

Part 3: Imam 'Ali In His Own Era

22. The Election of the Imam 'Ali

Had Quraish (Meccan Community) remained in control of the political affairs during the first few days after the death of Uthman it would have prevented the Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib from coming to power. Had Tallah Al-Zubayr and their supporters expected 'Ali to come to power they would not have opposed Uthman or called for his assassination.

Each of the two companions was hopeful that he rather than 'Ali would be the fourth caliph and Quraish was determined to use all its power to keep 'Ali away from the caliphate. You may remember that the Imam said to the Hashimites when the Second Caliph issued his instructions concerning the Electoral Convention: "Should your people (the Qureshites) be obeyed in matters pertaining to you you will never be given the leadership."¹

Fortunately Quraish lost the political initiative for a few days after Uthman's assassination. The Qureshites were astonished and numbed and they did not know what to do. It is true that the non-Umayyad Qureshite leaders instigated the uprising against Uthman and called for his assassination. Yet the people who made the revolution were from outside Mecca and Medina.

They were Egyptians Bassrites and Kufites. These revolutionary elements were in control of the political affairs having what the Qureshites did not have of influence during that short period.

The reign of the Third Caliph exhibited to the Muslims that Quraish had committed a classical error when it diverted the caliphate from 'Ali to Uthman. The natives of Medina found in the few days following his death a breathing time and an opportunity to liberate themselves from the Qureshite influence and its despotic role in directing the caliphate and giving it to whomever it chose.

Thus Quraish for the first time was not obeyed in a matter pertaining to the House of the Prophet. Therefore the House of the Prophet was given the leadership and 'Ali who was the head of the House

was elected.

It was ironic concerning the caliphate that 'Ali desired to be the elected caliph when Abu Bakr was elected when 'Umar was appointed and when Uthman was selected.

And at each time Quraish used to stand in his way and divert the caliphate from him to others. Yet his desire and the Qureshite desire did not clash when he was offered the caliphate after the death of Uthman.

The Qureshite leaders were wishing out of jealousy that 'Ali would not be given the leadership. 'Ali on the other hand wished that the caliphate would be diverted from him because he expected to face tremendous difficulties which could not be surmounted by a man of principle such as 'Ali.

A Drafted Caliph

Al-Tabari reported that the Meccan and the Medinite companions including Talhah and Al-Zubayr met with the Imam 'Ali and told him: "We have to have an Imam." He said: "I have no desire for your leadership. I would be satisfied with whomever you choose." They said: "We shall choose none but you."

They came to him time after time saying: "We know of no one who has more right or precedence in Islam or closer relation to the Prophet than you." He said: "Do not do it. I would like to be an assistant rather than a leader." They said: "By God we shall not desist until we elect you."²

Al-Tabari reported also that the people remained five days after the death of Uthman without an Imam. The revolutionary people gathered the people of Medina and told them: You are the people of the counsel.

You are the makers of the caliphate and your decision would be honored by the nation. Look for anyone whom you choose and we will follow you. The majority said: We choose 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. We will be satisfied with him. The revolutionaries gave the people of Medina two days to choose a leader. People came to 'Ali saying to him: "We want to elect you; you are witnessing what happened to Islam and what we are exclusively (from among the rest of the people) facing of difficulties."

A Gloomy Expectation

'Ali said: "Leave me out and seek other than I. Certainly we are facing a crisis with many faces and colors. The hearts will not stand for it and the minds will not rest on it." They said: We ask you in the name of God. Can't you see what we are facing? Can't you see what happened to Islam? Can't you see the crisis? Do you not fear God?

He said: "I accept and you should know that if I accept I will follow only my knowledge in administering your affairs. If you leave me out I would be only one of you yet I would be of the most obedient to

whomever you elect."³

They left him after they made an appointment with him for the following day..

The following day (Friday) people came to the Mosque and 'Ali mounted the pulpit and said: "O people upon mutual counsel and permission this affair is yours.

No one has the right to lead you except the one you choose. We parted yesterday on an agreement. If you choose I will sit for you; otherwise I will not have any ill feelings against anyone (if you change your opinion)." They said: "We are still on the same principle as yesterday."⁴

People elected him. It is said that Talhah was the first one who gave him his allegiance.⁵ The people of Kufa said that Malik Al-Ashtar was the first one who gave 'Ali his allegiance.

Unachievable Goals

The Imam reluctantly accepted the election although he wished that the caliphate had been diverted from him to another person. The caliphate in his view was not an end.

He viewed it only as a means of spreading justice among people realizing brotherhood among the followers of the Islamic message and leading the nation to a life ruled by principles of the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. All evidence was pointing to the fact that the achievements of these goals had become impossible.

The unity of the nation had come to an end during the reign of the Third Caliph. His saddening death was expected only to increase the division of the nation and magnify the flame of dissention.

'Ali's program called for implementation of equality in distribution of public funds executing justice removal of corruption and elimination of discrimination. This was expected only to meet the strongest opposition from elements of strong influence who were not willing to relinquish their acquired privileges.

Quraish's Hostility

Quraish the community that blocked 'Ali's way to the caliphate for twenty-five years (thinking that if he comes to power the caliphate will remain in his house) will do all it can to destroy his caliphate.

The Privileged Companions

The class of companions who were preferred in salary by the Second and Third Caliphs and acquired wealth through investment of the surplus fund which they received will oppose 'Ali because he believes in distributing the public funds equally among the Muslims.

Those who enriched themselves by accepting huge sums of money and vast pieces of land from the Third Caliph and his appointed governors will also oppose the Imam because he intends to recover what they received illegally and put it back in the Islamic treasury.

The Promoted Companions

Talhah and Al-Zubayr members of the Electoral Convention were representing a new class of companions and endeavored to bring the reign of Uthman to an end (hoping that one of them will replace him). They were expected to try to fight 'Ali with all their power.

The two companions were extremely powerful. The fortune of each had amounted to tens of millions of dirhams.⁶ They had the support of the Qureshite clans and a great number of the people of Basra and Kufa. And above all they were supported by Ayesha Mother of the Believers who enjoyed a great influence and a high prestige.

In fact this important lady was one of the tremendous obstacles which the Imam had to face because she was extremely hostile to the Imam. She was effective and influential because of her high position. She was the one who fermented a revolution against Uthman in order to replace him by her cousin Talhah or her brother-in-law Al-Zubayr.

The Umayyads

More dangerous than all these elements were the Umayyads members of the clan of the assassinated Caliph whose influence was escalated during his reign and one of them Muawiya became the strongest man in the Muslim World.

Tribalism

What made the Umayyads extremely dangerous was their exploitation of the tribal spirit in the Arab society which compelled the members of any tribe regardless of their number to obey their chief under any condition. Such a spirit produces evil when the chief of the tribe is greedy putting his worldly interest ahead of his religion.

It is very easy for a ruler who controls a national or state treasury to purchase the loyalty of a tribe by purchasing the loyalty of its chief. There is nothing that corrupts man's conscience like money. The Umayyads were masters in the art of purchasing people's loyalty and corrupting their conscience. They were the rulers of the important Islamic provinces and this enabled them to have a great number of proteges and purchase the loyalty of many tribes by pleasing their chiefs.

The Absence of the Military Draft System

The aforementioned difficulties would be accentuated when compulsory military service is absent. The Faith of Islam makes it mandatory to the Muslims to defend the nation and the sacred principles of Islam. Yet the performance of this duty was left during the time of the Prophet and the first three Caliphs to the conscience of the Muslims. The Islamic Army was composed of volunteers. The aforementioned difficulties would be accentuated when compulsory military service is absent. The Faith of Islam makes it mandatory to the Muslims to defend the nation and the sacred principles of Islam. Yet the performance of this duty was left during the time of the Prophet and the first three Caliphs to the conscience of the Muslims. The Islamic Army was composed of volunteers.

When the nation is united and people are conscious of their religious duties it would be easy for the government to gather task forces in order to meet any threatening danger. But when the nation is divided and people are confused by the slogans of various parties it would be most difficult to meet arising dangers and subduing subversive elements.

This is much harder when subversive elements already exist and military forces acquired through purchasing the loyalty of chiefs of tribes through public funds. This was the situation when the Imam was elected. There was no national military establishment.

People were divided and confused and Muawiya the governor of Syria had established in that province during the eighteen years of his governorship a viable military power by gathering the tribes of Syria around him and putting all their forces under his command.

The caliphate was diverted from the "Brother of the Messenger" when the nation was healthy and united and religion was its main concern. Then the caliphate was forced upon him when the nation was divided and the caliphate became bloody.

'Ali was not the man who runs away from his responsibilities even in a desperate situation where the elements of evil and anarchy which shall stand in his way are much stronger than the good elements which support him.

The Imam was fully aware that the Umayyads were to acquire the authority of the Muslim World and transform the caliphate into a despotic Kingdom. The Imam was aware of this because he was aware of the prevalent corruption in the nation and because of the information which he received from the Prophet about the future of the nation.

His awareness of this future would not justify in his eyes a passive attitude. As a matter of fact his expectation of the future success of the Umayyads made him more determined to fulfill his duty after he found some good elements determined to assist him and desirous to combat injustice in the Islamic society and purify it of corruption.

The Imam expected the Umayyads to control the Muslim World but this expected control was not inevitable or predestined from Heaven where man has no choice. On the contrary what was expected to happen was to be a result of failure of the Muslims to combat injustice and stand for the truth.

Had the Imam refused to lead the nation after the righteous companions and their good followers offered him assistance he would have assisted the Umayyads in reaching their evil goals.

It was his duty to stand up and to do all he could to prevent them from coming to power. If the nation supports him justice will prevail and he would avoid the Muslims a great danger that threatened their religion and future as a nation of a great mission. If the nation let him down he would have fulfilled his duty and pleased his Lord and his conscience. He would be following the examples of the prophets who entered into struggles which they did not hope to win.

Blood and Tears

As the Muslims put the Imam face to face with his responsibility and forced the caliphate upon him he tried also to make them face their responsibility. He warned his electors that they will face very insane crises which will demand heavy sacrifices and that they should not expect but blood and tears. He told them that they are about to face a crisis of manifold faces and colors with which neither hearts stand nor minds rest with certainty.

He told the people of the acquired privileges who enjoyed self enrichment at the expense of others that he will re-direct the nation and will not listen to criticism by people who are opposed to justice. "If I respond to your call I will follow only my own knowledge."

The good companions of the Prophet and their followers gave the Imam their allegiance (while they had a clear idea about what they will face) with an unequalled zeal. His election was truly an election by the people whose hearts were filled with faith without being corrupted by politics and quest of prestige. These people believed that they were electing the Brother of the Prophet the most knowledgeable of his message and the Prophet's choice from his nation.

As to the people of political ambition and material greed from the members of the preferred classes they were unable to resist the tide of enthusiasm of the masses of the people. They had lost political control during that short period. The death of Uthman stunned them and they could not gather themselves to resist the Imam. They gave him their allegiance as other people did.

Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam one of the most hostile persons to the Imam was among those who elected him. Talhah and Al-Zubayr elected the Imam though each of them was hopeful to become the caliph after Uthman.

