as if everybody, or at least those exerting an influence, had lost control of themselves. They neither knew themselves or their status nor had an appropriate expectation from themselves or their society.[48](#)

For example, consider the heads of the opposition to ‘Ali. You can see that what they expected was far beyond their capacity or status and, if they did not share opposition to ‘Ali as a person at top of power, they would oppose each other as well. Was it not Talhah and Zubayr who pulled on each other’s cloaks when disagreeing on who should lead the prayer for the Jamal army and they lashed their horses on the face?[49](#) Was it not Marwan ibn Hakam, a member of the Jamal army, who was accused of killing Talhah for revenge; at least he expressed happiness over his death.[50](#) Or could Mu‘awiyah bear these or could these bear Mu‘awiyah? Apart from these, was there not the probability that impartial influential persons who neither pledged allegiance to Imam ‘Ali nor opposed him would rise against any other person who would be caliph? But, ‘Ali’s unparalleled personality and background stopped them from doing so although they did not stand beside him either.[51](#)

The problem, as we said, was that the social, moral and psychological order had been disrupted. The problem was not knowing themselves and mistaking their capabilities. The problem is not that ‘Ali could not put these conditions in the right order; no one else could put the collapsed society with individuals who had become rebellious in the right order. These individuals had to be stopped by force and military action. Unfortunately, however, after these ups and downs, this order and system was established by Mu‘awiyah.

‘Ali provides a wise brief account of the conditions at that time and the many changes that had occurred.

Once, when he was the caliph, someone ironically told him, “Why have so many people united to oppose you while they had united to support the first two caliphs?” ‘Ali said in response, “Because they [the first two caliphs] ruled people like me while I rule people like you.”[52](#)

## Sociopsychological Disorders

These were the facts. The situation had changed entirely. Imam ‘Ali’s problems were mainly due to these changes. The opening of a new horizon to a limited, closed and poor society and converting its local government to a vast empire, which encompassed the Iranian (Persian) Empire and a major part of the Roman Empire not only created new complex problems, but more importantly, affected the morals, thoughts, spirits, expectations, ideals and wishes of the early Muslims. They did not want to or perhaps, because of their new characteristics, could not bow to the religious rules and fundamentals. They wanted a religion that they could interpret on their own, a religion that would serve their goals and wishes rather than the other way round. This is why they could not bear a person like Imam ‘Ali (‘a). An example of this follows.

During the war of Siffin, Imam and his outstanding companions were trying to prevent war by any means. One of such companions was ‘Ammar. He tried to preach to Mughayrah ibn Shu‘bah to prove the Imam’s truth but the latter pretended he did not know what he heard although he well knew the Imam and his background and had even at the beginning of his caliphate told him, “Reinstante Talhah, Zubayr and Mu‘awiyah in their positions so that the people would unite on pledging allegiance to you and the solidarity would not be disturbed, then you can do what you want.” When he found out that ‘Ali did not pay attention to this suggestion, said on the following day, “After reflecting on the issue, I found out that I had made a mistake and the truth is what you thought.”[53](#) Imam said to ‘Ammar, “Leave him, because he would not take from religion other than what would bring him closer to this world. He actually makes himself mistake affairs so as to find excuses for his mistakes.”[54](#)

Indeed, one should say that not only could they not bear the Imam, they could not bear any other person either. Their joint opposition to the Imam was actually because he had the power and did not pay attention to their unlawful and mainly impractical wishes. This was the cause that united them or at least prevented any clear difference between them from appearing. Such unity would indeed collapse in sensitive moments and the disputes and tensions would appear.[55](#)

Nevertheless, during his caliphate, ‘Ali had to fight those who rose to fight him. The wars were a natural result of the complications that dated from the pre-Islamic era and had appeared from the middle of ‘Umar’s caliphate. This period ended by Imam ‘Ali’s martyrdom and Mu‘awiyah’s taking power.[56](#)

There are many people who say that the problems during ‘Ali’s caliphate were due to his strict approach that was based on justice and the Religion. Although this is right, the fact is that all the problems were not caused by this single reason. The roots of many of them have to be sought in the evolved conditions of those days.

A full-fledged deep development had occurred that would drown anything and anyone. Only a small number of faithful and pure Muslims were saved from the current; those who joined 'Ali and stood by his side to the last drop of their blood while many of them were martyred in the three wars.[57](#)

## The Disrupted Society

This disrupted situation could be put in order neither by Imam 'Ali nor by any other person. Quite on the contrary to what many old and new writers have said, if the first two caliphs had been in the same situation as 'Ali had, things would not have changed greatly.[58](#) The success of those two in maintaining the unity and social order was indebted to the conditions of those days rather than to their personal characteristics or general policy. Undoubtedly, if 'Ali had been chosen as caliph in their time, he would have been much more successful than they were. This is to a certain extent true even about 'Uthman. His failure did not result just from his negative characteristics. Most probably, if any of his two predecessors had been caliph in his time, the situation would not have been so different and they would have faced more or less the same problems.

These writers have forgotten that problems of 'Uthman were in the first place the continuation of the problems that 'Umar faced in the last years of his caliphate and were actually the side effects of the new situation that had been created mainly by the new conquests. In his last years, 'Umar felt that he had lost his influence and could not rule with the same power and decisiveness of the first years. It was very difficult for him to accept this fact and, as we have already mentioned, on several different occasions he expressed his wish to die.

However, it is as if 'Ali's critics have forgotten all this. This was because, in their analysis, they fail to consider the rapid essential developments of the conditions and they have evaluated the degree of success of each of the caliphs merely based on their policies and personal characteristics.[59](#)

Even if Mu'awiyah, who was known for his tolerance, tactfulness and policies, had taken charge immediately after 'Uthman's murder, he would have faced the problems that Imam 'Ali faced.[60](#) Doubtless, the Jamal Companions would oppose Mu'awiyah much more strongly than they opposed 'Ali because they admitted the religious and personal worthiness of 'Ali and even the legality due to public allegiance to him and only brought excuses. They knew this and, therefore, 'A'ishah on several occasions decided to return while each time she was stopped from doing so by the lies she was told [61](#) and she later very much regretted what she had done.[62](#) Zubayr also left the front in the last moments, because he could not convince himself to fight Imam 'Ali.[63](#)

However, in their view, not only Mu'awiyah lacked any worthy past, but they also considered themselves much more superior and worthier than Mu'awiyah. Apart from this, most probably, people like Sa'd ibn Waqqas and others, who neither supported nor opposed Imam 'Ali, would have opposed Mu'awiyah. To them, it was incomprehensible and unacceptable that Mu'awiyah should be caliph immediately after 'Uthman and they should follow him. Long after taking power, Mu'awiyah still feared them and

considered them as impediments to his succession by Yazid.[64](#)

This is also true in another way about those who accepted the Imam's caliphate. People like Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abadah, even if the Imam was not on the scene, would surely oppose Mu'awiyah or his likes. Their opposition to Mu'awiyah was not because they were among the supporters of 'Ali and then 'Ali opposed Mu'awiyah. Their opposition was a serious and deeply rooted one. They fought beside 'Ali because they thought he was right. Even if there was not such a person to stand beside and fight, the situation would not be much different as Mu'awiyah feared them even after 'Ali was martyred.[65](#)

It was thus that the Rebels [*khawarij*] appeared unavoidably. The problem of the Rebels was not born out of the Arbitration [*hakamiyyat*]. The event made public a problem that existed even in the Prophet's time. They were violent, strict Bedouins who basically comprehended the religion otherwise, with a very strict interpretation, and it was based on the same understanding that they objected even to the Prophet (S). It is well known that one day a member of the Bani Tamim tribe, who later became one of the heads of the Rebels and was killed in the Jamal war—Dhu'l-Khuwaysarah—when the Prophet distributed the booties, objected to him, saying, "O' Muhammad, why didn't you distribute them fairly?" The Prophet got angry and said, "Are you saying I did not act fairly? With whom can you find justice other than with me?" Then, the Prophet said that they would be a group who would rebel against the religion and would have to be fought.[66](#)

Some time was needed to pass and some developments had to take place before this Bedouin group with its strict interpretations and misunderstandings would be formed to stand up against the ruling system. It would be a sheer mistake to say that they were formed out of the Siffin war and the story of the Arbitration [*hakamiyyat*]. They were a tumor within the Islamic society that finally secreted its infection and indeed the conditions at the time of Imam 'Ali were so that they found the right time to show themselves.[67](#)

Definitely, if Mu'awiyah was in 'Ali's place, he would act more powerfully and extensively. Their objection to 'Ali was, "Why did you accept the Arbitration? You have to regret this act of yours!" This was the only objection they could have because, in their opinion, 'Ali had never deviated from the right path of Islam and, therefore, many of them changed their mind after the Imam and his companions provided some explanation and left the war front in Nahravan. But, could they treat Mu'awiyah so?

A person like Mu'awiyah was, in their eye, the manifestation of oppression, violation, infidelity and irreligiousness. Thus, they resisted him and his successors when they came to power. It should be said that they created epics in doing so. Their resistance and fighting against them lasted to the beginning of the 'Abbasid period and they finally faded away not with military power but because the grounds for their presence and continuation faded away and those who remained reformed and modified their thought, beliefs and practice so that they became like the other Muslims.[68](#)

## The Origin of the Problems

The conclusion is that ‘Ali’s (‘a) problems were not just rooted in his justice-seeking attitude. A major part of the problems were due to the conditions of those days and any other individual in his place would face the same problems. If later Mu‘awiyah settled in power, it was more because of the conditions that were in place after ‘Ali’s caliphate rather than because of Mu‘awiyah’s personal characteristics. Most of his rivals and claimers had been killed in the fight with ‘Ali and the bitter experiences of those days had exhausted and fatigued the people and they were no longer willing to respond positively to the call by influential individuals who had claims on power. It was as if the society had been tamed and lost its turbulence while seeking a power that would bring about security. At this time the people thought that it was only Mu‘awiyah who could do so with the help of his obedient Syrian supporters. Although he later brought about a security like that in a cemetery among the dead, which meant divesting the people of all their freedoms and dignities and violating all the principles of Islam.<sup>69</sup> This was a brief account of the story of how ‘Ali became the caliph and of the oppositions against him. ‘Uthman’s inefficiency and nepotism and the violations and recklessness of his governors made the people support ‘Ali. The people went to ‘Ali to pledge allegiance in such great numbers that his two sons were injured. They went to ‘Ali themselves so it would not make sense to talk about his being accepted by the people. They had made their choice before pledging allegiance.

There were other factors as well. For example, what Montgomery Watt says about the cause of Mu‘awiyah’s victory and the problems that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) faced, “Mu‘awiyah was supported by the Syrian Arabs who were ruled by him for many years. Most of them had not come from the desert and were from families who had lived in Syria for one or two generations and, therefore, were more reliable than the Bedouins whom ‘Ali (‘a) relied on. The superior situation of these Syrian Arabs was one of the main reasons for Mu‘awiyah’s success.”<sup>70</sup>

The opponents and objectors to ‘Ali were in fact troublemakers and adventurous people who would oppose any other person that was to be in ‘Ali’s place. Their objection was why they were not on top of power. What put them in the same front was their shared opposition to ‘Ali rather than sharing the same beliefs or methods. It was them whose propagandas, threats, or subornation created a gap in the united line of the masses of people who had directly pledged allegiance to ‘Ali or had recognized him. Otherwise, the fact is that, except for a small number, everyone had accepted ‘Ali as caliph. It can even be said that this popular acceptance was more extensive than that of the past caliphs.<sup>71</sup>

We remind that the story of ‘Ali’s becoming the caliph was different from those of the three previous caliphs. Although the people who surrounded and swore allegiance to him generally looked at him as they had at the previous caliphs and wanted him to take charge of their worldly affairs, there were still some among his supporters who swore allegiance to him because they thought he was the right person to succeed the Prophet (S). Their allegiance was not just for having a leader for their worldly affairs. Rather, it was an allegiance to the right successor of the Prophet (S) both in their worldly and in their

religious affairs, i.e. an allegiance to one who was worthy of the position of Imamate in its deep and extensive sense, an Imamate that was the continuation of Prophethood, a divine mission and a natural and logical consequence thereof. Although they were small in number, they kept remained by 'Ali's side and would call the people to him while also having a critical role in 'Ali's wars and were by and large martyred during the wars.[72](#)

## [A Distorted Picture of Reality](#)

This was the reality of the history of the Senior Caliphs as it occurred. If the first part is peaceful and without tension, it is because of the foreign threats and being busy dealing with the internal threats, poverty, the simple and narrow society. If the next part is disturbed and full of tension, it is because of the new conditions that were created as the foreign threats had been removed and the wealth that had flowed in. Appointing the caliphs was a regular thing to the people of that time. In their view, the caliphs were ordinary people and their position did not have any significance. The caliphs themselves had the same view.

When Abu Bakr said, "Understand me; I am not the best of you." Or "There is a Satan who overcomes me. If I go the wrong way, lead me back to the right way", he neither joked nor was it a litotes. He really thought like that and the others viewed him that way. When 'Umar said, "Watch me. If I make a mistake, notify me.", he was serious. When an Arab stood up to say, "I swear by God that, if you go the wrong way, we'll use our swords to bring you back to the right way.", in fact he was expressing the perception of the people of his time about the caliph and basically the position of caliphate.[73](#)

Later, however, as we will explain, things were looked at and depicted differently. The stories gradually become less and less worldly and more and more religious and spiritual and even sacred. The period of history that was the history of the early Muslims was depicted as the history of the realization of Islam in its entire and pure form as part of the sequence of the other Islamic periods or even in line with the religion itself. They even become criteria for interpreting the religion and given a stature equal to that of the Prophet's (S) time. Now the problem is how this occurred, why and what the consequences were.

After Mu'awiyah had absolute power and Imam Hasan was forced to keep silent, he did things that later became the source of many important changes in the history of Islam and even in the understanding of the Muslims themselves. This does not mean that he knew the results of his actions. Perhaps he pursued other goals but his actions were very much effective in the structure of Islamic theology, jurisprudence and ideology, so much so that it would not be an exaggeration to say that, without considering what he did, one cannot find out about the changes in the understanding of the Muslims about Islam and Islam in its entirety.[74](#)

Mu'awiyah had important opponents even in the peak of his power and perhaps he knew them well. They were 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr, 'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr, 'A'ishah, Sa'd ibn Waqqas, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abadah and, in general, the companions of and the Shi'ites supporting

Imam 'Ali ('a). Except for the opposition of Shi'ites and of the Rebels, which was on ideological grounds, the rest were politically motivated. However, Mu'awiyah was clever enough and knew enough about the people and the right time to tackle his political opponents and to suborn and threaten them to silence. Therefore, he could bear them. What was unbearable to him and he even feared was the heavy shadow and the attraction of 'Ali ('a).

Indeed 'Ali ('a) had already been martyred by that time. He feared his personality rather than his person. Such a personality opposed the legality and the absolute domination of his. If he could break the personality and sacredness, he both would have taken the historical revenge of himself and his family on him and removed the biggest impediment to the legality and continuation of his domination and that of his family.<sup>75</sup>

## Confronting 'Ali's Personality

The first step was encouraging cursing Imam 'Ali ('a). After a while, he realized that this alone was not sufficient and effective. He, therefore, decided to order his rulers to forge stories similar to stories of the virtues of 'Ali, as approved by the Prophet (S), but this time about other people. This is the starting point of the developments and the time when he and his men are taken as sacred. At this time, sayings were forged in appreciation of the Companions, the time of the Companions, the Three Caliphs, the Senior Caliphs, the Promised Ten [*'ashrah Mubashshirah*], the Prophet's wives and important influential people in the early periods of Islam. These sayings settled in the minds of the people and even the scholars and narrators of sayings, and never left their minds or were doubted because there was no ground for this to happen while they were reinforced in the later periods for reasons that we will say later.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has a chapter in *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* under the title 'Expressing Part of the Pains and Tortures inflicted upon the *Ahl al-Bayt*', in which he quotes a full saying from Imam Baqir ('a) in which the latter provides an account of what the Shi'ites' Imams and their followers went through, "... We were constantly subject to battery and cursing, chasing and disadvantages. We and our followers could not live safely. Then liars who fought the truth stepped in who reached positions with *amirs*, judges and governors because of the lies they told. They forged quotations and propagated them. What we had not said or done, they narrated about us so as to disgrace us with the people and to make them hostile to us. This situation was worsened after Imam Hasan died in the time of Mu'awiyah..."<sup>76</sup> After this quotation, he quotes another story from the reliable book *Al-Ihdath* by Mada'ini, a major part of which we mention here because it serves many useful purposes, "After 'Ali ('a) was martyred, when Mu'awiyah settled in power, he thus wrote to his governors, 'I shall not have any obligation to him who talks about the virtues of 'Ali or his family.'

Subsequently, orators began to curse at 'Ali ('a) at any rostrum they stood on to give speeches. They expressed their renouncement and used bad language about him and his family. Kufah was troubled more than other places because there were more Shi'ites there. Mu'awiyah appointed Ziyad ibn

Sumayyah as the governor and added Basrah to that. He hunted for Shi'ites and, as he was a Shi'ite during 'Ali's time, he knew them very well. He would find and kill them anywhere they were. Terror reigned wherever. He would cut off limbs, make them blind and would hang them from palm trees. He chased them out of Iraq. As a result, no well-known person remained there."

On another occasion, Mu'awiyah wrote to his agents, "Do not accept the testimony of the Shi'ites of 'Ali or any of their dependents. Focus your attention on Shi'ites and the friends of 'Uthman. Bring close to yourselves and respect those who talk about his virtues. Send me their story, their name and the names of their father and their clan."

His agents did so until there were many virtues of 'Uthman talked about and distributed around. This was due to the various awards that Mu'awiyah gave to Arabs and liberated slaves, be it a cloak or a piece of land, etc. They competed for material success. Any hobo that went to an agent of Mu'awiyah and recounted a story on the virtues of 'Uthman would be enrolled to be appreciated and given a special reward. Some time passed by with such events. As these events unfolded, time passed by.

After a while, he wrote to his governors, "There are many sayings about 'Uthman anywhere. When you get my letter, encourage the people to talk about the virtues of the Companions and the First Caliphs. Any virtue that has been talked about 'Ali, forge the same about the Companions and send it to me, because I like this better and it would make me happier while they neutralize the arguments of 'Ali and his Shi'ites and it will cost them dearer than mentioning the virtues of 'Uthman."

His letters were read out to the people. Following this, many stories about the virtues of the Companions were told, all of which were lies and forged. The people went on this path until the stories were read out on rostrums and were induced to school masters. They taught the same to children and the sayings became so common and so significant that they were learned like the Qur'an and were taught to girls, women, male and female slaves.

Then he wrote another letter asking his agents to put under pressure and persecute anyone who loved 'Ali and to destroy his house. "...thus many sayings were forged and propagated. The jurists, judges and *amirs* followed on the same path. In the meanwhile, the narrators who lied and pretended to be pious and sacred were far ahead of the others and much more involved in reaching wealth and a position by doing so and by getting close to governors, until the forged sayings reached pious and truthful people, people who neither told lies nor could, by nature, believe that the others could tell lies as narrators. Therefore, they accepted them all as truth. If they had known the sayings were lies, they would have neither accepted them nor narrated them..."<sup>77</sup>

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid then quotes ibn Naftawiyah, who is a great scholar of the sayings, "Most of the forged sayings that were made about the Companions during the Umayyad reign were made because the latter intended to bring themselves closer to the Companions, thus destroying the Bani Hashim."<sup>78</sup>

The fact is that Mu'awiyah and, his successors, the Umayyad did so for a variety of reasons. To stabilize

and legalize their position and to defeat their great rival, Bani Hashim and on about that the Imams, they had to depict themselves as the religious and legal inheritors of 'Uthman and show that 'Ali was involved in his murder. If they could do so, they would achieve their goals. It is exactly because of this that their poets and eulogists talked about the virtues of 'Uthman, his innocence while being murdered and that the Umayyad were the true inheritors of his blood and his inheritors in the caliphate.[79](#)

In this regard, Goltziher says, "It is historically quite evident that the Umayyads introduced themselves as the religious and legal successors of 'Uthman and, seeking to avenge 'Uthman's death, were hostile to 'Ali and the Shi'ites. 'Uthman was the symbol and slogan of the Umayyads against 'Ali and the 'Alavites. Thus, the title 'Uthmani (ottoman) was one used for the ardent supporters of the Umayyad."[80](#)

All this depended on giving 'Uthman as high a position as possible. Such a position would immunize him against any criticism that might be said against him. This would entail several results. Firstly, nobody would consider why and by whom and on what charges was he killed. The virtues that were recounted about him surrounded his true personality and behavior with a thick curtain and would make him disappear in a halo of light. Secondly, it would prove that an individual like this was on the right path to the last moment of his life, he was killed innocently like a martyr and his murderers were misled about religion and were on the wrong path. They could indeed use propaganda to make the people believe that 'Ali was involved in the event, and effectively so. Thirdly, the innocent blood had to be avenged and nobody deserved to do this more than Mu'awiyah and the Umayyad and it is he who deserves to succeed 'Uthman.