An Early Opposition

A Qureshite woman of great influence and high voice was not stunned by the sequel of the events. Ayesha wife of the Prophet and a Mother of the Believers was completely present-minded capable of thinking planning and working for her political goal. She declared her opposition to the Imam the moment she received the news of his election.

Ayesha was the most outspoken person against Uthman. Her propaganda against him was one of the main factors in bringing the rebels to Medina and besieging the Caliph. When he was besieged she was calling for his assassination.

Al-Balathari in his history recorded that when the situation became serious for Uthman he ordered Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam and Abdul Rahman Ibn Attab Ibn Oseid to meet with Ayesha. They came to her and she was preparing herself for pilgrimage. They requested her to stay in Medina that God may protect the man (Uthman) through her.

She said: "I shall not do what you are requesting." The two men stood up and Marwan recited a verse of poetry indicating that Ayesha started the fire and when the fire grew she was leaving! At this point she told him: "Marwan I wish that Uthman were in one of my sacks and I could carry him so I may throw him in the sea."⁷

Abdullah Ibn Abbas while on his way to Mecca (after Uthman appointed him "Ameer" (leader) of the pilgrimage) met Ayesha on the road and she said to him: "Ibn Abbas God has given you wisdom intelligence and eloquence. Beware do not try to dissuade the rebels to save that tyrant."⁸

Sudden Reversal

Her hostile attitude towards Uthman was immediately changed when she received the news of 'Ali's election after Uthman's death. While at "Saraf" coming back from her pilgrimage Ayesha met Obeid Ibn Abu Selema (who was related to her through her mother). The following dialogue took place:

Ayesha: What do you know?

Obeid: Uthman was killed and the people remained eight days without a caliph.

Ayesha: Then what did they do? Obeid: They elected 'Ali.

Ayesha: May Heaven fall on earth if your man succeeds. Return me to Mecca.

She turned her face towards Mecca saying "By God Uthman was killed unjustly. By God I shall avenge for his blood."

Obeid: By God you are the first one who discredited him. You used to say about him: Kill Naathal

(likening Uthman to a heavily bearded Arab Jew named Naathal) because he deserted the faith.

Ayeshah: They made him repent then they killed him. They said and I said and my last saying is better than my first saying.[9](#)

Thus the Mother of the Believers turned in one hour from an enemy of Uthman urging people to kill him to an avenger of his blood and she did not lack the argument for her opinion in both situations for both attitudes.

Campaigning for War at the Sacred Mosque

She went to Mecca and when she arrived at the Sacred Mosque of Mecca she delivered a fiery speech urging people to avenge the blood of Uthman.[10](#) She forgot and through her influence as a wife of the Prophet and daughter of the First Caliph she made her audience forget that she was the holder of the biggest share of the responsibility of his death.

She forgot and made people forget that Islam had forbidden and abolished the pre-Islamic traditions which allowed people to wage bloody wars for revenge and that the punishment of a killer is not in jurisdiction of any one but a true Islamic government.

She forgot and made people forget that God had commanded her and all the wives of the Messenger to stay at their houses and that she should not display herself as women used to do during the pre-Islamic days.[11](#)

Her audience in Mecca were the Qureshites who shared with her the hatred of 'Ali since the days of the Prophethood. These people made continuous efforts to keep 'Ali away from leadership for twenty-five years. He was elected caliph only when the Qureshites lost the political control after the death of Uthman. Now Mother of Believers was trying to gather the Qureshite anew in order to destroy his leadership after the believers elected him.

Mecca is the Sacred City whose sanctity 'Ali would not violate. Therefore it was a safe place for the conspirators. They gathered there from various places after Ayeshah preceded them raising the banner of rebellion towards "Ameer Al-Mumineen" (the Leader of the Believers)

A Preparation for War Under Way

The first one to respond to her call was Abdullah Ibn Amir Al-Hadrami who was Uthman's appointed governor of Mecca.[12](#) He said: "I am the first one to seek revenge for the blood of Uthman." When the Umayyads knew about the attitude of Ayeshah they left Medina secretly to Mecca.[13](#)

Talhah and Al-Zubayr stayed in Medina for a while then decided to go to Mecca to join the Mother of Believers.[14](#) They left Medina pretending that they were going for Omrah (a brief visit to the ancient

House of God in Mecca)

The Two Companions Joined

Talhah and Al-Zubayr were most expected to join the camp of Ayesha because her goal was to cancel the caliphate of 'Ali in order to replace him with one of the two companions.

She instigated people against Uthman and ordered them to kill him for the same purpose.¹⁵ She wanted to replace him with her cousin Talhah as her prime choice or with her brother-in-law Al-Zubayr as a second choice.¹⁶

The Umayyads Were Still to Be Reckoned with

The meeting of the conspirators and their dialogue in Mecca indicate that the Umayyads after Uthman were still something to take into account. People of Mecca were with them; the former governor Abdullah Al-Hadrami was in the front line and they did not encounter any opposition from the Meccans.

Yaala Ibn Omayah (he is Ibn Munyah) Uthman's former appointed governor of Yemen pillaged what was under his control of the Islamic treasury in Yemen before the arrival of Obeidullah Ibn Al- Abbas the Imam's appointed governor of Yemen. Ibn Omayah brought for the conspirators six hundred thousand dirhams and six hundred camels.¹⁷ This enabled them to implement a portion of their unholy project.

Abdullah Ibn Amir who was Uthman's appointed governor in Basra brought a great amount of funds.¹⁸ He informed them that they had many proteges in Basra. In fact everyone of Uthman's appointed governors had many proteges. The purchase of the Arab tribes' loyalty was the Umayyad art. They excelled in that art and bought many chiefs and tribes in order to erect the pillars of the Umayyad Kingdom.

Rassrah the Chosen Target

When the conspirators tried to decide to which city they should go in order to begin the revenge for the blood of Uthman they realized that all of Syria was under the control of an Umayyad governor Muawiya who was more hostile to the new Caliph than they were.

Finally they decided to go to Basra in spite of the presence of the Imam's appointed governor. They chose Basra because it had many Umayyad proteges.¹⁹ They hoped that the words of Mother of the Believers will influence the majority of the people of its population to repudiate the Imam.

United Only Against the Imam

The Umayyads and their previous enemies: Ayesha Talhah and Al-Zubayr had agreed to stand against

the Imam who was their common enemy. The destruction of his leadership was their first goal. They were divided on their ultimate goal namely: Who is to rule after the destruction of the Imam's caliphate?

The Umayyads were working for returning the caliphate to them while Ayesah and Talhah and Al-Zubayr were opposed to that. The Umayyads were wiser than Talhah Al-Zubayr and Ayesah. The Umayyads were hopeful to eliminate them after using them.

To them the three leaders were partners in shedding the blood of Uthman and dangerous to the Umayyads. The following story shows the extent of their difference in goals.

Sa-eed Ibn A-Aws Uthman's former appointed governor of Kufa came to Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam and his group while the caravan was at the beginning of its journey to Basra. He asked them: "Where are you going and leaving alive the people from whom you should seek revenge? (He meant Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr)

Kill them and go back to your homes. They retorted: We hope that we will be able to kill all the killers of Uthman.

Sa-eed met Talhah and Al-Zubayr privately and asked them the following question: If you prevail against 'Ali whom are you going to make a caliph? Tell me the truth! They told him that the caliphate will be for one of them.

Either of them that would be chosen by the people shall be the caliph. Sa-eed suggested to them that they should give the caliphate to one of the children of Uthman because they were going to avenge his blood.

They said: We are not going to pass over the elders of the Meccan companions and give the leadership to the orphans. Sa-eed said: "I would not endeavor to take the leadership away from the children of Abd-Munaf" (whose descendants are the Hashimites and the Umayyads). He went back and so did Abdullah Ibn Khalid Ibn Useid.[20](#)

Sa-eed was hasty. Marwan and his group were trickier than Sa-eed. They were trying to weaken or destroy the caliphate of the Imam and then eliminate the three leaders.

The Umayyads were much more intelligent than the three leaders Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr. They wanted to use these leaders in order to reach their goal and then sacrifice them. But the three leaders were not aware of what was planned for them.

History informs us that Marwan killed Talhah in the Battle of Basra.[21](#) Had Al-Zubayr remained alive he would not have escaped the avenge of the Umayyads.

Talhah and Al-Zubayr did not have any legitimate excuse in their rebellion against the Imam. Talhah was the first one who gave allegiance to the Imam and Al-Zubayr was one of the electors. Yet when

they started their unsuccessful venture both claimed that they were forced to give their allegiance to the Imam.

Were Talhah and al-Zubayr forced to elect the imam?

The Imam was most aware of the human and Islamic rights and he was too righteous to deprive people of their rights. Every Muslim is entitled to exercise his political freedom and authorize or refuse to authorize another person to govern in his name. Every human has the right to refuse to pledge his allegiance to any candidate even if he is elected by the majority.

However such an abstainer should not try to prevent such an elected person from exercising his right to administer the affairs of the people as long as he governs according to the Islamic laws. A ruler who is elected by the majority is not permitted to force a person to change his vote from "no" to "yes."

The Imam Did Not Force Any Companion to Elect Him

The Imam himself faced difficulties and was subjected to injustice when companions tried to force him to elect Abu Bakr.[22](#) Other companions warned him after they selected Uthman that he should not incur harm to himself by refusing to vote for Uthman.[23](#) The Imam believed that such attempts are violations of his natural rights. The Imam is not expected to do what he used to criticize.

He believed that the Messenger of God had chosen him to lead the nation and that the duty of the nation is to follow the choice of the Messenger. Yet he refused to use violence as a means of acquiring leadership when Abu Sufyan offered him to fill Medina with horses and men against Abu Bakr.[24](#)

Saad Ibn Abu Waqass who was a member of the Electoral Convention refused to elect the Imam and said to him: By God you will see no harm from me. The Imam did not force him to pledge his allegiance to him.[25](#)

He did not force Abdullah Ibn 'Umar to elect him and he was not less important than Talhah and Al-Zubayr. The Imam asked from him to bring a surety and when he refused to do that the Imam said to the people: Leave him I am his surety. Then he said to him; "You are as far as I have known you a man of ill manner in your youth and adulthood."[26](#)

When he asked him to bring a surety he wanted only to be sure that the one who refuses to elect him will not try to revolt against him. Osamah Ibn Zayd Ibn Harithah refused to elect the Imam and the Imam did not try to force him.

Individuals from the natives of Medina also refused to elect the Imam. Among these were Zayd Ibn Thabit Hassan Ibn Thabit Muslimah Ibn Mukhlid Muhammad Ibn Muslima Naaman Ibn Basheer (who became a supporter of Muawiya later) Kaab Ibn Ujrah and Kaab Ibn Malik (who was sent by Uthman to collect the Zakat of Muzainah then he granted him what he collected).[27](#)

All these were loyal to Uthman and opposed to the Imam. Yet the Imam did not force any of them to elect him. The Imam would not have given an exceptional treatment to Talhah and Al-Zubayr if they had refused to elect him. The most he could do to them was to ask them to offer a guarantee that they would refrain from any subversive activity.

I do not rule out that the rebels or their leaders had exercised some pressure against the two companions and made them elect the Imam. But such pressure would not have prevented the two companions from saying to the Imam:

We are forced to elect you. Had they said that to him he would not have accepted their election. He was the most knowledgeable of the fact that their election cannot be sound when it is done by force.

The Imam Could Not Force His First Elector

Furthermore to expect an Imam to force people to elect him he had to have certain elements: A strong desire to come to power and a military power through which he could force people to elect him or tremendous wealth with which he may try to purchase the loyalty of the people.

Our Imam was not desirous to come to power and he did not make himself a candidate. He seriously tried to divert the leadership from himself. He did not accept the caliphate except when it was forced upon him. He did not have a military power or a material wealth through which he could exercise any pressure against individuals or masses of people.

In addition to this it may be possible for a caliph who has already been elected by the majority to try to force an opponent to vote for him. But it is not conceivable that a candidate tries before he is elected by a majority or a minority to force the first voter to elect him.

The story which tells us that Talhah and Al-Zubayr were forced to elect the Imam mentions that Talhah was the first one to pledge his allegiance to the Imam. It tells also that a man called Habib Ibn Thu-aib who was present at that time interpreted the incident to be ominous saying that the Imam will not succeed because the first hand to give him allegiance was paralyzed (Talhah had a paralyzed finger since the Battle of Uhud).[28](#)

The Imam Refuted the Allegation

The Imam refuted the allegations of the two companions in a message he sent to both of them after they left Mecca to Basra. In that message he left no excuse for the two companions. "Certainly you have known."

He said "Though you have concealed the fact that I did not seek the people until they sought me; nor did I solicit their election but they elected me. You were from the people who sought me and elected me.

The masses of the people did not elect me for a prevailing authority nor for any material wealth. If you had elected me voluntarily you ought to reverse your attitude and repent to God quickly. If you had elected me unwillingly you have given me the right to demand your obedience when you exhibited your free election and concealed your intention."[29](#)

If the two companions had elected the Imam under pressure from the rebels or other people they should have at least informed the Imam at the time of election or at least before they left Medina that they had elected him unwillingly.

They stayed in Medina months after the election and never claimed any coercion. Their silence for the duration of that period is evidence that they elected him voluntarily. They did not refrain from mentioning that because of fear of punishment.

It is one of the known facts in history that Saad Ibn Abu Waqass who was their colleague in the membership of the Electoral Convention and Abdullah Ibn 'Umar did refuse to elect the Imam and neither of them was punished or threatened by the Imam. Talhah and Al-Zubayr were wealthier and more powerful than Saad and Abdullah.

Therefore the Imam said in his message to the two companions: "Certainly you were not the most entitled from among the 'Migrants' (the Meccan companions) to keep silent out of fear. Your refusal to enter into my election could have been easier for you than to exit out of it after acknowledging it..."[30](#)

The Guilty Accused the Innocent

However the two companions did not only claim that they were forced to elect the Imam but also accused the Imam of the murder of Uthman. Yet they and Ayesah Mother of the Believers were the ones who urged people to besiege and kill Uthman and the Imam was the defender of Uthman among the Migrant companions. Since people of Medina were aware of this the Imam concluded his message by the following words: "And you have alleged that I had killed Uthman.

Those who stayed in Medina and did not join you or me ought to be questioned about this matter. Then everyone of us will be burdened with his own action. You the two old men ought to reverse your attitude. The most you may suffer now is shame; but if you continue your way you will add to the shame the Divine punishment."[31](#)

The story of the coercion of Talhah and Al-Zubayr to elect the Imam was obviously untrue. 'Ali was not the man who would try to force any voter to elect him while he was not yet an elected caliph. The two companions invented the story of coercion to justify their rebellion against the Imam.

The two companions who allowed themselves to fight 'Ali and to kill thousands of Muslims for their own interests would not be expected to refrain from telling untruth deliberately.

- [1.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 33 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 239.
- [2.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 427 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 98.
- [3.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 434 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 99.
- [4.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 435 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 99.
- [5.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 435 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 99.
- [6.](#) Ibn Sa'd mentioned in his al-Tabaqat part 3. p110 that al Zubayrs wealth announced to forty million dirhams and in p. 222 that Talhah's wealth amounted to thirty million dirhams
- [7.](#) Al-Balatheri Ansabul-Ashraf part 4 p. 45.
- [8.](#) Ibn Abu-Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 506.
- [9.](#) Abn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 106.
- [10.](#) Abd Al-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 2 p. 297.
- [11.](#) The Holy Qur'an chapter 33 verse 33.
- [12.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 449-450.
- [13.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 448-450.
- [14.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 452.
- [15.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 459.
- [16.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 506.
- [17.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 106.
- [18.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 106.
- [19.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 106.
- [20.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 107.
- [21.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 124.
- [22.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 1 p. 190.
- [23.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 37.
- [24.](#) Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 1 p. 185 Al-Tabari in his History part 4 p. 428.
- [25.](#) Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 22 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 428.
- [26.](#) Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 22 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 428.
- [27.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 429-430.
- [28.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 428.
- [29.](#) Al-Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 3 p. 111-112.
- [30.](#) Al-Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 3 p. 111-112.
- [31.](#) Al-Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 3 111-112.

23. The Battle of Basra

The period at which the Qureshite community was overwhelmed and lost the political control had elapsed. Quraish woke up after the Brother of the Messenger was elected. Now this community went on gathering its forces determined not to let 'Ali enjoy his leadership and to demolish that leadership regardless of what it may cost the Muslims in blood unity and religion.

The Qureshite parties (though neither of them had good intentions towards the other) agreed to wage war against 'Ali the Imam of the truth. One of the two parties was led by three leaders who had a high religious position:

Ayeshah the politically-minded wife of the Holy Prophet Talhah and Al-Zubayr who were among the early Muslims with a brilliant record in their endeavor during the days of the prophethood along with a long companionship of the Holy Prophet.

The other party was the Umayyads led by Muawiya (governor of Syria). The Umayyads were known (with the exception of a few) to be less religious than other Muslims as they were known for their long and strong hostility towards the Prophet.

That hostility continued for most of the years of the prophethood and the signs of it did not disappear except during the last two years of the life of the Messenger.¹ In spite of that this party had a tremendous material power which made it the more dangerous of the two parties.

A Third Party Governor of Kufa Both parties declared their open defiance to the Caliph. Both parties made out of the revenge for the death of Uthman a slogan with which they were trying to deceive millions of ignorant Muslims.

The two parties were joined by Abu Musa Al-Ashari in a covered and camouflaged way. As the Imam's appointed governor of Kufa Abu Musa was able through his malicious method to offer to the two parties tremendous assistance.

However the three leaders of the first Qureshite party were faster than the second party in their violent hostility. They took the strategy of offense while Muawiya took the strategy of disobedience and defiance.

The three leaders took the law in their hands and appointed themselves as the high magistrates of the nation and the administrators of its affairs. They went on shedding the blood of the Muslims² though they were neither heirs nor relatives of the assassinated Caliph. Nor were they elected by the nation.

History recorded the names of the killers of Uthman and their number did not exceed five: Soudan Ibn Hamran Al-Ghafiqi Qutairah Kinanah Ibn Bishr Al-Tajeebi and Amr Ibn Al-Hamiq.³ History records that three of them: Kinanah Ibn Bishr Al-Tajeebi Soudan Ibn Hamran and Qutairah were killed at the same time Uthman was murdered.⁴ Thus only two of them survived Uthman. But the three leaders did not go after these two.

They considered all who attended the besiegement of the Third Caliph from Basra Kufa and Egypt to be of his killers. Yet most of these came asking the Caliph to make changes and did not come to kill him.

They came only to pressure him to change his policy towards handling the public funds and towards his relatives. The few who killed him made their attack on him while the majority of the rebels were unaware of what the few did. His death probably was a shocking surprise to most of those who besieged him.

The three leaders considered all who attended the besiegement partners in his assassination because their presence was an assistance to the murderers. If this logic is sound then it would have been the duty of the three leaders to go to the Imam and ask him to give them what they deserved of punishment

because they were among the biggest agitators against the Caliph.⁵

A Sweeping Condemnation

The three leaders were not satisfied to kill only the ones who besieged Uthman whose number did not exceed twelve hundred from Egypt Kufa and Basra. Evidently the three leaders considered every loyal person to the Imam a partner in the murder of Uthman.

They went to Basra and turned thousands of its inhabitants against the Imam then used them to fight whomever they could reach of the Imam's followers in Basra or Kufa. The participants in the siege of Uthman from the people of Basra did not exceed two hundred persons and none of them participated directly in killing the Caliph.

The Qureshite war followed a pre-Islamic method. Its purpose was not to kill the killers of Uthman but to destroy the caliphate of the Imam. How would they avenge the blood of Uthman when they were the ones who urged people to kill him?

A Warning Prophecy Not Heeded

The three leaders went to Basra accompanying three thousand persons including a thousand Meccans. Uthman's former appointed governors supplied them with funds and means of transportation through what they stole from the public funds before they left their posts.

Their procession arrived to a water where dogs at that water barked at them. Mother of the Believers Ayeshah asked about the name of the place. When they told her it was the water of Al-Hou-ab she realized that she was deviating from the right road and the prophecy of the great Messenger had been fulfilled.

She said "Return me return me (to Mecca)."⁶ Al-Zubayr and his oldest son Abdullah confused her by bringing witnesses testifying falsely that the water is not the water of Al-Hou-ab.

It is also reported that she was told that 'Ali is about to overtake them and they ought to hurry out. Thus she continued her journey to Basra.⁷ Yet she knew that the Imam does not fight anyone that does not fight him. She was too intelligent to believe in the testimony of witnesses who were brought to her by people who justified every means for reaching their end.

The voice of the Messenger was still ringing in her ears: "I wish I knew which one of you will be the rider of the huge camel to be barked at by the dogs of Al-Hou-ab and she would be deviating from the right road." (He was addressing Ayeshah and Om Selema) and he turned to Ayeshah saying: "Humairah I have warned you."⁸

Dividing Killing and Truce

Finally the procession arrived in Basra and the wife of the Messenger was able (through her position with the Messenger of God and her father being the First Caliph) to divide the people of Basra after they had given their allegiance to the Imam. The three leaders' party and the party of the governor of Basra Uthman Ibn Hunayf fought each other then agreed on a temporary truce.

This truce was violated by the three leaders when they attacked the followers of Ibn Hunayf then forced him out of the leadership of the prayer at the Mosque and slaughtered many of his guards then occupied the governor's office and massacred their opponents.⁹ Their opponents were not the killers of the Caliph Uthman but they were loyal to the Imam.

The Contents of the Truce Agreement

Al-Tabari in his History reported that the truce pact which was made between Ibn Hunayf on one hand and Talhah and Al-Zubayr on the other hand contained the agreement to send a messenger from Basra to Medina seeking information from its inhabitants whether Talhah and Al-Zubayr elected 'Ali voluntarily or by force. If people of Medina testified that the two companions were forced to elect 'Ali the city of Basra shall be under control of the two companions and Ibn Hunayf should leave his post.