Thus, Mu'awiyah's succession and caliphate would be justified and his opposition and fight against 'Ali as well. This was an argument that would be accepted by the Muslims of that time, who were still under the influence of the pre-Islamic heritage and rules, which the Umayyads sought to revive as much as possible because, according to the "*Thar*" law in the pre-Islamic customs, the inheritors of the murdered person should avenge his blood. The only principle was attaining revenge.[81](#)

The best proof for what was said is the story of the conclusion of the agreement during the arbitration for the Siffin war by 'Amru ibn al-'As and Abu Musa Ash'ari, a model which later both Mu'awiyah and the other Umayyad caliphs followed. After the many arguments between the two, 'Amru ibn al-'As asked his counterpart to have what they agreed on written by the scribe, who was 'Amru's son. After they both testified to the unity of God and the prophethood of the Prophet and truth of the first two caliphs, 'Amru addressed his son, asking him to write, "Uthman became caliph after 'Umar and with the consensus of the Muslims and consulting with the Companions and he was a pious person." Abu Musa objected, saying, "We are not here to discuss this issue."

'Amru said, "I swear by God he was either a pious person or an infidel." Abu Musa said, "He was a pious person." Amru said, "Was he an oppressor or was he made subject to oppression?" "He was subject to oppression." Abu Musa said. "Has God not given the choice to the guardian of the oppressed to avenge their blood?" "Yes, he has." Abu Musa said. 'Amru said, "Do you know a worthier person than

Mu'awiyah to be 'Uthman's guardian?" "No." Abu Musa said. "Is Mu'awiyah not right in searching out 'Uthman's murderer wherever he is in order to kill him or not be faulted in attempting to do so?" "Yes." said Abu Musa. "We think that 'Ali has killed 'Uthman."<sup>82</sup>

All of these were written as part of the agreement.

## **Increasing Importance of the Companions' Position and Stature**

This was a brief account of the conditions in which sayings were forged in favor of 'Uthman and his previous caliphs and the Prophet's Companions. In order to achieve his goals, Mu'awiyah had to put 'Uthman in a high position. Therefore, as Mada'ini says, Mu'awiyah issued orders for forging sayings immediately after he became the caliph. However, the problem was that this could not be limited to 'Uthman. To the people of that time, some of whom had seen 'Uthman and the previous caliphs, it was not acceptable that he had had such a position while the previous caliphs and the other well-known Companions had not. It would be questionable and dubious and would raise doubts about 'Uthman's virtues. They were thus forced to raise the positions of others along with 'Uthman, and they did so.

Other than this obligation, there were other consequences to this action, the most important being that, by illuminating the face of each of the Companions, they would help reduce the importance of the most illuminating one.<sup>83</sup> When Mu'awiyah said, "Do not ignore any virtue that has been quoted by any Muslim about 'Ali, unless you mention for me a counterpart for it among the Companions.", he actually meant to reduce the importance of 'Ali. Therefore, he explicitly said, "I would like it better. It would make me happy and would neutralize the arguments of 'Ali and his Shi'ites." Indeed he succeeded in this for reasons that we will mention later.

Nevertheless, the result was that he raised the level of the others so much that sometimes they would be close to that of the Prophet (S)<sup>84</sup> and the early history of Islam was given a special importance and became sacred and was as valuable and important as Islam itself. It was so important that Islam would be unimportant without considering it.

## **Development in the Understanding of the Religion**

Thus, a political rivalry entailed a great development in the understanding of the religion, which meant understanding the religion in the light of the early periods, i.e. those of the Senior Caliphs, the Companions, the Followers and especially the Senior Caliphs and the Companions. Although there were numerous factors involved, the most important and effective were indeed the same as those of Mu'awiyah for destroying the personality of 'Ali. His forgeries for disgracing 'Ali, however, did not and could not survive although they were not ineffective either, especially in the first centuries; however, his forgeries for putting others at the same level as that of 'Ali remained and were universally believed.

As we have mentioned before, one of the basic differences between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis was and

is their different perceptions of Islam. The Sunnis, contrarily to the Shi'ites, accepted Mu'awiyah's actions consciously or subconsciously and finally accepted him. Therefore, they looked at Islam through its early history while the Shi'ites looked at the early history of Islam according to the principles and criteria of Islam.[85](#)

Although later with the development of analysis and historical critique, mainly thanks to the Mu'tazilites, the undisputable religious splendor of the early period was somehow broken, it was a transient flow and could not be continued due to numerous reasons, the most important of which was that the Mu'tazilites came into being when the religious thought of the mass of the people had been formed. They wanted to reform beliefs that had been intermingled with the heart and soul of the people and based on which, their personalities had been formed. They naturally failed in doing so. Most probably, if they had come into being at an earlier time, they would have had more success.[86](#)

As we said, the core of Sunni religious belief in those and the later days is the same sacred attitude towards early Islamic history.[87](#) If this collapsed, the basis of their beliefs would collapse. Therefore, neither the Mu'tazilites nor any other group could confront it. The question was not which opinion was right and which wrong. The mentality of the masses of the people and a major part of the jurists and scholars of the sayings had been formed in a way that required such an outlook.

Otherwise, both their faith and their personalities would collapse from within and this meant that no belief would exist to substitute the previous attitude. Accepting the Mu'tazilite beliefs would mean the collapse of the entire structure of their beliefs. Neither were the Mu'tazilites so reliable nor what they said was explicit and comprehensible to be blindly accepted by them, especially since the Mu'tazilites did not have a stable and well-developed school and every one of them expressed a view different from those of the others.[88](#)

Finally, another important point to be added to this is that every faithful person, be he a Muslim or non-Muslim, has a conservative belief system. This is a requisite for religious faith and its outcome. He has accepted the religion and borne its limitations to reach otherworldly salvation. Because of this, he will choose faith if given two choices of faith or reason. The problem again is not that these two are opposite to each other or vice versa. The problem is discovering the characteristics of the mind and the thought of a faithful person or his attitude. When facing two beliefs one of which he deems to be according to the rules of the religion and the other one of which he deems to be according to reason, he will finally choose the former. In such cases, the religious precaution will never be overcome by rational precision.[89](#)

The Mu'tazilites faced such a problem. This is a problem that many reformists today are facing as well and is the most important factor of why progressive reformist movements tend to be conservative although their views are rationally and logically superior to those of their rivals and are seemingly according to the religious rules as well. However, being suspicious about them, which was caused by the irresponsibility of some, and their disagreement with the heritage of those whom the people considered as righteous people, finally drove them out and made their rivals successful. It would be appropriate here

to quote Ibn Abi'l-Hadid about some of their views about the Companions:

“The Mu‘tazilites looked at the Companions and the Followers as they looked at the other people, i.e. individuals who sometimes made mistakes and sometimes were on the right path, who did things some of which are to be praised and some to be criticized. They did not fear adopting such a position while the others were not so because they had put the Companions and the great ones of the Followers in a position that could not be criticized.”

“The Mu‘tazilites said, ‘We see that some Companions criticize the others and some even cursed at the others. If the Companions were in such a position that was not to be criticized or cursed at, this would have to be inferred from their behavior towards each other because they knew each other better than the people of our time do while we see that Talhah, Zubayr, ‘A’ishah and their supporters refused to support ‘Ali and even opposed him. Mu‘awiyah and ‘Amru ibn al-‘As also fought against ‘Ali. ‘Umaru made a sarcastic remark to Abu Hurayrah because of the latter’s quoting a story and upbraided Khalid ibn Walid as a corrupt person while condemning ‘Amru ibn al-‘As and Mu‘awiyah of betrayal and theft from the public treasury. Basically, few people can be found among the Companions who were not subject to his action or remarks while many such examples can be found.

The Followers treated each other in a similar fashion to that of the Companions and made similar remarks about their offenders. However, the public put them in a high place in later times. The Companions are like the other people. We criticize their wrongdoers and praise their righteous ones. Their superiority to others is only because of experiencing the presence of the Prophet (S). Perhaps their sins are greater than those of the others because they closely witnessed the miracles and the signs of the truth of the religion and, therefore, our sins are lighter than theirs because we can be excused [on such grounds].”[90](#)

After quoting the above, Ahmad Amin says that the Mu‘tazilites freely criticized the deeds and words of the Companions and the Followers and revealed their contradictions. They even went so far as to criticize the Two Shaykhs. Then he mentions examples of their criticisms of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar.[91](#)

Adopting such a position towards the Companions and the Followers were mainly or even entirely due to their rationalist tendencies. They did not want to accept anything that was said without reason or give any principle a priority higher than that given to reason. It was exactly because of this that the people said this about them and their opponents, “Backgammon is Ash‘arite and chess is the Mu‘tazilite.”, because the backgammon player relies on chance and destiny while a chess player relies on wits and struggle.”[92](#)

## [The Other Critics](#)

Other than the Mu‘tazilites, there were also others who inclined towards intellectual liberalism and critically analyzed the early history of Islam and the time of the Companions and of the Followers. From

among them, we can mention Ibn Khaldun. While talking about Islamic jurisprudence, he says, "... Apart from this, all the Companions were not experts on giving opinions or issuing *fatwas* and it was not possible to ask all of them regarding religious duties. This was limited to those who knew the Qur'an by heart and to those who were familiar with the nullifying [*nasikh*] and nullified [*mansukh*], similar [*mutishabih*] and explicit [*muhkam*] contents and the other guidelines of the Qur'an, because they had either learned these directly from the Prophet (S) or from their superiors.

Therefore, they were known as the Reciters [*qurra*], i.e. one who recited the Qur'an because the Arabs were an illiterate nation, those who could read the Qur'an became known as the Readers, which seemed to be a strange thing to them at that time. In the early periods of Islam, this was the situation. After a while, Islamic cities developed and progressed and reached a splendid point and illiteracy was eliminated among the Arabs by insisting on the Book—the Qur'an—and inferences were made and the jurisprudence was completed and included among the techniques and the sciences. Then, the word to refer to someone who knew the Qur'an by heart changed and was replaced by 'jurisprudent' or scholar..."<sup>93</sup>

Ibn Hazm is among these individuals. Indeed he reaches a viewpoint similar to that of the Mu'tazilites and Ibn Khaldun from a different stance. He is a scholar and jurisprudent of the Zahiri school, who limited the religious documents to the divine decrees and the consensus and rejected deduction. He reached such a point of view by rejecting the theory of 'the right words' and the 'right deeds', which were unanimously agreed on by Sunnis. In this regard, Muhammad Abu Zuhrah says, "Ibn Hazm believed that it was not permissible to imitate any person, be he one of the companions or otherwise, alive, or dead. He believed that deeming as true sayings which are attributed to the Companions, but are not approved by the Prophet's tradition is an imitation that is not allowed in God's religion because no saying shall be deemed as true, unless it is approved by the Book and the Tradition or a consensus of these two or a proof that is derived from the collection of these three.