If people of Medina testify that the two companions elected the Imam voluntarily the governor Ibn Hunayf would stay in his post and Talhah and Al-Zubayr could stay in Basra under the control of the Imam if they want and if they choose to leave Basra they could.¹⁰

The messenger of the two parties to Medina was Kaab Ibn Soor a former judge of Basra. When he asked people of Medina about the two companions' election of the

Imam people did not answer his question except Osamah Ibn Zayd Ibn Harithah. He stated that they elected 'Ali unwillingly and under coercion. Sahl Ibn Hunayf (brother of Uthman Ibn Hunayf governor of Basra) and others attacked Osamah Ibn Zayd but Osamah was defended by a few people who were from the opposition of the Imam and Osamah was taken to his home without being hurt.¹¹

Al-Tabari recorded that when the Imam knew about what took place in Medina he sent to Uthman Ibn Hunayf a message in which he blamed him for his inefficiency and told him in the message: "By God they were not forced for a division. They were forced for unity and good. If they want to declare their disobedience they have no excuse; and if they want something else we may consider the matter."¹²

When the message of the Imam came to Uthman Ibn Hunayf and Ibn Soor came with his news from Medina Talhah and Al-Zubayr sent to Uthman Ibn Hunayf to leave his post and his office. Uthman refused to do so saying that what the Imam brought up is different from what they had agreed upon. Upon this Talhah and Al-Zubayr and their supporters made their attack at the Mosque then they

attacked the governor and prevailed against him.

They occupied his office and the city of Basra then took over the treasury. This was followed by a massacre. [13](#) The three leaders aimed at liquidating their opponents. Ibn Hunayf was taken prisoner. They tortured him and pulled the hair off his beard and wanted to kill him.

Al-Tabari in reporting these events relied on the narration of Seif Ibn 'Umar who alleged to have taken his information from Muhammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah.

Knowing the Imam's method of conducting himself we ought to discredit this report. The Imam was not a man who would take a pledge of loyalty from a person who was forced to give it.

We have already substantiated that the claim of coercion by Talhah and Al-Zubayr was unfounded. The reporter of this story was Seif Ibn 'Umar who was discredited by many historians and hadith recorders and some of them declared him as one of the forgers of the history and some of them accused him of being a heretic. [14](#) We shall deal with this in the following chapter.

Forcing Two Persons Does Not Nullify the Election

Assuming that the two companions were forced to elect the Imam this would allow them only to withhold from the Imam their assistance if he seeks it. It would not allow them to hinder the Imam from exercising his rule as the administrator of the affairs of the nation after he was elected by the overwhelming majority from the companions of the Prophet.

Forcing two persons to elect an Imam does not cancel the whole election or the legitimacy of his caliphate. Al-Zubayr was forced to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr when Abu Bakr was elected. Historians reported that Al-Zubayr came out from the house of 'Ali drawing his sword in the faces of the attackers saying. "Ali has the right more than anyone to the caliphate."

The attackers took the sword from his hand and led him to Abu Bakr and made him give his allegiance to him by force. [15](#) Forcing Al-Zubayr at that time did not cancel the legitimacy of Abu Bakr's election in spite of the fact that his election was a "Faltah" (an incident that came without preparation or planning) according to the testimony of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. [16](#)

Would it have been legitimate at that time for Al-Zubayr to go to Mecca for example and occupy it and drive Abu Bakr's appointed governor from Mecca by force? I do not believe that Al-Zubayr could claim that this was legal for him to do. I do not think that anyone from the companions would agree with him if he had claimed the right to do that.

Had he done this he would have been fought and considered to be a divider of the Muslim community. Why should it be legitimate for him and Talhah to fight the Imam and drive his appointed governor out of Basra and occupy a city whose people pledged their allegiance to him?

Illegal Agreement

If Ibn Hunayf had agreed with the two companions voluntarily on the contents of the alleged pact of the temporary truce he would have committed a grave mistake.

This is because his agreement with the two companions represents a negligence of the trust which the Imam put in the hand of Ibn Hunayf and because it is an agreement on dividing the nation. This is abhorable to God and His Messenger.

Granted that Ibn Hunayf agreed on that. This could not make it legitimate for the two companions and for the Mother of the Believers to implement the contents of the agreement because it contained a pledge to commit a major sin.

If Ibn Hunayf had breached the pact between him and the two companions after the Imam reprimanded him he would have only fulfilled his duty. This is because the contents of the pact are unjustifiable in Islam.

If the two companions wanted out of their occupation of Basra to make one of them a caliph the Faith of Islam does not allow them to do so. Muslim reported in his Sahih that Abu Sa'eed Al-Khidri said that the Messenger of God said: "If two caliphs are elected kill the latter of the two."¹⁷ Muslim reported also that the Messenger said: "Whoever stood in open disobedience and parted with the bulk of the community then dies he would die a pre-Islamic death."¹⁸

The Imam's Journey

Muawiya declared his open defiance to the Imam and the Imam found his confrontation with Muawiya inevitable. Therefore he went on trying to mobilize an army in order to subdue this dangerous rebellion. While he was dealing with this crisis he received the news of the journey of the three leaders to Iraq. He changed his plan.

The Imam found it necessary to give priority to the crisis of the three leaders. The province of Iraq was the most important among the Islamic provinces for the caliphate. Should the three leaders occupy Iraq while the Syrian province is controlled by Muawiya the Imam would have lost most of the moral material and military forces in the Muslim World.

The Imam facing this crisis was fifty-eight years old. His relatively old age did not diminish his determination, bravery and his fast response to the big problems and facing them with proper solutions.

During the days of the Messenger he was his right arm, the one who solved his problems and subdued his enemies. Now after twenty-five years during which he was in actual retirement he returns with his well-known capabilities to face crises but on a larger scale. The forces he had to face at this period were incomparably greater than what he used to face in the days of the Prophet.

Unprecedented Test

The struggle between right and wrong was and still is difficult for the followers of the truth. People of the right camp are usually in the minority. The wrong side has its own attraction as it has fruits which the people of its camp can pick quickly. The truth is not tempting and the strength of its followers springs from their belief in God the Day of Judgment and their determination to sacrifice.

The difficulties which the camp of truth faces increase greatly when people are confounded unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Under such circumstances the truth loses the assistance of people with good intention who would be helpful if the right road were clear to them.

On the other hand the wrong camp wins certain forces which could have been antagonistic to it if they had known that it is the wrong camp. People of good intention may stay neutral because they do not know which side is right.

Their neutrality decreases the number of the supporters of truth and the wrong party would be relieved of the burden of combating these good people due to their neutrality.

This is what happened to the camp of truth which the Imam was leading. It was the first time it took place in the Islamic history. It never happened during the days of the Prophethood nor did it happen during the days of the Three Caliphs who preceded the Imam.

The Holy Prophet faced many enemies but the separation between him and his enemies was as clear as the separation between day and night. He is the Messenger and his followers are the believers in his message and his enemies are the pagans and the rest of the unbelievers who declared their disbelief in his message. There was no possibility to lose the distinction between right and wrong.

Abu Bakr faced at the beginning of his reign forces that declared their desertion of the Faith of Islam. Thus there was no room for any confusion between right and wrong. When the war of desertion ended the First Caliph had to face forces that did not believe in Islam and declared their animosity towards its message. And so was the situation during the days of 'Umar and Uthman. Right and wrong distinguished from each other like day and night.

The Imam 'Ali on the contrary had to face hostile forces which belonged to the Faith of Islam and declared their belief in its Book and offered the five prayers and paid Zakat. Furthermore one of the camps of those forces was led by three people whom the Muslims highly respected because of their companionship to the Prophet or for being related to him by marriage.

Thus it became difficult for the masses of the people and even for some of the knowledgeable people to distinguish between the camp of the truth and that of falsehood. The history of the three leaders attracted tens of thousands of people and made them side with them against the well-guided Imam while they were thinking that they were right and that he was wrong.

Had 'Ali come to power immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet his confrontation with Talhah Al-Zubayr and Ayesah could have been easier than his confrontation with them twenty-five years later.

During the early years after the Prophet people still remembered the distinctions of 'Ali his great endeavor in the way of God and his position with the Holy Prophet and the Prophet's declarations about him. By the passage of more than two decades after the death of the Prophet people had forgotten 'Ali's distinctions. He was away from the political arena and in actual retirement.

People of Basra and Kufa probably knew about Talhah and Al-Zubayr more than they did about the Imam 'Ali. Talhah and Al-Zubayr had many properties and big investments in both cities. Even Al-Zubayr forgot that the Holy Prophet had told him that he will fight 'Ali while unjust to him. This explains the word of the Imam which he uttered before he was elected: "... For we are facing a crisis with many faces and colors.

The hearts do not stand to it and the minds do not rest with it." As the crisis which was precipitated by the movement of the three leaders had such great dimensions it was the duty of the Imam to face it with all his forces. Therefore he left Medina with a few hundred volunteers hoping that he will overtake the leaders and their followers before reaching Iraq and prevent them from implementing their plan.

When he arrived to Rabatha he realized that they had already passed it and gone towards Basra. However he believed that their invasion of Basra was less harmful than invading Kufa where the most important Arab forces were settled.

He went on until he arrived to Thee Qar. He sojourned there after he sent a message to the people of Kufa urging them to join him for the sake of bringing peace preventing evil and supporting truth. The three leaders were already in control of Basra.

They drove Uthman Ibn Hunayf out of his office. Uthman came to Thee Qar. When he met the Imam he told him: "Ameer Al-Mumineen when you sent me to Basra I was bearded but I returned to you without a beard."

The Imam said to him: "May God reward you for what you have suffered. Two persons before me ruled the people and both followed the Book; then the third one followed them. People spoke about him and dealt with him the way they did. Then they elected me. Talhah and Al-Zubayr elected me then they breached their covenant with me and instigated people against me. It is one of the wonders that they obeyed Abu Bakr and 'Umar and now they antagonize me. By God they know that I am not less than any of those who passed away. God I ask Thee to untie what they knotted and abort what they plotted and make them meet the evil consequences of what they have done."¹⁹

Abu Musa Al-Ashari

After the three leaders' party occupied the City of Basra Ayesah Mother of believers took a further step. She wrote to the leaders of Kufa informing them that her party had already occupied Basra urging them to avenge the blood of Uthman and discouraging them from supporting the Imam.[20](#)

Of course she wrote to Abu Musa (the Imam's appointed governor of the city) and asked him to use his influence in preventing the Kufites from sending any recruits to the army of the Imam. Abu Musa did not need anyone to urge him to do that. He was not loyal to the Imam; nor was he a believer in his right.

The messages of the Mother of Believers to the Kufites had their effects. It divided them. Some of them called for the support of the Imam and some of them called for staying out of the dispute or for supporting the three leaders. Abu Musa spoke to the people repeatedly warning them and advising them not to enter into any battle for the support of the Imam. He reported to them that he heard the Messenger of God saying:

"There shall be a faith-testing crisis in which the less participation the better." Then he told them: "Sheath the swords give refuge to the oppressed until people are united and the cloud of crisis clears up."[21](#)

Had the Kufites obeyed Abu Musa the Imam could not have faced the crisis with any considerable strength.

He had only a small army when he arrived to the area of Thee-Qar. It is amazing that history did not record that Abu Musa ever criticized the three leaders for invading and occupying Basra and pushing people to the Faithtesting crisis which he used to mention so often.

Evidently. Abu Musa shared with the three leaders their opinion and he wanted the Muslims to approve their usurping the authority from the Imam and breaching their covenant with him after they pledged their allegiance to him.

Abu Musa used to report the hadith of the crisis as if he had a special knowledge of it. Yet the Holy Qur'an declared the following:

"Do the people think that they will be left alone when they say: 'We have believed' without being tested? Certainly We have tested generations before them. Thus God would know the people of truth and the untrue ones." The Holy Qur'an chapter 29 verses 2-3.

Abu Musa Misinterpreted His Own Report

It seems that Abu Musa reported a statement he attributed to the Prophet but he did not understand what it meant. If the Messenger had uttered the words which Abu Musa reported the Prophet had meant

that there will be a devious and confusing movement in the Muslim society and that the duty of the Muslims will be to discourage its people and to let the people of that innovation down by denying them any support.

The Messenger did not mean that the good believers should not resist the people of innovation when their movement becomes dangerous to the unity of the nation and when they shed the blood of the Muslims. Otherwise the Prophet would be calling upon the nation to approve the devious movement and let them succeed in reaching their goal and usurping the power and administering the affairs of the Muslims after they acquire what they seek of power.

[Abu Musa Disagreed with the Qur'an](#)

Had Abu Musa understood the words of the Messenger he would have known that those who entered Basra and usurped from the Imam his authority and drove his appointed governor out of Basra are the people of the devious movement who should be denied all support.

He should have known that when those people divided the Muslims the duty of the Muslims was to fight them because they are people of invitation to an un-Islamic movement and to a rebellion against the legitimate Imam in whose name Abu Musa was ruling Kufa.

Abu Musa reported the hadith which he claimed to have heard from the Prophet and forgot what the Holy Qur'an clearly declared that the nation is dutybound to fight a Muslim party that commits an aggression against another Islamic party:

"If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them; but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other then fight the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just." The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 9.

Abu Musa also forgot another verse which makes it mandatory to obey the Imam and support him:

"O ye who believe obey God and obey His Apostle and the people of authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves refer it to God and His Apostle if ye do believe in God and the last Day. That is best and most suitable for finer determination." The Holy Qur'an chapter 4 verse 58.

This verse makes it mandatory for Abu Musa and every Muslim to obey the Imam.

Obedience of the leader of the believers is mandatory to every Muslim unless the leader calls upon people to disobey God. The verse also commands that a matter of dispute should be referred to the Book of God and the instruction of the Messenger. The Imam 'Ali was the leader of the Muslim nation

and he did not invite people to disobey God. He rather called upon them to obey Him.

His aim was to unite the Muslims and the aim of his opponents was to turn people against him and to divide the nation.

Which Faith-testing Crisis?

However there were many confounding crises that took place in the history of Islam before the election of the Imam and after his departure from this world. The Prophet in the statement which Abu Musa attributed to him did not name that crisis. How did Abu Musa know that the crisis which the Prophet meant was the crisis which took place during the days of the Imam's reign?

It is not reported that the Prophet ordered 'Ali to be in active in the face of confounding crises which were to take place during the days of his reign. On the contrary he commanded him to fight and commanded the believers to follow him. Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak (part 3 page 139) recorded that Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari reported during the days of 'Umar that the Messenger ordered 'Ali to fight the breachers (of the pact of allegiance) the Unjust party and the Seceders' party; and that Abu Ayyoub asked the Messenger saying: "With whom shall we fight these parties?"

The Messenger replied: "With 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib." Al-Hakim recorded also that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger of God said that 'Ali shall fight for the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an as I fought for its revelation.

Abu Musa Appointed Himself a Counselor to the Nation and the Imam

His words indicate clearly that he accused the Imam of being a partner in the confounding crisis about which he spoke. His words indicate also that he accused the Imam with either the lack of knowledge of the instructions of the Messenger or disobedience of the Prophet's instructions or with both lack of knowledge and disobedience. Yet the Messenger said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is the gate of that city; whoever wishes to enter the city should come through its gate."²²

Abu Musa Persisted in His Error

It may be said that Abu Musa was following Abdullah Ibn 'Umar whom he used to love and whom he recommended for leadership. Abdullah Ibn 'Umar stood neutral in the dispute between 'Ali and his opponents. He did not support the truth. Nor did he fight the untruth. But then he found himself failing to follow the Book of God.

Therefore he repented and changed his attitude towards 'Ali. Al-Hakim recorded in his Al-Mustadrak through his channel to Al-Zuhri who reported that Hamzah said the following:

"While he (Hamzah) was sitting with Abdullah Ibn 'Umar a man from Iraq came to Ibn 'Umar. He said:

Abu Abdul-Rahman (a code name of Ibn 'Umar) by God I have been seriously trying to follow you and take an attitude similar to yours towards the division of the nation and be neutral as far as I could.

Yet I have read a verse from the Holy Qur'an which occupied my mind and I would like you to inform me about it. I mean the Word of God: 'If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them; if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just.'

"Please inform me how to comply with this verse. Abdullah said: 'You have nothing to do with this. Go away.' The man left and when he disappeared Abdullah turned to us saying: 'I never found in my heart something as I felt about this verse that I did not fight the aggressor party as God commanded me to do.'

["23](#)

Al-Hakim commented on this report saying: "This is an important hadith reported by many outstanding tabi-is (good religious scholars who did not witness the Prophet and took their knowledge from his companions). I have chosen the channel of Shu-aib Ibn Abu Hamzah to Al-Zuhri because the two Sheikhs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim) used this channel which indicated that this is truly authentic."

Thus Abdullah Ibn 'Umar repented for his wrong stand in the quarrel between 'Ali and his opponents but Abu Musa did not repent.

Abu Musa Did Not Distinguish Between Hadith and Qur'an

However I am not confident that Abu Musa conveyed the statement of the Messenger as the Messenger pronounced it. And we find that Abu Musa reported to the people of Basra when he was their governor something contrary to the truth and denied by all Muslims. Muslim in his Sahih reported the following:

"Abu Musa Al-Ashari summoned the readers of Basra. Three hundred readers of the Holy Qur'an came to him. He said to them: "You are the righteous men of Basra and the readers of the Qur'an. Let not the passage of time make you forget the truth. Thus your hearts will be hardened. We used to read a chapter similar to the chapter of Bara-ah in length and seriousness and I have forgotten it. However I remember of that chapter only the following verse:

'Should Ibn Adam acquire two valleys full of money he would seek a third valley. And the abdomen of Ibn Adam would not be filled but by soil.' "And we used to read a chapter which was similar to the chapters which are begun with the word: "Sabbaha " and I have forgotten it. I remember of it only the following: 'O you who believe why do you say what you do not do? Testimony will be written on your necks then you would be questioned about it on the Day of Judgement."["24](#)

The words which Abu Musa reported are certainly not from the Holy Qur'an; nor do they resemble the Qur'anic words in the least. The best guess is that Abu Musa was disturbed in his thinking unable

sometimes to distinguish between the Qur'an and the hadith. And when he reported a hadith he was not accurate nor could he understand it.

I believe that Abu Musa was a part of the conspiracy of Talhah Al-Zubayr Ayesah and Muawiya Ibn Abu Sufyan. He was trying his best to destroy the caliphate of the Imam. Had he succeeded in convincing the Kufites to sit and refrain from supporting the Imam the reign of the Imam would have ended in the first year after his election.

It is obvious that the Imam did not trust Abu Musa and that he knew his negative attitude towards the members of the House of the Prophet in general and towards him in particular.

When the Imam was elected he sent Imarah Ibn Shihab one of the companions as a governor of Kufa to replace Abu Musa. But Imarah came back to Medina after Tulaihah Ibn Khuwailid threatened him before his arrival to Kufa...[25](#)

(During the short period that took place after the death of Uthman there was no security for people.) The Imam then kept Abu Musa upon the request of Al-Ashtar. Abu Musa was a Yemenite and most of the Kufites were Yemenites.

The Imam sent Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Muhammad Ibn Jaafar to the Kufites asking them to join him in his journey to Basra and to be supporters and helpers to the religion of God. He told them also that he wanted to bring peace and reunite the nation. The two messengers did not succeed and the attitude of Abu Musa was the biggest obstacle in the way of their mission.

When they challenged him he spoke his mind saying: By God your man and I still owe allegiance to Uthman. If fighting is inevitable then we should not fight anyone until we finish the killers of Uthman wherever they may be. [26](#)

Thus Abu Musa believed that he owed allegiance to Uthman even after Uthman died but he did not believe that he owed any loyalty or obedience to the living Imam and that he did not have to respond to his call.

He believed that if the fight is necessary they had to fight the killers of Uthman. But the three leaders who were the first to call for the murder of Uthman should not be fought even if they usurp the authority of the Imam in Basra and people should not challenge them.

Abu Musa spoke his mind also on another occasion when Abd Kheir Al-Haiwani said to him: "Did Talhah and Al-Zubayr not give 'Ali a pledge of Allegiance?" When Abu Musa replied in the affirmative Abd Kheir asked him: "Did 'Ali commit any wrong-doing which allows the two companions to breach their covenant with him?" Abu Musa replied: "I do not know." Abd Kheir said: "We leave you until you know."[27](#)

He took this attitude in order to preserve for the three leaders their gains against the Imam. Had he spoken the truth he would have admitted that the two companions had breached their covenant with the

Imam without any justification.

But this would damage his interest and their interest. It is also reported that the two messengers sent Hashim Ibn Utbah Ibn Abu Waqass to the Imam to inform him of what took place. The messenger returned to Thee Qar where the Imam was and informed him of what had taken place.

The Key to the Solution

It became clear to the Imam that Abu Musa was the biggest obstacle and that his dismissal is the key to the solution of the problem. The Imam could not lead a respectable army as long as the Kufites listened to Abu Musa. Therefore he sent to him a letter with Hashim Ibn Utbah saying to him: "Send people to me. I did not appoint you governor except to have you as my assistant for establishing the truth."

Abu Musa refused to do so and Hashim wrote to the Imam the following: "I have come to a man who is a radical disputer open in hatred." The Imam sent Al-Hassan and Ammar Ibn Yasir to urge people to join the Imam.

He wrote to Abu Musa: "I have sent Qurthah Ibn Kaab as governor of Kufa. Leave your post blamed and defeated. If you defy him and he prevails against you I commanded him to execute you. Abu Musa left his post and Al-Hassan and Ammar went on in their mission and people of Kufa responded to their call.[28](#)

It is reported also that Abu Musa did not leave his post and persisted in his defiance until Al-Ashtar joined Al-Hassan and Ammar because he felt that he was responsible for keeping Abu Musa in his post when he requested the Imam to keep him in that post. When Abu Musa unveiled his malicious intentions Al-Ashtar said to the Imam: "Ameer Al-Mumineen may God honor you With your permission I would like to join them (Al-Hassan and Ammar); I believe that the Kufites are very obedient to me.

If I go there I hope that none of them will disagree with me." The Imam honored his request. He went there and called upon everyone he met to join him in his march on the mansion of the governor. He entered the mansion with a large group while Abu Musa was standing at the main mosque speaking to his audience discouraging them from supporting the Imam and reporting to them what he claimed to have heard from the Prophet concerning the confounding crisis and that the one who does not participate is better than the one who does.