Then, the Companions' sayings cannot be considered as evidence because they were ordinary people. The like of this theory has been quoted from Shafi'i. In this respect, he said, "How can I adopt the saying of him whom I would argue with if I had been living during his time." However, it would be close to reality to say that Shafi'i would accept the Companions sayings if all the Companions had a consensus on them while he would adopt one of their sayings, if they have varying opinions. No, that a saying is that of a Companion does not constitute sufficient ground for following it because no one's saying is as valuable as that of God's Prophet. As Malik ibn Anas said, "Everyone has said things some of which are rejected except by he who has made this speech."<sup>94</sup>

## **The Intellectual and Ideological Consequences**

Nevertheless, the problem is not just that Islam has to be looked at and studied out of the early Islamic history. More important than this was that this period was contradictory in itself in many ways. This is a

period full of rivalry, conflicts and disputes, so far so that the great people of the time stood up against each other and had each other's blood on their hands. If it was the best and the most sacred period and nothing but the realization of true Islam and its Muslims were the best and the noblest Muslims, why did they stand up and draw their swords against each other? How could two truths fight each other? Such considerations in practice influenced the formation of the jurisprudential and theological structure and the religious psychology of Sunnism more than, for example, accepting the principle that Islam has to be understood and interpreted according to the early Islamic history.[95](#)

To solve this problem, they had to resort to certain solutions. They were forced to say both were right and, despite their disputes and fights, both acted according to their duties and will, therefore, attain reward and enter into the Paradise. It is possible to justify one, two or several cases based on such a hypothesis and to say that there were mistakes in the actual manifestations. Yet, the problem is that the early Islamic history is full of such events and clashes and is nothing but the story of such rivalries and confrontations, especially among those about whom one cannot mention such doubts. This is a problem that not only strongly influenced the Sunni image of history as relating to those days, but also affected everything that somehow related to Islam.[96](#)

From this point of view, the history of those days and, consequently, that of the entire history of Islam is neither absolutely black nor absolutely white. Rather, it is gray. It is as if there was no certain criterion to judge the true or the false. Everybody is either absolutely right or somehow floating in a sort of truth without anyone being preferred to the others. More important than this is that judging their actions and behavior and criticizing the events were banned. The principle was that all were good and the difference in their behaviors was because of their differing knowledge rather than their faith or the other characteristics originating from their faith and, because of this, we are not allowed to question what they did and consider their actions for judging their truth. Thus, the mental, intellectual and psychological backgrounds to judge them according to the contradictions and to evaluate the issues based on their truth or falsehood were eliminated. This strongly influenced the jurisprudential and theological fundamentals of political discussions whether about imamate or caliphate or political and religious issues.[97](#)

The Sunni jurisprudential and theological structures and, consequently, the Sunni psycho-religious structure rely on the thought that, in competition between two Muslims, it is not possible for one to be absolutely right and the other to be absolutely wrong. This is in the first place due to their sacred view of the early history [of Islam] and its figures. This thought and this psychological structure has made problems within Sunnism in the present time. One can say that it is a new unprecedented problem because the Sunnis in the past never faced such a problem or at least it was not as severe as it is now. It is the modern life, society and history that have brought about such a problem with such severity.[98](#)

In the past, the need and urgency to respond to the revolutionary needs of the young generation were not so strong or serious or there was not such a problem at all or, if there was, it was not as extensive

and forceful as it is now. Today, such a problem exists throughout the Third World and the Muslim countries and Islam cannot be indifferent to it, especially because the young Muslims in general, at least in the past two decades, have demanded Islam to respond. They require Islamic responses to their new needs because, in the first place, they deem such responses to be more appropriate for and more in harmony with their needs. In the second place, the religious obligation stops them from doing anything that is non-Islamic.[99](#)

It is precisely because of this that many revolutionary Sunni Islamic thinkers have been reviewing their historical thought in an attempt to find responses to their serious and urgent needs. This was intended to find a more explicit, decisive and helpful criterion for analyzing and evaluating themselves, so as to see the truth as the truth even if it has been distorted by others, and to stand up against falsehood and help the truth. Accepting the principle that the mask of Islam impedes straightforward judgment and decision-making is equal to accepting the illegality of any action against a ruling system that commits any crime or treason by resorting to Muslim appearances. So far as this principle, which is the result of recognizing the early Islamic history and protecting it against any criticism, has not collapsed, the problem will still be in place. It is because of this that Sunni jurisprudential and theological books have defined differently such subjects as allegiance [*biy'ah*], consensus [*ijma'*], religious authority [*ijtihad*], rejection [*takhta'ah*], acceptance [*taswib*], consensus of the People of Loosing and Binding [*ahl-e hall wa 'aqd*], caliphate and the caliphs' positions, guardianship [*wilayat-e amr*] and the need to obey the leader, and other subjects.[100](#)

Revolutionaries and thinkers who have attempted to develop their ideology by maintaining this principle have actually failed. They wanted to make up for their ideological weakness by relying on individual faith, perseverance and devotion. This is impossible, at least in our time. If the necessary condition for achieving sociopolitical goals is the perseverance and resistance of the revolutionaries, the sufficient condition is undoubtedly the ideology and strategy in harmony with the nature of its goals and the zeitgeist and which at the same time have the power to go on, resist and respond.[101](#)

The problem indeed does not have to be limited to what was said above. Recognizing early Islam events and protecting them from criticism prevents the necessary proper religious intellectual and scientific development that the Muslims need at this time. Only part of this problem is revolutionary and challenging while, even to respond to this need and to lead it to the right path, a development has to occur in the set of beliefs. More important is that, in order to study the different subjects critically, including the religion and the history of religion, which are among the most important needs of the modern era, a solution has to be considered. It is not possible to defend the faith of individuals against the critiques of the modern era only because of the insistence of the former on dogmas that originated from the consensus of the Muslims in a certain part of the history rather than the religion itself.

Every religion has a set of absolute non-criticizable values and dogmas. This is because of the nature of the religion and is not affected by the developments through time. However, this is not true about part of

the beliefs that are rooted in the consensus among the believers rather than the religion itself and it cannot be defended forever against the scientific and historical criticisms. Resisting this critical current will entail escaping from religion or rebelling against its protectors and causing an ideological disorder. [102](#)

Apart from this, it was a principle that everything that happened in that period was nothing but the realization of true Islam, and, in order to find out about the applications and views of Islam in any respect which has an example in this era, one has to refer to that period. However, the important thing is that, in this time, there are sometimes various answers to a certain problem without any change in the conditions. Now, which answer has to be taken as true?

For example, as to the selection of the caliph, there were various examples. Abu Bakr recommended 'Umar in his will while 'Umar recommended six people in his will and determined how the caliph had to be selected from among them. Also, Abu Bakr's caliphate in the beginning received the allegiance of a few people. This and many other examples, especially in jurisprudential and theological problems, which resulted in various answers to be given to a certain problem, which were occasionally contradictory, later created many problems for Sunni theologians and jurists in terms of determining the justified criterion. All of this was because of recognizing the early Islamic history in its entirety. [103](#)

[1.](#) The fact is that even the Prophet (S) himself was not that respectable and sacred for the Quraysh tribe. As it can be found out from their treatments of the Prophet, they did not believe in the Prophet (S) like the other Muslims did. They considered the Prophet's stature and position to be much lower than the possible minimum with the Muslims in general. The following story is a good example of this.

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar narrates, "I wrote down whatever I heard from the Prophet (S) so that I could memorize them. The Qurayshis prohibited me from doing this, saying, 'Why do you write down everything that you hear from the Prophet (S) while he is a human being who speaks occasionally under a feeling of anger and occasionally under a feeling of satisfaction?' Then, I stopped writing and said this to the Prophet. 'Keep writing because I swear by God that nothing but the truth comes out of this' said the Prophet while pointing to his mouth." Masnad Ahmad, vol. 3, p. 162. Another example is the same person—Dhu'l-Khuwaysarah—who objected to the Prophet (S) for not acting justly. Milal wa Nihal, vol. 1, p. 116.

These two and many other examples indicate this fact. However, later the Muslims raised the level of their belief, especially that of the Qurayshis, in the Prophet (S) to the level they themselves believed in, saying, "These people, as the close companions of the Prophet (S), must have had such a belief in the Prophet (S). To them, the problem was not what beliefs really existed. It is interesting to know that the Qurayshis themselves were put in the highest position by the Muslims in the later periods because the latter thought the former were the closest and the most loyal comrades of the Prophet. See Iqtida' as-Sirat al-Mustaqim, pp. 150–5, and Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 13, pp. 24–36.

[2.](#) Almost all the books on the history of Islam that cover the events during the Prophet's (S) life and after his death provide a very similar account of the story of Abu Bakr's selection and the discussions during the selections. This proves that the story is true. For example, see Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, vol. 1, pp. 2–17.

[3.](#) Islam founded a new society with religious as well as worldly values mixed with each other. Ahmad Amin a good explanation of how religion was realized, developed and continued according to the pre-Islamic heritage in Fajr al-Islam, pp. 69–97. Also see Al-'Aqidah wa'sh-Shari'ah fi'l-Islam, pp. 9–42, and Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, pp. 350–510.

[4.](#) Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm, pp. 175–6. For further explanation, see pp. 171–82.

[5.](#) A small group considered Abu Bakr's caliphate to originate in the Prophet's (S) will. Hasan Basri, Muhib ad-Din at-Tabari and a group of the Traditionists are among them. Ma'alim al-Khilafah fi'l-Fikr as-Siyasi al-Islami, p. 133. Ibn Hazm provides an elaborate and complicated discussion to prove that Abu Bakr's selection was a decree. Al-Fasl, vol. 4, pp. 107-11. The critique of this theory can be found in Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm, pp. 172-3, and a more scientific critique of it in An-Nazm al-Islamiyyah, pp. 84-5. It is interesting to know that Ibn Juzji, who is a well-known Granadan scholar of the 8th century, attributes both Abu Bakr's and 'Umar's appointments to caliphate to the Prophet's (S) will. See his book Al-Qawanin al-Fiqhiyyah, p. 17.

[6.](#) Concerning the opposition of the Helpers to Abu Bakr's selection, see Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, pp. 5-10, and Abu Bakr's and 'Umar's Responses to the Helpers, pp. 6-7.

[7.](#) Upon Abu Bakr's nomination, Abu Sufyan said, "O, the children of 'Abd Manaf, will you consent if one from the Tamim tribe rules you? I swear by God that I will fill Medina with warriors and horses." Mawaqif, p. 401.

[8.](#) Concerning the opposition of Bani Hashim, see Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, pp. 4, 10, 13-16. What 'Ali later said about the cause of his resistance shows that he had more supporters and Abu Bakr had more opponents. For example, see his sermon in Al-Gharat, vol. 1, p. 302, and also his words in Kashf al-Muhajjah by Sayyid ibn Tawus.

[9.](#) Many of those who were accused of apostasy and known as the Rejecting Party [ahl raddih] were not in fact apostates. They politically rejected Abu Bakr rather than rejecting Islam. In this respect, especially see Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm, pp. 177-80, and also An-Nass wa'l-Ijtihad, pp. 136-50, and Fajr al-Islam, pp. 80-1. To find out about the views and the analysis of those who consider all the Rejecting People as apostates and defend Abu Bakr's actions, see Al-Bid'ah: Tahdiduha wa Mawqif al-Islam minha, pp. 32-3. The writer, 'Izzat 'Ali 'Atiyyah elaborately mentions the documents of this story.

[10.](#) For example, see the arguments of the supporters and opponents of the selection of Abu Bakr in Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, pp. 4-16.

[11.](#) The argument that the caliphate and the Imamate requires people of a certain stature and only an individual like 'Ali deserves them was not only said by 'Ali but was also expressed later by the next Imams in other ways. For example, see Imam Hasan's letter to Mu'awiyah in Nazariyyah al-Imamah 'inda ash-Shi'ah al-Imamiyyah, pp. 318-9. On the qualifications of an Imam, see Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah by Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 8, p. 263.

[12.](#) The full text of the speech of the Imam can be found in Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, vol. 1, p. 12. It is interesting to know that, after his speech ended, Bashir ibn Sa'd, the great rival of Sa'd ibn 'Ibadah, said, "If the Helpers had heard this from you before they swore allegiance to Abu Bakr, they would have never stopped or disputed allegiance to you." Bashir was the chief of the Aws tribe and, because of his cooperation in the allegiance, 'Umar during his caliphate gave a greater share to the Aws members than to the Khazrajis. See Thawrat al-Husayn by Muhammad Mahdi Shams ad-Din, p. 16.

[13.](#) "The Bani Hashim had surrounded 'Ali ('a) and they were accompanied by Zubayr... Bani Umayyah had surrounded 'Uthman and Bani Zuhrah had surrounded Sa'd and 'Abdu'r-Rahman 'Awf..." Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, pp. 10-11.

[14.](#) Tabari, vol. 3, p. 197.

[15.](#) Ibn Qutaybah thus tells the story of how they made 'Ali ('a) swear allegiance, "After they twice sent a person to 'Ali to ask him for allegiance, 'Umar and a group of people went to his house and took him to Abu Bakr, telling him, 'Pledge allegiance.' He said, 'What will happen if I don't?' He said, 'We swear by God that we will cut off your head.' He said, 'Then you will have killed a servant of God and the brother of God's Prophet.' 'Yes, God's servant but not the Prophet's brother.' said 'Umar. Abu Bakr was still silent.

'Umar asked him to make 'Ali pledge allegiance. He said in response, 'As long as Fatimah is by his side, I will not force him to do anything.' Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, vol. 1, p. 13. Ibn Qutaybah gives an elaborate account of the story, then says, "'Ali did not pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr until Fatimah died.'" Ibid., p. 14. Also see, Riyahin ash-Shari'ah, vol. 2, pp. 3-41.

[16.](#) The most important or rather the only argument in those days was that the Arabs would not bow to non-Qurayshis. Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah, pp. 6, 8.

Later, in the first sermon that he delivered in Medina after his last trip from Mecca, 'Umar gave an elaborate account of how Abu Bakr was selected as caliph and of the events of those days. See Masnad by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, pp. 55-6.

[17.](#) 1,200 Muslims were martyred in Yamamah, 23 of whom were from Quraysh and 70 from the Helpers. At-Tanbih wa'l-

Ishraf, p. 248.

[18.](#) After the Yamamah war, ‘Umar, whose brother Zayd had also been killed in the war, thus said to Abu Bakr, “A large number of the Qur’an Readers [qurra’] were killed in the Yamamah war. I fear that all the Readers may be killed in the other wars and most of the Qur’an be lost. I think of collecting the Qur’an...” Al-‘Awasim min al-Qawasim, p. 67.

For various documents and quotes on this, see the footnotes.

[19.](#) Regarding the apostates who rejected Islam and seriously threatened Medina, see the well-written elaborate argument in Muir, The Caliphate, pp. 11–410; also, At-Tanbih wa’l-Ishraf, p. 247–50.

[20.](#) What kept the Muslims busy was the continuous wars because, in those days, they were busy fighting Rome and Iran. Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal, vol. 1, p. 18.

[21.](#) Kanz al-‘Ummal, vol. 5, p. 658; also, Al-‘Awasim min al-Qawasim, p. 45. More documents can be found in these footnotes about the event and the various accounts.

[22.](#) The fact is that the substitution of ‘Umar was not without tension. Ibn Qutaybah says, “When Abu Bakr was ill, the illness with which he died, a group of the Companions went to visit him. ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf addressed him and said, “How are you, the caliph of the Prophet? I hope you will get well and be cured.” “Do you think so?” Abu Bakr replied.

“Yes,” he said. Abu Bakr said, “I swear by God that I feel heavy and have a severe pain, yet what I see from the side of you, the Immigrants, is much more painful to me. I entrusted your affairs with him who is the best of the people with me, but you are arrogant and disobedient and want to take charge. This is because of the worldly prosperities you see...” Al-Imamah wa’s-Siyasah, vol. 1, p. 18; Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 20, p. 23; Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal, vol. 1, p. 25.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid also tells of Talhah’s explicit opposition, “When Abu Bakr selected ‘Umar, Talhah said, ‘How would you respond to God, if he asks from his people now that you made a strict person govern them?’ Abu Bakr said, ‘Have me sit up. Are you warning me to fear God? If He asks me, I will say, ‘I made the best one of your people to govern them.’ and Abu Bakr then reproved him.” (Ibid., p. 24).

According to the accounts of this as provided in Kanz al-‘Ummal, others apart from Talhah opposed this selection.

According to one account by a Companion, ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf and ‘Uthman entered Abu Bakr’s meeting and talked to him in private. Then, a number of people entered to object to him for his appointment of ‘Umar because of the latter’s roughness. Kanz al-‘Ummal, vol. 5, p. 675. According to another account, when Abu Bakr’s will to appoint ‘Umar as caliph was written, Talhah went to Abu Bakr and said, “I am talking on behalf of those who object to your appointment. Why did you select ‘Umar who is a strict and rough person?” Ibid., p. 678.

After being appointed to caliphate, ‘Umar ascended the rostrum and said, “O’ God, I am a rough person, make me milder, I am weak, make me stronger, I am stingy, make me generous.” Ibid., p. 685. His sermon shows that such objections really existed and were even public.

Apart from these, there were also other factors that were involved. Ibn Abi’l-Hadid says, “In his terminal illness, Abu Bakr said to the Companions, ‘When I selected the best one of you, everyone of you was arrogant and wanted himself to be the one because of the worldly prosperities you saw. I swear by God that you will have curtains of brocade and fabrics of silk.’” Sharh Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, vol. 20, p. 24.

[23.](#) Contrary to Abu Bakr, ‘Umar considered himself competent to make laws. However, as one can find out from his words and deeds, he considered this to be due to his being the ruler of the Muslims not, for example, because of his personal or religious stature. His son, ‘Abdullah, says that one day, in a place near Bayt al-Muqaddas (Jerusalem), he said to the Muslims, “O’ people, I am in such a position among you that the Prophet was among us.” Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol. 4, p. 465.

He later showed that he really considered himself to be in such a position as a ruler. Regarding those of his actions that were based on such an attitude, see An-Nass wa’l-Ijtihad, pp. 148–383. The jurists and theologians of the later periods defined and developed governmental orders based on such a stature that ‘Umar and the other caliphs considered themselves as having, as well as on other grounds. In this respect, see Al-Ahkam fi Tamyiz al-Fatawi ‘an al-Ahkam by Ahmad ibn Idris Qarafi, pp. 390–6, Khasa’is at-Tashri‘ al-Islami fi’s-Siyasah wa’l-Hukm, pp. 310–9 and Al-I’tisam by

Shatibi, vol. 2, pp. 121–2.

[24.](#) As an example, when ‘Umar put ‘Ali (‘a) under pressure to make him pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr, ‘Ali said, “Do this because you will have a share of it. Consolidate his building today because you will inherit it tomorrow.” *Al-Imamah wa’s-Siyasah*, vol. 1, p. 11. When selecting his substitute, ‘Umar said, “If Abu-‘Ubaydah was alive, I would select him to this position.” (*Ibid.*, p. 23). It is interesting to note that, from among those who had died, Abu-‘Ubaydah was the first one whom ‘Umar mentioned and sighed that he was not alive.

[25.](#) *Min Usul al-Fikr as-Siyasi al-Islami*, p. 347.

[26.](#) This can be found out by considering the personal and moral characteristics of the second caliph and the psychological, upbringing and moral characteristics of the Arabs at the Prophet’s (S) time and a short while before and after that. For example, see *Kanz al-‘Ummal*, vol. 5, pp. 674–87, and also *Umar ibn al-Khattab* by ‘Abdu’l-Karim al-Khatib, pp. 42–52, 371–440. Also see his advice to the caliph after himself, which indicates his spiritual and psychological sensitivities, tendencies and thoughts. *Al-Bayan wa’t-Tabyin*, vol. 2, pp. 47–8.

[27.](#) ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar thus depicts the hard and threatening conditions of those days, “When the Prophet passed away, Medina became full of hypocrisy and Arabs became apostates. Non-Arabs were happy and had speculations of plots and said, ‘The man in whose light the Arabs have got power has died.’ Then, Abu Bakr gathered the Immigrants and the Helpers, saying, ‘The Arabs have refused to give camels and sheep and gave up the religion and non-Arabs are considering attacking you because the Prophet passed away. Then, give your opinion because I am a person like you but indeed my responsibility in this respect is heavier.’” *Kanz al-‘Ummal*, vol. 5, pp. 660.

[28.](#) There are numerous accounts of the Muslims’ fear of fighting Iran even in ‘Umar’s time. It is well-known that ‘Umar feared taking such an action and, therefore, on several occasions decided to go to the front himself until ‘Ali made some brief and clever remarks to clear his fear while preventing him from going to the front. Part of what ‘Ali said is, “... Victory or defeat of the religion from the beginning was not because of the small or great number. This is a religion that God made victorious and whose armies got power from Him until they got there...” *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 164.

[29.](#) To have an idea of the loot that was obtained in the wars with Iran or Rome, see *Akhbar at-Tawal* and also *Al-Kamil fi’t-Tarikh*, vol. 2, pp. 38–68.

Amin quotes this book as saying, “The Muslims got a great deal of booty in the Jilowla’ war which was more than in any other war. A large number of women were taken as captives. It has been said that ‘Umar always said, ‘O’ God, I turn to you from the children of the captives of the Jilowla’ war.” *Fajr al-Islam*, p. 95. In another case, *Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal*, vol. 1, pp. 25–6, thus quotes ‘Umar, “When the news of the Qadisiyyah conquest arrived, ‘Umar said, ‘I turn to God if I am alive and see the presence of your children from them.’ They asked him why. He said, ‘How would it be if the Arabic trick and intelligence of the non-Arabs are gathered in one man?’” *Kanz al-‘Ummal*, vol. 5, p. 702.