Ammar Ibn Yasir was responding to him by saying: The Messenger of God told only you that not taking part in it is better than your participation. Then Ammar said: God prevails against those who try to fight Him.

The servants of Abu Musa came running to the mosque saying: Abu Musa Al-Ashtar entered the mansion beat us up and drove us out. When Abu Musa came down and entered the mansion Al-Ashtar shouted: "Get out of our mansion. May God get your soul out of your body. By God you are of the early

hypocrites." Abu Musa said: Give me a respite only this evening. Al-Ashtar granted him that saying: You will not stay tonight at the mansion.

People entered into the mansion trying to loot Abu Musa's belongings but Al-Ashtar prevented them saying: I granted him my protection.²⁹ Thus the Imam needed to use force in order to remove Abu Musa from his post because Abu Musa was not like the rest of the appointed officials. He was a conspirator against the Imam disguised as his appointed governor.

Had he been really scrupulous about war and blood shedding he should have sided with the Imam because the Imam was still far from entering a battle. He was seeking peace and unity while the three leaders had already shed a great deal of blood.

Abu Musa approved what the three leaders did and tried anxiously to preserve for them their bloody gains by urging people of Kufa not to join the Imam. Yet the Imam was asking people to come to him in order to assist him if he is right and to correct him if he is wrong.

Thus we can easily conclude that Abu Musa was not a man of peace or against war. He was rather against the Imam collaborating with his enemies. The Imam was trying to prevent war while the three whom Abu Musa was trying to protect had already started their bloody battle before the Imam's arrival to Thee Qar. Of the words which the Imam said to the people of Kufa when they met him at Thee Qar are the following:

"I have invited you to witness with us the behavior of our brothers in Basra. If they change their attitude this is what we want. If they persist in their wrong way we shall not agree with them but we shall try peaceful avenues preferring them to the avenue of war (unless they force it upon us). There is no power but that of God."³⁰

I have given Abu Musa this lengthy discussion because his hostile stand toward the Imam was a factor in shaping the events of that period. He performed a very dangerous role whose consequences were detrimental to the Muslim World.

Finally a group of Kufites (numbering twelve thousand) came to join the Imam. Al-Tabari Ibn Al-Athir and other historians along with a number of hadith recorders reported that the Imam said before the arrival of the Kufites: "Twelve thousand and one men will come to you from Kufa." Abu Al-Tufail a companion who reported this hadith said: "I stood at Thee Qar counting those men. I found them to be twelve thousand and one men."³¹

Kufa was able to send to the Imam tens of thousands of its men if it were not for the stand of Abu Musa and the messages of Ayesah. Her religious place and the place of Talhah and Al-Zubayr in the minds of the Muslims were factors in discouraging the Kufites from joining the camp of the Imam. When the Imam neared Basra a group from Abdul Qeise joined him.³² And after all that the Imam's army did not exceed twenty thousand while the three leaders' army according to estimates was a minimum of thirty

thousand.[33](#)

The Imam's Effort for Peace

As expected the Imam did not start a battle against his opponents in Basra. All legitimate avenues of peace must be explored although his opponents had shed enough blood to justify fighting them. He wanted to confine the crisis and bring it to an end.

Thousands of Muslims were confounded and confused because of the religious position of his opponents; therefore he wanted to leave no excuse for his opponents and to make the right path clear to the masses of the Muslims.

Historians recorded that the Imam sent Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr as his special envoy to the three leaders to speak to them and offer them peace. Al-Qaaqaa was a man of wisdom and prestige and he was not accused of anything concerning Uthman.

He went on his mission and it appeared to him that he convinced the three leaders to accept peace and give the Imam a pledge of allegiance and reunite the Muslims after the death of Uthman and the events of Basra had divided them. As for what the three leaders spoke of concerning the killers of Uthman the Imam was supposed to consider it at a later stage.[34](#)

The ambassador came back to the Imam and informed him of the result of his negotiations with the three leaders and the Imam hoped that some good will come out of the negotiations. Thus he went to Basra. To his disappointment he found his opponents closer to war than to peace and that their military preparation was bigger than his.

They had already gathered an army of thirty thousand fighters. [35](#)

Al-Zubayr Lost Determination

The determination of Al-Zubayr to fight was shaken up when he learned that Ammar Ibn Yasir was with the Imam's army. When a man informed him that he saw Ammar Ibn Yasir with the Imam's army and that he spoke to him Al-Zubayr refused to believe that. But the man assured him time after time that Ammar was there. Al-Zubayr sent a member of his family to see whether this was true. When his messenger came back confirming the truth of the information Al-Zubayr said: "This broke my back."

He lost his nerve and a tremor violently shook his body. Even the weapons which he was carrying started to shake. It was well known to Al-Zubayr and the rest of the companions that the Prophet said to Ammar: "Ammar be cheerful. The aggressor party will kill you and your last drink from this world is a drink of milk." Realizing that Ammar was with the army of the Imam Al-Zubayr became frightened.[36](#)

The Imam in Dialogue with His Opponents

In spite of this Al-Zubayr stayed with his party. The Imam wanted to make it clear to him and to his colleague Talhah that they were wrong. He met them between the two camps while each of them was riding his horse and people were looking at them. The Imam was completely unarmed and Al-Zubayr was fully armed.

The Imam wanted to show people that his goal is peace rather than war. His opponents declared their rebellion against him under the pretext of avenge for Uthman for the sake of God. The Imam tried to remind them of God and the following dialogue occurred:

The Imam: "Certainly you have prepared arms horses and men " he said to the two companions while he and they were on their horses. "I do not know whether you have prepared an excuse when you meet your Lord on the Day of Judgment. Fear God and be not like a woman who unspun her strands after she had strongly spun it.

Was I not your brother and you used to believe in the sanctity of my blood and I believed in the sanctity of your blood? Did I do anything that makes it legitimate for you to shed my blood?"[37](#)

Then he said to Al-Zubayr: What brought you here? Al-Zubayr: You have brought me here and I do not believe that you are qualified to be caliph. You have no more right than we have to be caliphs. And you killed Uthman.

Reminiscence of a Prophecy

The Imam: "You believe that Uthman was more qualified than I? We used to count you from the children of Abdul-Muttalib (Al-Zubayr was the son of Safeyah daughter of Abdul Muttalib) until your son Abdullah the evil son separated you from us. Zubayr do you hold me responsible for the blood of Uthman while you were his killer? May God punish today our harshest to Uthman."

Then the Imam said to him: "Do you remember the day when you were with the Messenger of God passing through the area of Banu Ghunam and he smiled at me and I smiled at him then you said to him: 'Ibn Abu Talib is always conceited.' The Messenger of God said: 'He is not conceited and you shall fight him unjustly.'" [38](#)

Al-Zubayr: By God yes I remember that now and had I remembered that before I would not have come here. By God I will never fight you.

Talhah was expected to take the same attitude as Al-Zubayr. The Messenger foretold Al-Zubayr that he will fight 'Ali while he is unjust and that certainly goes to Talhah whose stand towards the Imam was like that of Al-Zubayr but more violent and unjust. But Talhah was not affected by all that. He stuck to his hard line.[39](#)

The Basra camp began to shoot and kill men from 'Ali's camp. The followers of the Imam began to ask and beg him to permit them to fight and the Imam refused time after time.

The Imam Offered the Arbitration of the Qur'an

Finally the Imam held a copy of the Holy Qur'an and asked: Who is willing to hold this Qur'an and invite the other camp to follow what is in it and he should know that he will be killed? A young man from Kufa volunteered to take the mission and the Imam turned his back to him. He repeated his question and no one was willing to take that mission except the young man. The Imam gave him the Qur'an and commanded him to tell the opposite camp:

This is the Book of God between us and you from its beginning to its end. Fear God for our blood and your blood. The Kufan youth did what the Imam told him to do and the Bassrites shot and killed him. With this flagrant aggression the Imam declared: "Now it is legal for us to fight them."[40](#)

The Beginning of The Battle

"By God I did not commit any sin for which they could criticize me; nor did they put between them and me a fair judge. They are seeking a right which they have neglected and trying to avenge a blood which they have shed. Certainly they are the aggressor party which was predicted by the Prophet to include a man and woman who are related to each other through marriage.

"By God I shall prepare for them a basin which I will fill. They will drink out of it without quenching their thirst and it will be their last drink. God the two men (Talhah and Al-Zubayr) have faced me with open hostility dealt with me unjustly breached their pledge of allegiance to me and instigated people against me. God I ask Thee to untie what they knotted and invalidate what they plotted and make them meet disappointment in their expectation and action. I have tried to secure their repentance to prevent hostility and gave them a respite before the battle began. They ignored the gracious overture and rejected peace."[41](#)

The Imam was not a man to be intimidated by war nor frightened by the quantity of enemies. Talhah and Al-Zubayr and their thirty thousand soldiers would not terrify him. He was still the same hero who brought the Arabs to their knees during the days of the Holy Prophet and the years did not increase in him but bravery and determination.

He had known through information from the Messenger that this battle was coming and that his enemies were the aggressor party which the Prophet described to include the man and the woman who are related to each other through marriage rather than birth (Al-Zubayr was married to Asma sister of Ayesha)

The Imam Knew His Killer's Description

When he faced Al-Zubayr unarmed the Imam was asked: How did you face Al-Zubayr unarmed and he was well armed knowing his bravery? "Al-Zubayr is not my killer " he replied. "My killer is obscure from a low family. He will kill me but not on a battlefield. Woe to his mother.

He will wish that his mother had been bereaved by his death. Certainly he is as wicked as the killer of the Female Camel of the Prophet Salih." (The Camel of Salih was created miraculously and was killed by one of the most wicked men in history.)

Although he knew that his opponents shall fight him he offered them peace and called upon them to change their attitude. He was determined to use all means available to him in order to prevent bloodshed.

Should they refuse his peaceful proposal and persist in their hostile way he was determined to prepare for them a deadly basin which he will fill. He would be the one to fill it and they would come out of it without quenching their thirst. Then he asked the Almighty to untie what they knotted and to show them the evil consequences of their deed and the disappointment in what they expected; and God responded to his prayer.

Historians disagree about the duration of the Battle of Basra whether it was one day or more. Whatever the time of its duration it was one of the ugliest and most violent battles. It was unique in its effect in dividing the Muslims. For the first time history witnessed the Muslims standing in two camps fighting each other and thousands of them fell by the swords of each other.

The battle started and appeared to be short and the losses seemed to be light. The general offense which the army of the Imam started was stormy. It shook the Bass-rite camp and compelled the thousands of the soldiers of the three leaders to run away before the middle of the day.

Talhah was shot by a deadly arrow which made him bleed to death. It is reported that Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam killed him.[42](#)

Talhah's Death

Jundab Ibn Abdullah Al-Azdi reported that he witnessed Talhah accompanied by a band of fighters and many of them were wounded and they were overwhelmed by people. Talhah himself was wounded. He was holding a sword and his followers were leaving him one after another and he was saying. "Servants of God patience there is only victory and reward after patience."

I told him: "May your mother be bereaved by your death. Go away to safety. By God you would not be victorious nor would you have any reward. You have only sinned and lost." Then I shouted at his followers and they were surprised and left him. Then I told him: By God if I want to I can kill you here.