[30.](#) Goldziher well explains the new experience, which was the result of the piled wealth from the wars, by quoting the Prophet (S) (Saying 36 in *Al-Jihad* by Sahih Bukhari. *Al-‘Aqidah wa’sh-Shari’ah fi’l-Islam* (The Belief and the Shariah in Islam), p. 340. Taha Husayn gives another account of the late years of ‘Umar’s caliphate as it was during the time of the Two Shaykhs. *Al-Islamiyyat*, p. 662.

[31.](#) *Min Usul al-Fikr al-Siyasi al-Islami*, p. 350.

[32.](#) *Sirah* by ibn Hisham, vol. 4, pp. 337–8, also *Masnad* by ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, pp. 55–6.

[33.](#) Regarding ‘Umar’s will and the conditions therein, see *Al-Imamah wa’s-Siyasah*, vol. 1, pp. 23–5.

For the numerous problems and limitations that ‘Umar had in appointing his successor, it would be appropriate if I quote ‘Ali al-Wirdi’s opinion. Indeed, because of his Shi’ite tendencies, he wants to say that, if ‘Umar did not appoint ‘Ali, it was in fear of the Quraysh’s opposition. Here, the problem is not whether this theory is true or false.

The important thing is to show the conditions of those days, “Nowadays, some think that ‘Umar could have appointed his successor caliph and the people would have accepted and obeyed him. This is a superficial view. We do not know what went on behind the curtains on those days. If ‘Umar had selected ‘Ali as his successor, the Qurayshis would have indeed made plots and risen against him, whom they took as an enemy.” He then adds, “It seems that ‘Umar was wondering and wanted to appoint ‘Ali as caliph but he saw that the Qurayshis would stand up against him...” *Wu‘az as-Salatin*, pp.

[34.](#) Despite the outstanding and special position of the Second Caliph and that in the following periods his methods were often followed, nobody followed his way in determining a successor. Despite the fact that Sunni theologians have specified all ways of determining the next caliph according to the First Caliph, they did not mention this method. *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*, pp. 6–11.

[35.](#) *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 5, pp. 475, 744.

[36.](#) *Al-Fikr as-Siyasi ash-Shi'i*, p. 248, quoted from *Al-Falsafah as-Siyasiyyah li'l-Islam* by 'Abdu'd-Da'im Abu'l-'Ata', pp. 31–2.

[37.](#) Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Az-Zuhd*, vol. 2, pp. 39–43, and also *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, pp. 147–53, and especially the footnotese by Muhibb ad-Din Khatib to *Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim*, pp. 53–5. You can find a fair and comprehensive critique of the sayings on 'Uthman's virtues in *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 9, pp. 265–361.

[38.](#) Ibn Khaldun's Introduction, translated by Muhammad Parvin Gonabadi, vol. 1, pp. 390–3. You can find in *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 2, pp. 341–2, a detailed account of what Ibn Khaldun quotes from Mas'udi.

[39.](#) *Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 26. Concerning the corruption and recklessness of 'Uthman's governors, see Fajr al-Islam, pp. 79–81. Compare what Shahrestani says here, which contains part of the most important critiques against 'Uthman, both during and after his life, with the interpretation, justifications and rejections by ibn 'Arabi in *Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim*, pp. 63–122, and especially the sharper footnotes by Muhibb ad-Din Khatib, *ibid*.

[40.](#) One such example is Walid ibn 'Aqabah, the governor of Kufah. With his singers and female attendants, he would sit and drink wine through the night. Once he said four units for the Morning Prayer and, while genuflecting, asked for wine. When the Muslims objected to him, he said, "I will read more prayer if you want." See *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 2, pp. 344–5, for the story of the Kufis' objection to 'Uthman and his reaction and his being punished by 'Ali. Compare this with what Ibn Taymiyyah said when he gives an account of 'Uthman's reluctantly rejecting the objectors since he had given power to his corrupt and reckless relatives. *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 3, pp. 173–6.

[41.](#) The elaborate account of the Muslims' objection to, surrounding and killing of 'Uthman and reading the corpse prayer on him can be found in *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, pp. 157–64, *Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah*, vol. 1, pp. 32–45, and *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 2, pp. 345–57. It is interesting to know that Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says, "A'ishah's objection to 'Uthman was so strong, explicit and aggressive that nowadays nobody dares to say that A'ishah said so about 'Uthman or she accused 'Uthman of such things." *Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 11.

[42.](#) Concerning the widespread actions of Mu'awiyah to forge sayings on the virtues of 'Uthman, see *Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid*, vol. 11, pp. 15, 16. One of the reasons that the Umayyad resorted to prove their legality and truth was that they were the religious and legal inheritors of 'Uthman. The eulogists and poets of the Umayyad court had talked a great deal about this. This was one side of the issue.

The other side was sanctifying 'Uthman and using propaganda regarding his right and innocence. The higher his position was defined, the higher would be the position of his inheritors, while the other way round was also true, i.e. if his stature was doubted, the doubt would be extended to include the Umayyad as well. This was the most important factor in sanctifying the face of the man that did not have any special position or charisma in the eyes of the people during his caliphate. For further explanation, see *Al-Umawiyyun wa'l-Khilafah*, pp. 12–17.

Concerning discussions that were later held on 'Uthman and his comparison with the Senior Caliphs whether among the theologians or the Traditionists, see *Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid*, vol. 1, pp. 6–10, and also *Al-Mawaqif*, pp. 407–13 about the critiques of the religious intellectuals and those who had revolutionary tendencies, see *Andisheh-ye Siyasi dar Islam-e Mu'asir* (Political Thought in Contemporary Islam), p. 150.

[43.](#) See the footnotes of Muhibb ad-Din Khatib on *Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim*, pp. 63–5.

[44.](#) *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, p. 156.

[45.](#) *Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*, p. 181.

[46.](#) This is a famous sentence quoted from 'Umar. See *Tajrid al-'Itiqad*, p. 245, *Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 26.

[47.](#) "...Those who pledged allegiance to 'Ali considered him the worthiest of the Muslims to be the caliph, as the previous

Muslims believed that Abu Bakr was worthier and, therefore, selected him and they selected 'Umar and then 'Uthman. Islam bila Madhahib, p. 110.

[48.](#) An example of such expectations can be found in the suggestion of Abu Musa Ash'ari in Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 2, p. 409.

[49.](#) Concerning the dispute of Talhah and Zubayr on leading the prayer and the army before the Jamal war, see Naqsh-e 'A'ishah dar Tarikh-e Islam ('A'ishah's Role in the History of Islam), vol. 2, pp. 48-65.

[50.](#) Concerning the killing of Talhah by Marwan during the Jamal war and a critical study of it, see *ibid.*, pp. 173-5; also, Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim fi'dh-Dhab 'an Sunnah Abi'l-Qasim, pp. 40-241, also an ornate rejection of this theory in Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim, pp. 155-7, and especially the more ornate rejection by Muhibb ad-Din Khatib in his footnotes on these same pages.

[51.](#) Despite the fact that a person such as Sa'd ibn Waqqas was not by 'Ali's side, he did not want to stand against him either. He rejected helping 'Ali by saying, "I will not fight, unless you give me a sword that can think, see and talk to say that this side is right and that side is wrong." Al-Fitnah al-Kubra, p. 5. In the meanwhile, in talking about 'Ali, he said, "After what I heard from the Prophet about 'Ali, if they put the saw on my head so that I would reject him, I would not." Kanz al-'Ummal gives various accounts and provides different documents of this story: vol. 13, pp. 162-3.

[52.](#) 'Abdu'l-Karim al-Khatib, Al-Khilafah wa'l-Imamah, p. 121.

[53.](#) Ibn Khaldun, Introduction, vol. 1, p. 398.

[54.](#) Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 20, p. 8.

[55.](#) The best example of this self-centered interpretation and such unacceptable expectations can be found in the arguments of Talhah and Zubayr with 'Ali. See Naqsh-e 'A'ishah dar Tarikh-e Islam ('A'ishah's Role in the History of Islam), pp. 35-41.

[56.](#) Certainly, one of the main causes of the oppositions 'Ali faced during his caliphate was long-standing hostility of the Qurayshis. He mentioned this on various occasions and complained about the Qurayshis. Once he said, "All the hostilities that the Qurayshis had against the Prophet in their heart, they expressed to me and will later do so to my children. What do I have to do with the Qurayshis? I fought them at God's order and that of the Prophet. Is this the reward for him who has obeyed God and his Prophet?" Ash-Shi'ah wa'l-Hakimun, p. 17.

The others had also found out about this. Once 'Umar told 'Abbas, "If it wasn't for Abu Bakr's decision for after his death, the power would indeed be in your hands and, if this had happened, you and your tribe would have not been able to live in peace as they would've looked at you like a cow would at his killer." On another occasion, the Companion Jalil ibn at-Tihan told 'Ali (a), "The Quraysh's jealousy of you is of two types. Their good people want to be like you and compete with you in achieving high spiritual positions. Their bad people, however, are so jealous of you that it is a burden on the heart and destructive for the action. When they see you have gifts that make you happy and frustrate them, they want to get to your level and leave you behind while the target gets farther and farther from them and their attempts fail. As they fail, they stand up against you. I swear by God that you more than all the Qurayshis deserve their appreciation because you helped the Prophet and performed his right after he died. I swear by God that their opposition is to their own disadvantage. They broke their contract with God and His hand is above all hands. Nevertheless, we, the Helpers, use our hands and tongues for you..." Al-Fikr as-Siyasi ash-Shi'i, pp. 204-6, especially see the views of Ziyad ibn al-Gham Sha'bani (died 156 AH) and those of Sha'bi in this respect as quoted by Muhibb ad-Din Khatib in the footnote to Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim, pp. 168-9.

The fact is that the Quraysh's opposition was not limited to 'Ali and included the Prophet as well, examples of which can be found in the late years of the Prophet's life. Shaykh Mufid quotes Imam Sadiq as saying, "The Prophet was told that the Qurayshis had said, 'Did you not see how the Prophet consolidated the power in his family? After his death, we will take it away from them and will transfer it somewhere else...'" Amali, p. 123. Concerning the sarcastic remarks by the Qurayshis led by Abu Sufyan, to Bani Hashim, even at the time of Prophet, see the narration by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar in Iqtida' as-Sirat al-Mustaqim, Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 155, and also what Abu Sufyan said at the grave of Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, Qamus ar-Rijal, vol. 10, p. 89.

[57.](#) See the analysis by Taha Husayn on the economic and, consequently, religious developments of that time. *Al-Fitnah al-Kubra*, pp. 170–81.

[58.](#) As an example, see the sermon of Abu Hamzah in *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, vol. 2, pp. 100–3, and the way he introduces the first caliph and 'Ali ('a).

[59.](#) A brief account of such criticisms can be found in *Nazariyyah al-Imamah lada ash-Shi'ah al-lthna-'ashariyyah*, p. 280.

[60.](#) The socioeconomic and, consequently, religious, intellectual and political developments of the first period were so deep and rapid that they disabled a man of politics such as Mu'awiyah. In his terminal illness, he admitted this inability in a sermon, "O' people, we are in hard conditions full of war, a time in which the righteous man is considered guilty and the oppressor adds to his rebelliousness..." *Uyun al-Akhbar*, vol. 2, p. 259.