He replied: By God if you do that you would perish in this world and in the Hereafter. I said: By God your blood has become legal to us and you are of the regretters. Then he left accompanied only by three people and I do not know what happened to him after that except that I know he perished.[43](#)

Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr witnessed Talhah urging people to fight even though he was bleeding from a wound. He told him: Abu Muhammad you are wounded and you are too sick to continue your way. Enter these houses.[44](#)

The Killer of Talhah

Historians reported that Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam is the one who shot him with a deadly arrow. Yet Talhah was his commander. Marwan and the rest of the Umayyads believed that Talhah and Al-Zubayr were two of the main agitators against Uthman but they were delaying their avenge of the two men until they obtain victory against the Imam.

When Marwan witnessed that the battle was lost he did not want Talhah to escape death because he was to the Umayyads the actual killer of Uthman. Thus the Umayyad strategy was to use the three leaders as a means to retrieve the authority which they lost by the death of Uthman.

They were ready to sacrifice the three leaders as easily as one would spend a dirham. But the three leaders did not know what they were doing. Had Al-Zubayr not been killed after his departure from Basra he would not have escaped the avenge of the Umayyads.

Al-Zubayr Left the Battlefield

The Imam as we mentioned above reminded Al-Zubayr of the word of the Messenger when he told him that he will fight 'Ali while he is unjust to him. Upon that Al-Zubayr promised not to fight the Imam.

His determination to fight was already weakened when he knew that Ammar Ibn Yasir is within the army of the Imam. In spite of this he remained at the camp and participated in the battle for a short time. He did so because his son Abdullah accused him of being a coward filled with fear when he witnessed the flags of 'Ali carried by brave men. When Al-Zubayr informed his son that he took an oath not to fight 'Ali his son counseled him to break his oath and make an atonement for that by liberating one of his servants. He did that and fought.[45](#)

Al-Zubayr Freed a Slave in Order to Fight the Imam's Camp

It is amazing that Al-Zubayr was too scrupulous to break his oath without an atonement but he was not too scrupulous after the atonement to participate in a battle in which he may kill whomever he faces of the Muslims. Yet he knew that killing a believer deliberately would bring eternity in Hell.[46](#)

Finally Al-Zubayr left the battlefield and he did not leave until Ammar Ibn Yasir met him and started

driving him out of the battlefield by his spear. Afraid to kill Ammar or to be killed by him Al-Zubayr asked him repeatedly: "Abu Al-Yaqthan (Ammar's code name) do you want to kill me?" Ammar repeatedly answered him: "No Abu Abdullah (Al-Zubayr's code name) but you have to leave."⁴⁷ It was known to the companions that the Messenger said that the aggressor party shall kill Ammar.

Al-Zubayr was expected to fear a fight against the Imam more than a fight against Ammar. For fighting 'Ali according to the testimony of the Messenger is like fighting the Messenger himself. The Prophet said to 'Ali Fatima Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein: "I am at peace with whomever you are at peace and I am at war with whomever you are at war."⁴⁸

Al-Zubayr met his death after leaving Basra. Amr Ibn Jurmooz killed him while he was on his way to Medina.⁴⁹

Under the Leadership of Ayesah

The camp of the three leaders was shaken up. Talhah died and Al-Zubayr left the battlefield; but Mother of the Believers took over after the two and proved that she was a braver leader and more capable of commanding the masses. She was more hostile than the two companions to the Imam. She had through her relationship to the Messenger and to her father Abu Bakr a halo of holiness in the eyes of the masses of the Muslims.

She was placed in an armored canopy on the back of her camel (Askar). She called upon the people to come and fight and they came back to her with great zeal. They probably felt that to let the wife of the Messenger down is to let the Messenger himself down.

They decided to offer their sacrifices for her. They attacked the right and left wings of the Imam's army and forced the two wings to retreat. The two wings joined the heart of the army where the Imam was standing. At that moment the Imam showed a bravery unparalleled in the history of wars.⁵⁰

The Unique Courage

The Imam personally moved towards the camel leading what was called the "Green Division" which consisted of the Migrant and Medinite companions. He was surrounded by his children Al-Hassan Al-Hussein and Muhammad. He gave the banner to Muhammad and Muhammad told his soldiers to slow down until the rain of the arrows stopped.

The Imam sent word to Muhammad urging him to advance and commanding him to start the decisive battle. When Muhammad hesitated the Imam came from behind and put his left hand on the right shoulder of his son. He reprimanded him and commanded him to advance.⁵¹

The Imam then compassionately took the banner from him and carried it in his left hand while his sword was drawn in his right hand. Then he charged the opposite camp hitting them with his sword then came

back when his sword was twisted. He straightened it with his knee.

His children and companions including Ammar and Al-Ashtar surrounded him and tried to prevent him from repeating his action but he kept looking at the opposite camp. Then he returned the banner to his son Muhammad and charged again entering into the midst of the hostile camp hitting them with his sword.

Witnessing people falling by his sword men started to run away from him to the right and to the left. He returned after he moistened the soil with their blood and his sword was twisted; so he again had to straighten it with his knee.[52](#)

His companions surrounded him and asked him in the name of God not to continue reminding him that it was their duty to protect him and do what he was doing. He said: By God I do not want out of what you are witnessing (of his action) anything except to please God. Then he said to Muhammad: "Son of Al-Hanafeyah (his mother): This is the way you should fight."

Ta-if's Honey

A man brought him honey. When he tasted it he said to the man who brought it: "Certainly your honey is from Al-Ta-if" (a city in Hijaz) and the man said: Yes it is.

But "Ameer Al-Mumineen" by God I am amazed how could you distinguish the honey of Al-Ta-if from others today when the hearts are jumping to the throats?" The Imam replied: "Son of my brother by God no fear touched the heart of your uncle nor is he concerned with anything (but the truth).[53](#)

The Imam's Thrust Changed the Battle

The two charges of the Imam had their expected effect.

They represented a thrust in the camp of the enemy and raised the morale of the Imam's army. He ordered Al-Ashtar to attack with his division the left wing of the Bassrite army and he did and killed Hilal Ibn Wakee-a who was the commander of the left wing. The fight was fierce and Al-Ashtar forced the left wing to retreat towards Ayeshah.

They formed a circle around her and most of them were from Banu Dhubbah Banu Uday Banu Asad Banu Najjah and Banu Bahilah. All these surrounded the camel and started to compete with each other by holding the rein of the camel one after another.

The camel became the banner of the Bassrites and Mother of the Believers was urging her sons to fight and her hope of victory did not diminish.

Abdullah Ibn Khalaf Al-Khuza-i chief of the people of Basra and their wealthiest came and asked for a

duel saying that no one should meet him but 'Ali and the Imam came to him and immediately hit him with his sword and split his head.

Abdullah Ibn Abza held the rein of the camel then attacked the army of the Imam saying: "I hit them but I do not see Abu Hassan ('Ali). This certainly is saddening." The Imam met him and struck him with his spear and left the spear in him saying: "You have seen Abu Hassan. How did you see him?"

About seventy warriors from Quraish were killed while they were holding the rein of the camel and many non-Qureshites also died.⁵⁴ Abdul-Rahman Ibn Attab Ibn Oseid from Umayyad was from the top of the Qureshites.

Al-Ashtar attacked him and killed him. Al-Ashtar also attacked and killed Khabbar Ibn Amr Al-Rasibi when he heard him challenging the Imam.

Ammar the Ninety- Year-Old

Ammar Ibn Yasir who was ninety years old fought like a lion. It is reported that he had a duel with Amr Ibn Yathri who was the bravest one among the Bassrites. Amr Ibn Yathri killed a number of companions of the Imam.

Ammar challenged him saying: Certainly you have taken refuge in a safe place. Leave your place and come to me. People worried about Ammar because of his old age and because of the reputation of Amr as a warrior. But Ammar prevailed against him and dragged him by his feet to the camp of the Imam.⁵⁵

A man said to the Imam: "Ameer Al-Mumineen " what a great "Fitnah" (faith-testing trial)!! The Badrians (companions who attended the Battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet) are attacking each other with swords. The Imam replied: "Woe to you; Would this be a "Fitnah" when I am its leader? By the One Who sent Muhammad with the truth and honored his face I never lied; nor was I devious from the right road and no one ever was deviated from the right road through me. I am on a clear evidence from my Lord who made it clear to His Messenger and His Messenger made it clear to me. I shall be summoned on the Day of Judgment and I will be guiltless. And if I had sinned what I am doing now would be an atonement for my sin."⁵⁶

Hamstringing the Camel

Beholding that death is around the camel and realizing that the war will not come to an end as long as that camel was standing the Imam drew his sword and advanced towards the camel while the rein of the camel was in the hands of the Dhubbites. The killing continued and many of them fell down. The Imam reached the camel with a group from Nukhaa and Hamdan.

He said to one of his companions (named Bujair): Hit the camel. Bujair hit the back of the camel with his sword. The camel fell down on his side and roared terribly. As soon as the animal fell the army of Basra

ran away as if they were locusts in a strong wind.

The Imam Spoke

Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Ammar Ibn Yasir carried the canopy of Ayesha and put her aside. The Imam came towards her while he was angry but holding himself.

He hit the canopy with his spear and said to her: Sister of Aram (likening her to a woman that ruled the country of Yemen before Islam). "You have brought people back to fight after they ran away and instigated them and made them kill each other..." She said: Ibn Abu Talib you have won be forebearant... Then she was taken to the mansion of Abdullah Ibn Khalaf Al-Khuza'i. She stayed days there then the Imam sent her back to Medina in a very dignified way accompanied by women and men.[57](#)

Ammar came to her when she was about to leave. He asked her: "Mother where does this journey fit with what God had commanded you to do?" She said: "I testify that you were always telling the truth." He said: "Praise be to God the One Who put for me these words on your tongue."[58](#)

The Imam remained three days in his camp then he entered Basra. He followed the "Sunnah" of the Prophet in his treatment of the people of Mecca. He forgave their guilty and prevented his followers from taking anything from the properties of the Bassrites.

He divided what he found in the treasury of Basra among the winners and the vanquished equally. He prayed over the dead of the two parties. People of Basra re-elected him and re-pledged to him allegiance. He received that pledge from them while they were under their banners. He received it from the healthy and the wounded.

He addressed his vanquished opponents saying: "You were the army of the woman and the followers of the animal. When it roared you responded and when it was hamstrung you ran away... Whoever lives with you would be bound by his sin and the one who leaves you receives the mercy of his Lord! By God your city shall be drowned and I visualize its mosque looking like a front of a ship or a sitting giraffe."[59](#)

His prophecy was fulfilled years later when Basra was drowned and covered by water and nothing of its buildings remained visible except its mosque.[60](#)

One of his companions told him after God gave him the victory: I wish my brother was present here to see how God gave you victory over your enemies. The Imam replied: "Is the sympathy of your brother with us?" He said: Yes.

The Imam said: "Then he was present with us and others were present who have not been conceived yet whom time shall bring infrequently and through whom the faith will be strengthened."[61](#)

[The Responsibility of The Three Leaders](#)

As we look back at this war retrospectively we find that thousands from the Bassrites met their death believing that they were on the right side. They were confounded and it was difficult for them to believe that a wife of the Messenger and two of his outstanding companions had parted with the truth.