[61.](#) The fact is that 'A'ishah was not that determined or even willing to fight with 'Ali and several times decided to leave it, when 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr, who was her nephew, stopped her from doing so. See *Naqsh-e 'A'ishah dar Tarikh-e Islam ('A'ishah's Role in the History of Islam)*, vol. 2, pp. 51–2.

[62.](#) After the Jamal war, 'A'ishah strongly regretted what she had done and showed this regret in different forms, including after the martyrdom of Hajar ibn 'Uday at the hands of Mu'awiyah, she said, "I wanted to rise to avenge 'Uday's blood but I feared I might repeat the Jamal event.", *Al-Fikr as-Siyasi ash-Shi'i*, p. 291.

[63.](#) A precise and elaborate account of Zubayr's deserting the battlefield can be found in *Naqsh-e 'A'ishah dar Tarikh-e Islam ('A'ishah's Role in the History of Islam)*, vol. 2, pp. 160–70.

[64.](#) For example, see *Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah*, pp. 177, 189, 191.

[65.](#) The fact is that the Helpers' support of 'Ali and their opposition to Mu'awiyah and the Umayyad had various reasons. It was the opposition that led them to the support. This continued. Mu'awiyah frequently made sarcastic remarks about them and the other Umayyad rulers did the same and even massacred them. Mahmud Subhi thus quotes Mas'udi as saying, "When Imam Hasan entered into peace with Mu'awiyah, Qays ibn Sa'd insisted on fighting Mu'awiyah while giving his advocates the options either to accept a peace like Imam Hasan or continue the war without the Imam."

Then, he adds, "Well, he had well understood what it meant if the Umayyad ruled over the Helpers." *Nazariyyah al-Imamah lada ash-Shi'ah al-lthna-'ashariyyah*, p. 44. In another case, Qays ibn Sa'd wrote a letter to Nu'man ibn Bashir, who was also a Helper but he and his father had left the Helpers because of family and tribal rivalry and joined Mu'awiyah, in which he wrote, "If all Arabs gather around Mu'awiyah, the Helpers will rise to fight them." Concerning the deeply rooted opposition of the Umayyad and the Helpers, see *Al-Imamah wa's-Siyasah*, vol. 1, pp. 177–220. On the rivalry and hostility between Mu'awiyah and the Helpers, also see *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, vol. 1, p. 129.

[66.](#) This story is recited in all history and sayings books. See the footnote on *Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, 1, p. 116. Interestingly, this is quoted by a person such as Ibn Taymiyyah. *As-Siyasah ash-Shar'iyah*, p. 46. On sayings about the Rebels, see *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 11, pp. 286–323.

[67.](#) On why and how the Rebels appeared and continued their activities, see the very good book *Al-Khawarij fi'l-Asr al-Umawi* by the well-known Nayif, and the older book *Al-Khawarij wa'sh-Shi'ah*, by Wellhausen, translated by 'Abdu'r-Rahman Badawi.

The best and the most comprehensive description of them is provided by the Imam himself. After the Nahravan war, the Imam was asked, "Who were they? Were they infidels?" "They ran away from infidelity." he replied. "Were they hypocrites?" they asked. "The hypocrites rarely remember God while they often did." he said. They asked, "Who were they then?" "They were a group trapped by an evil, which made them blind and dumb." he replied. *Al-Musannif*, no. 18656. Also see *Qira'at Jadidah fi Mawaqif al-Khawarij wa Fikr wa Adabuhum*, pp. 75–82.

[68.](#) For example, see the sermon of Abu Hamzah where he introduces Mu'awiyah, Yazid and Bani Marwan. *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, vol. 2, pp. 100–3. On the reforms and adjustments made by the Rebels in the later periods, see *Abbadiyyah's jurisprudence and theology*, especially the book *Alah al-l'tirad 'an Muhiqqi Al Abad* and *Al-Usul at-Tarikhiiyyah li'l-Firqat al-Abadiyyah*.

[69.](#) The fact is that the Umayyad politics was in various cases accompanied by force, pressure, intimidation, discrimination and religious fatalism. For example, see the words of Mu'awiyah while getting allegiance for Yazid in *Al-Imamah wa's-*

Siyasah, vol. 1, pp. 183–91, and the fearsome sermon of Ziyad ibn Sumayyah to the people of Basrah in *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, vol. 2, pp. 58–60, and the sermon of 'Abd al-Malik after the death of his father, Marwan in *Ansab al-Ashraf*, vol. 1, p. 164; also his sermon after Mas'ab ibn Zubayr was killed, as provided in *Al-Umawiyyun wa'l-Khilafah*, p. 120; also the letter of Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik for the crown principedom of his two children as provided in *Tabari*, vol. 7, p. 219; also the numerous sermons of Hajjaj, which are provided by Jahiz in the second volume of *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, especially his sermon addressed to the people of Iraq as provided in the book, pp. 114–5, especially see *Al-Umawiyyun wa'l-Khilafah* by Husayn 'Atwan.

The best and the most instructive of all is the story that 'Abdullah ibn Marwan, the son of the last Umayyad caliph, quotes to Mansur about the fall of his dynasty from the king of Nawbah. After hearing the story of the Umayyad, the king says to 'Abdullah, "...therefore God took your position because of your sins and put you in a position of abjection while God's avenge on you has not ended yet and I fear God's punishment may come down on you while you are in my country and then the punishment may affect me as well..." Ibn Khaldun's *Introduction*, vol. 1, pp. 397–8.

[70.](#) W. M. Watt, *The Majesty that was Islam*, p. 18. Ja'fari confirms Watt's views about the difference between the Syrians and the Iraqis.

[71.](#) "The people pledge allegiance to me; the same people who did so to Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman..." *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 3, p. 8.

[72.](#) Allamah Amini gives various accounts of those of the Helpers who accompanied Imam 'Ali ('a) in the Siffin war. According to the dominant version in *Mustadrak*, 250 of those who swore allegiance to the Prophet (S) in the Ridwan allegiance were by 'Ali's side while, according to another account, they were 800 and 360 of them were killed. Also the Badris accompanying 'Ali have been said to be 70, 80 or even 100. They mention the names of 145 Helpers. They are, in general, the Helpers faithful to Imam 'Ali and respected him in a position proportionately to what the Prophet (S) had advised. Many of them were martyred in this war and, in the later years of his life, 'Ali, who missed them, shed tears for them many times and wished to join them as soon as possible. *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 9, pp. 362–8.

Also, see *Tasmiyah min Shahd ma'a 'Ali Hurubih* in the article *At-Tasmiyat* in the journal *Turathuna*, vol. 15, p. 31.

[73.](#) The first two caliphs said many such words, which are provided in various historical and narrative resources. See *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* and the footnotes of Muhammad Jawad Jalali on the same book, pp. 241–54.

[74.](#) What Mu'awiyah did was so effective and lasting that even the Umayyad themselves were put in a high position with the Sunnis "Because the issue of the Umayyad and defending them always remained as part of Sunni political thought." *Dahi al-Islam*, vol. 3, p. 329.

[75.](#) See *Adwa' 'ala as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah*, p. 216, and how Abu Hurayrah forged sayings against Imam 'Ali in order to please Mu'awiyah and, in Kufah, after Mu'awiyah's power was established, read the same to the people and received great rewards.

[76.](#) To understand the numerous points mentioned in the tradition, which shows the conditions of Shi'ites in a period of one century, see *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 11, p. 43.

[77.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 44–6.

[78.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[79.](#) For example, see the poems of Umayyad poets in *Al-Umawiyyun wa'l-Khilafah*, pp. 15–21, and compare the same with the rejections of the 'Abbasid poets in *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 43.

[80.](#) Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2, p. 115.

[81.](#) The Umayyad said the caliphate was a right belonging to them, which they inherited from 'Uthman. 'Uthman got it from the Council but he was killed unjustly and his right was ignored. The caliphate left his dynasty and was transferred to the others. It is their duty to go to war in order to return it. The poets supporting the Umayyad said this repeatedly on different occasions (*Al-Umawiyyun wa'l-Khilafah*, p. 13) and even spread the propaganda that the Umayyad inherited the caliphate from the Prophet (S). *Ibid.*, p. 17.

This propaganda was so effective that it was widely believed in at least their main territory, i.e. Syria, until the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. Mas'udi says in this regard, "After Marwan, the last of the Umayyad caliphs, was killed, 'Abdullah ibn 'Ali

came to Syria, where he selected a number of the senior and rich people to send to Saffah. They swore before Saffah that they did not know any family of the Prophet to be his inheritors other than the Umayyad. In this meeting, Ibrahim ibn Muhajir recited a poem that was later followed by the supporters of the 'Abbasid, in which he sarcastically mentioned the 'Abbasid rather than the Umayyad as the inheritors of the Prophet. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 43.

[82.](#) Read the elaborate account of the story in Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 2, pp. 406–9.

Interestingly, Professor Subhani considers this story as the source of the belief in the truth of the caliphs. “No trace of this belief can be found at the time of the Three Caliphs. None of the Immigrants or the Helpers would ever think that belief in anyone’s caliphate would be an obligation and that anyone not believing in their caliphate would not be a true believer and be a heretic.

This principle was created by such politics in order to harm 'Ali and to legalize Mu'awiyah's rebellion in order to avenge 'Uthman's blood. Perhaps 'Amru ibn al-'As was the first person to cultivate such thought.” Then, he gives a full account of the story and concludes that, “This story and its likes indicate that belief in the caliphs' right to caliphate was born in an atmosphere of hostility and rivalry so that a clever and deceitful person could use the belief in the right of the Two Shaykhs to caliphate as a ground for acknowledging ('Uthman's) right...” Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal, vol. 1, pp. 265–6.

[83.](#) An example of such a current can be found in Rijal hawl ar-Rasul. This current has affected even a liberated and modernist person such as Khalid Muhammad Khalid, the author of the book.

[84.](#) In his Sharh as-Sunnah, Barbahari says, “You shall believe that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were buried in 'A'ishah's pavilion. When you come to the Prophet's grave, then it is necessary to express greetings to those two after the Prophet.” Tabaqat al-Hanabilah, vol. 2, p. 35. Cf. the article on the Companions in Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 488, and also Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim, vol. 3, pp. 23–230.

[85.](#) This is one of the sensitive, fine and critical points rarely noticed by Shi'ites and Sunnis. They talk to each other based on their principles and beliefs. One of the best examples is Dala'il as-Sidq by the late Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, which is a rejection on Ibtal al-Batil by Fadl ibn Ruzbihan, the latter also being a rejection of Nahj al-Haqq by 'Allamah Hilli. By reflecting on the text and the rejection of ibn Ruzbihan and then the critique of the late Muzaffar on him, one finds out that some of the discussions are based on two absolutely different foundations, while each of them has looked at the issue through their own beliefs and has criticized the other party on the same basis.

[86.](#) For example, see the elaborate introduction of Abu Ridah on Rasa'il al-Kindi.

[87.](#) 'Abd al-Hadi Ha'iri thus quotes Watt, the well-known British orientalist, on why Sadr the First was sanctified, “It was in the late decades of the 9/3 century that the Muslims clearly found out that the only way to protect their Islamic identity was for them to depend on the past history of Islam or, at least, that of the first periods.

In the late years of the same century, most of those who were involved in various religious movements accepted Sunnism with all its differences. This meant that all the companions of the Prophet of Islam, including 'Uthman, whose qualification for caliphate was strongly doubted by groups of the earlier Muslims, had to be respected...” Majalleh-ye Daneshkadeh-ye Adabiyat wa 'Ulum-e Insani (Journal of Faculty of Literature and Humanities), Mashhad, serial no. 56, p. 733.

[88.](#) One of the big problems of the Mu'tazilites was that they developed the final form of their beliefs exactly at a time when they were on decline due to various political, social, intellectual and religious reasons. The peak of this maturity can be found in the books of Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, except for Al-Mughanni, which was ignored by Sunni scholars despite its significance, and it was only in the 50's of the present century that it was discovered in Yemen, the center for Mu'tazilite Zaydis. See Al-'Usul al-Khamsah, which is among the best books on Mu'tazilite thought and is more than any of its preceding books based on religious and Qur'anic foundations.

If these and similar books had stepped on the scene earlier or at least simultaneously with the books of Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari, the Ash'arites would not have had such absolute hegemony. Regarding how the Ash'arites entered on the scene and why they succeeded, see his interview with the senior man of the Hanbalites of Baghdad, Barbahari in Tabaqat al-Hanabilah, vol. 2, pp. 18–9.

[89.](#) See the dialog between Ibn Hanbal and Mu'tasim in *Rijal al-Fikr wa'd-Da'wah fi'l-Islam* by Abu'l-Hasan Nadwi, pp. 118–20, and especially *Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* by al-Jawzi, pp. 397–437, the story of whose discussions with Mu'tasim and Wathiq are elaborately provided.

[90.](#) *Duha al-Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 75–6, quoted from *Sharh Ibn Abi'l-Hadid*, vol. 4, p. 454.

[91.](#) *Duha al-Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 86–8.

[92.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[93.](#) *Ibn Khaldun's Introduction*, vol. 2, pp. 907–8.

[94.](#) Ibn Hazm, *Hayatuhu wa 'Asruhu, 'Ara'uhu wa Fiqhuhu*, pp. 483–5, and also Goldziher, *The Zahiris, Their Doctrine and their History*, pp. 190–207.

[95.](#) As we have already said, apart from Shi'ites, it was the Mu'tazilites who had a critical attitude towards the early history. *Fajr al-Islam*, pp. 266–78. There were the Traditionists and the Hanbalites, who thought about nothing but sanctifying that period of history and its statesmen. "As the history of the Umayyad was written during the 'Abbasid era, who were their enemies, their virtues were not mentioned. However, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal mentioned some virtues of the Umayyad, which has made the orientalisists praise his leadership and bravery." *Duha al-Islam*, vol. 2, p. 122.

This method of Ibn Hanbal, which was contrary to that of his time, originated merely in his dogmatic belief in the truth of that period of history and its statesmen. In this respect, see *Al-A'immah al-Arba'ah*, vol. 4, p. 117. Other than this group, Sunni scholars in general had an intermediate stance. *Al-Iqtisad fi'l-I'tiqad*, pp. 203–5.

Cf. Gibb's views.

[96.](#) In regards to how *Ijtihad* and exegesis [*ta'awwul*] were used as means to acquit those who had done something wrong, see the introduction by Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Hakim on *An-Nass wa'l-Ijtihad* and the book itself and on what *ijtihad* means and where it can be applied, see *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 9, pp. 341–9.

It would be appropriate here to mention an example. When Khalid Ibn Walid killed Malik Ibn Nuwayrah in order to seize his wife and then returned to Medina, 'Umar asked Abu Bakr to avenge him, Abu Bakr said, "I will not kill him because he made *ijtihad* and made an error." *Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*, p. 179. This concept was later used widely both to acquit criminals and to acquit their historical heritage and to organize the historical, jurisprudential and theological perceptions of the Sunnis. For example, see the chapter on the virtues of Khalid Ibn Walid in *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 13, pp. 366–80.

Doubtless, one of the necessary things for such organizing is to extend the scope of *ijtihad* in the first place and, in the second place, to interpret and justify the disputes that had arisen between two trustworthy persons. For example, on the causes of the dispute between 'Umar and Khalid Ibn Walid, Sha'bi, who is one of the great jurists of the late first century and has an effective role in the organizing of Sunni jurisprudential and theological thought, says, "Khalid was 'Umar's cousin. The two had quarreled with each other in childhood. Khalid broke 'Umar's calf, which was healed sometime later. This was a reason for hostility between the two." *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 13, p. 369. Also see 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab by 'Abdu'l-Karim al-Khatib, pp. 424–40.

On the interpretation and justification of Jamal and Siffin wars during which the most prominent of the people went to war with each other, without offending or questioning any of the figures, see *Manaqib al-Khulafa al-Arba'ah fi Mu'allifat ash-Shi'ah* by 'Abdu's-Sattar at-Tunisi, pp. 64–70, and also *Al-Bid'ah: Tahdiduha wa Mawqif al-Islam minha*, pp. 25–61 by 'Izzat 'Ali 'Atiyah, especially *Al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim* and especially in this respect see the footnotes of Muhibb ad-Din Khatib, a book which is a masterpiece in religious and historical justification and interprets and justifies even the most apparent historical and religious facts in a way different from their reality. For example, see the justification on Mu'awiyah's command to kill Hajr ibn 'Uday, pp. 211–3 and the footnote of Khatib on page 212; and also see Khatib's defending Yazid, p. 214; also see pp. 244–51, on which Ibn 'Arabi condemns all historians except Tabari and for example why stories of corruptions of the caliphs have been told; also see I. Goldziher, *The Zahiris*, pp. 3–13; and the views of Ibn Hazm on *sententia*, deduction and causal determination.

[97.](#) For example, see the views of Ibn Hanbal on early Muslims. *Al-A'immah al-Arba'ah*, vol. 4, p. 117, and compare them

with his political thoughts and beliefs. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–20, and especially see *Sharh as-Sunnah* by Barbahari, the great Hanbalite scholar of the 4th century in *Tabaqat al-Hanabilah*, pp. 18–45. Also see *Al-Ibanah ‘an Usul ad-Diyanah* by Abu’l-Hasan Ash‘ari, pp. 45–141.

[98.](#) The principle is not about judging the people of the past, their behavior and the argument, opinion or stance of each. The problem is that the honesty and truth of the parties is evident and, therefore, one has to justify the actions taken. For example, see the Persian translation of *Ayyuha’l-Walad* by Ghazali, pp. 30–1.

[99.](#) The tendency towards revolution and armed movements among the contemporary Muslim youth can be studied in *Al-Faridah al-Gha’ibah* by ‘Abdu’s-Salam Faraj, an Islamic Jihad theoretician who was executed in recent years. In a part of his book, after rejecting all the recommended and experimented solutions for Islamicizing the society, including establishing Islamic political parties, bringing up a generation of Muslim educated people to take care of the affairs, guiding the people and publicizing the religion, immigrating to another place to provide the ground for returning conqueringly and the like, he says, “In Islamic countries, the enemy is from within. In fact, it is he who has the command and is represented by governments that have taken the power away from the Muslims.

This is why everybody must enter into the jihad.” After providing some explanations, he adds, “In order to implement God’s commands, one has to create an Islamic government. We do not insist on this or that result. The collapse of the infidel regime will provide everything to the Muslims.” *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, pp. 242–7.

[100.](#) Sa’d ad-Din Ibrahim thus describes the most important characteristic of Muslim fighters in Egypt in the 1970’s and 1980’s, “The practical violence of a group that has risen against the government and the others who act in the name of Islam.” *Asaf Husayn, Islamic Movements*, p. 29.

[101.](#) From among the Islamic intellectuals and writers, probably the first one who, in his words, tried to remove the mask of hypocrisy from the face of rulers pretending to be Islamic while in fact opposing it was Sayyid Qutb, especially in his last and most important book, *Ma‘alim fi’t-Tariq*, which was later subject to much criticism and was not entirely accepted other than by young people with revolutionary tendencies. Even Hasan al-Hadibi, the leader of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* of Egypt, explicitly criticized it in his *Du‘at li-lqdat*, and Yusuf al-‘Azm, the best-known *Ikhwanite* scholar, criticized some of his thoughts in his *Ra’id al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu‘asir*.

However, the conditions in the 1970’s and 1980’s provided an appropriate ground for expansion and influence of his thoughts. In practice, all contemporary Islamic movements that have taken place in the Sunni and especially the Arab World have been influenced by the thoughts of Sayyid Qutb, whether they were accepted in their totality or not. However, this does not mean that they could not achieve a challenging ideology that was at the same time Islamic. They started out from a dead end, therefore, could not and cannot get anywhere. They cannot and shall not ignore their ideological principles to establish their ideology on foundations other than that. They can provide a different interpretation of these principles but cannot put them aside. When they do so, they will be criticized and they will not have any satisfactory solution and their ideology will not have a chance to succeed or continue.

Their other mistake is that they tried to insist on the faith, persistence and devotion of the revolutionaries to guarantee achieving their goals. This is basically a wrong perception. They have deemed a part as the whole and tried to escape the dead end by emphasizing on it. It is strange that this mistake on their part is like that of the non-Islamic revolutionary groups. For example, the *Fada’iyan-e Khalq* (Devotees of the People) before the victory of the revolution in Iran had been deluded by a similar mistake. They criticized the Tudeh party members of Musaddiq’s time because of lack of persistence and thought that the only way to achieve victory was persistence and devotion. See the books written by Juz’i, Ahmadzadeh and Safa’i Farahani, especially the first one of the three. Also see *Idi’ulozhi wa Inqilab* (Ideology and the Revolution), pp. 212–20. On the importance of *Ma‘alim fi’t-Tariq* and the different views expressed about it, see Sayyid Qutb by ‘Abdullah ‘Awad, pp. 325–9.

[102.](#) On the attempts of the new generation to liberate from religious dogmatism, see *As-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah bayn Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Hadith*, especially pp. 7–12, by Muhammad al-Ghazali, one of the best-known religious scholars of the present time. Also see *Mufasssal min al-‘Aqidah ila’th-Thawrah* in five volumes, which is written by one of the best-informed

contemporary intellectuals, Hasan Hanafi, especially vol. 1, pp. 7–47.

[103](#). For example, see *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*, pp. 5–21 and *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah* by Abu Ya'la, pp. 19–28.

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