People were and still are trying to know the truth through their Leaders rather than to try to know the Leaders through the truth. I do not believe that the people of Basra were aware of the brilliant history of the Imam 'Ali and the declarations of the Messenger concerning him.

The three leaders who led the Bassrites were fully aware of 'Ali's history and the testimonies of the Prophet for him but they concealed what they knew about him.

They did not want the Bassrites to know it. They tried with all their power to minimize his right and merit and accused him of what they themselves committed the murder of Uthman knowing that 'Ali was innocent of their accusation. They added to what they had done to Uthman the blood of thousands of victims who died in that battle from both sides.[62](#)

[The Umayyads Were Less Blamable than the Three Leaders](#)

The responsibility of the three leaders in fighting the Imam and accusing him of the murder of Uthman was bigger than the responsibilities of Muawiya and the rest of the Umayyads.

The attempt of the Umayyads to avenge the blood of Uthman by killing his killers did not have an Islamic justification but it had a pre-Islamic tribal-justification.

They were from the members of the clan of the assassinated Caliph. They did not play a big part in turning people against him. The three leaders of the Bassrite party did not have any justification in avenging the blood of Uthman because they were the first to seek his blood.

In addition to this they were not from his relatives and they knew that 'Ali was the most protective of Uthman and opposed to his assassination. He offered Uthman his help and Uthman rejected his offer;[63](#) and in spite of this he sent his two sons to do their share in his protection.

[Talhah's Responsibility](#)

Al-Balatheri reported that Talhah blamed 'Ali when he hit Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein for their unintended failure in protecting Uthman and that 'Ali cursed Talhah because he insisted to do what 'Ali disliked (conspiring against Uthman).

Talhah replied saying: Had Uthman handed Marwan to the rebels he would not have been killed." 'Ali disagreed with Talhah saying: "If Uthman were to deliver Marwan to you Marwan would have been killed before he was tried."[64](#)

Al-Tabari reported in his History about the events of the year 36 after the Hijrah that 'Ali said to Al-Zubayr at Basra "Do you want to avenge from me the blood of Uthman while you were his killer? May God make our harshest to Uthman meet what he dislikes today."[65](#)

Muawiya the head of the Umayyad party was not from those who pledged allegiance to the Imam. On the contrary he refused to give such a pledge. It is true that the election of the Imam by the people of Medina and the majority of the Muslim nation made it mandatory for Muawiya to follow the Imam and obey him but he technically is not a breacher of covenant with the Imam as Al-Zubayr and Talhah.

The two companions Pledged their allegiance to the Imam then led a devastating war against him. They were duty-bound to obey him as long as he followed the Book of God and the instructions of His Prophet. 'Ali was the most adherent to the Book of God and the teaching of the Holy Prophet. God ordered the believers to fulfill their covenant in which they give allegiance to a righteous ruler. The Holy Qur'an declared:

"And whoever breaches he breaches against himself and whoever fulfills what he pledges to God God will give him a great reward." The Holy Qur'an Chapter 48 verse 10.

The Messenger of God ordered the nation to kill the breachers of the pledge of allegiance. Muslim reported in his Sahih that the Holy Prophet said: "There shall be events and events. Whoever tries to divide this nation while it is united hit his head with the sword whoever he may be."[66](#)

It is reported also that the Holy Prophet said: "Whoever takes a rebellious stand (against a righteous Imam) and parts with the united community then he dies he would die a pre-Islamic death. And whoever fights blindly under a banner unknown to be a banner of truth siding with a wrong party selfishly then he is killed he dies a pre-Islamic death. And whoever parts with my nation and carries a sword indiscriminately hitting its righteous and transgressor... and refusing to fulfill a covenant he made he is not from me and I am not from him."[67](#)

Much more was expected from Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr than from Muawiya who never had a brilliant past in religion; nor was he counted from among the righteous. The three leaders heard from the Messenger of God about 'Ali what Muawiya did not hear. Even if the Umayyad Muawiya had heard what the three leaders heard from the Messenger about 'Ali it would have been expected from them rather than Muawiya the opportunist to listen to the words of the Messenger and obey him.

Ayesah Al-Zubayr and Talhah knew that the Messenger said on the day of Ghadir Khum about 'Ali: "God love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."[68](#)

And the Messenger also said to 'Ali Fatima Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein "I am at peace with whomever you are at peace and I am at war with whomever you are at war."[69](#)

These statements indicate clearly that whoever fights 'Ali fights the Messenger of God and that the

enemy of 'Ali is the enemy of God and His Messenger. Thus the stand of the three righteous leaders with their hostilities towards 'Ali was an amazing event for which there is no justification.

Al-Zubayr's Responsibility

Al-Zubayr should be particularly blamed. He is the one who stood up when Abu Bakr was elected drawing his sword and saying "I shall not sheathe my sword until 'Ali is elected." 'Umar said to companions who were with him:

Take his sword and hit the rock with it.⁷⁰ Had 'Ali wanted to fight for the caliphate on that day Al-Zubayr was ready to fight and be killed for the sake of 'Ali's leadership. How did he after 25 years fight the Imam after the Imam was elected by the companions and he was one of the electors?

Al-Zubayr particularly was to be blamed also because he heard from the Messenger of God that he shall fight 'Ali unjustly. This was reported by Ibn Al-Athir in his Al-Kamil and Al-Tabari in his History and a number of historians.

Al-Hakim reported in his Mustadrak through four channels that 'Ali reminded Al-Zubayr on the day of the Battle of Basra that the Prophet said to Al-Zubayr that he shall fight 'Ali while he is unjust to him. And Al-Zubayr acknowledged that and said he had forgotten it.⁷¹

Ayeshah's Responsibility

Ayeshah particularly was to be blamed much more than the others because she was one of the wives of the Prophet and she knew the extent of the love of the Messenger for 'Ali. She received from the Messenger warning and reprimand when she displayed resentment towards the presence of 'Ali with the Messenger.

Dialogue of Om Selemah and Ayeshah

Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah recorded that Abu Makhnaf reported a dialogue between Om Selemah (another wife of the Messenger) and Ayeshah when the latter decided to go to Basra and invited Om Selemah to accompany her. Om Selemah reminded her of things which Ayeshah did not deny: She reminded her of what took place when both of them were with the Messenger of God and 'Ali sat privately with the Prophet and his session with him was long.

Ayeshah wanted to enter and Om Selemah advised her not to do that and she did not listen to Om Selemah. Then she came back crying. Ayeshah at that time informed Om Selemah that she said to 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib: "I have only one out of every nine days with the Messenger; why don't you leave me alone with my day?"

The Messenger turned to her angrily and his face was reddened saying to her: "Go away! By God

whoever hates 'Ali from the members of my family or from other families would be out of the Faith."[72](#)

The Lady of Al-Hau-ab

She reminded her also that they both were with the Messenger of God on a journey and Ayesah was washing the head of the Messenger and Om Selemah was preparing food for him. Suddenly he raised his head saying:

"I wish I knew which one of you will be the rider of the huge camel. The dogs of Al-Hau-ab will bark at her while she is deviating from the right road." Om Selemah said:

"I freed my hand from the food and said 'I seek refuge in God and His Messenger from this.' Then he slapped your back and said: 'Beware not to be that lady.' Then he said to me: 'Daughter of Abu Omayyah be not that lady.' Then he turned to Ayesah saying: 'Humaira (red faced) I have already warned you.' "

[73](#)

The Patcher of the Sole

And the third item of which Om Selemah reminded Ayesah was that they were with the Messenger on a journey. 'Ali used to mend the shoes of the Holy Prophet and wash his garments. The shoes of the Holy Prophet during that journey needed to be mended. He took them and started to patch them and sat in the shade of a tree.

Abu Bakr and 'Umar asked permission to see the Prophet.

Om Selemah said: Ayesah and I left and sat behind the curtain. The two men entered and chatted with the Prophet for a while. Then they said: Messenger of God we do not know how long you will be with us. We wish that you would inform us of a person whom you want as your successor.

He said to the two men: "I see his place. And if I inform you of him you shall part with him as the children of Israel parted with Aaron son of Imran." When the two men heard these words they left without comment.

When we came out to the Messenger you said to him (and you were our most courageous to ask him): Whom would you choose as your successor to lead them? He said: "The patcher of the sole." Then you and I went to see who was the patcher of the sole and we found 'Ali patching the sole of the Prophet. You said to the Messenger of God: I do not see but 'Ali and he said: "He is the one." Ayesah acknowledged all of what Om Selemah reminded her of. Then Om Selemah told her: I am Om Selemah. Yesterday you were agitating against Uthman and saying about him the worst words. You named him Naathal (a name of a heavily bearded Arab Jew). And you know the place of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib from the Messenger of God.[74](#)

A number of historians including Ibn Al-Athir and Al-Tabari reported the warning of the Messenger to Ayesah and his prediction that she would be barked at by the dogs of Al-Hau-ab.[75](#)

A number of the recorders of the hadith including Al-Hakim also reported that. Al-Hakim reported in his Mustadrak the following:

When Ayesah reached the area of Banu Amir dogs barked at her. She asked: Which water is this? They said: Al-Hau-ab. She said: I think I am going back. Al-Zubayr said: No you should continue your journey and let people see you and you will bring about peace. She said: I guess that I am returning. I heard the Messenger of God saying: What would one of you do when the dogs of Al-Hau-ab bark at her?[76](#)

Al-Hakim also reported that Om Selemah said: The Prophet one time mentioned the travels of some of the mothers of the believers and Ayesah laughed and he looked at her and said: Humaira you should not be that lady. Then he turned to 'Ali saying: "If you have to deal with her be kind to her."[77](#)

Om Selemah portrayed to Ayesah her deeds and she excelled in her presentation. She said:... "What would you say if the Messenger of God faces you while you are in these deserts riding the camel from one water to another water? Certainly God witnesses your travel and you shall meet His Messenger (on the Day of Judgment)." If I were in your place and I am told: Enter Paradise I would be ashamed to meet Muhammad after I tore up the screen with which he had hidden me. Make your house your fortress and the screen (of your room) your grave until you meet him while you are in your best obedience to God and help to religion...[78](#)

This sound advice was lost on Ayesah. She said: "I accept your preaching. The matter is not what you think.

It is a good journey which is requested by two parties fighting each other. If I stay I would not be sinning and if I leave it would be for something I have to escalate."[79](#) It is amazing that Ayesah claimed that she was taking the journey because two parties fighting each other resorted to her. Yet one of the two parties (the party of the Imam) not only did not request her to take it but vehemently opposed it.

On the other hand the other party would not have stood up to the Imam without Ayesah's help and instigation. This shows us that when a person determines to do something he would not lack an excuse with which to justify his action.

Ayesah did all that while she knew that the Holy Qur'an commands the wives of the Messenger to stay in their houses:

"And stay in your houses and bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the pre-Islamic State... " The Holy Quran Chapter 33 verse 34

All this shows that the three leaders were more responsible than Muawiyah in destroying the unity of the

Muslims by what they did under the pretext of avenging the blood of Uthman while their aim was the destruction of the Imam's caliphate.

Conclusion

In spite of all this we are not allowed to say about the three leaders but good and ask God to forgive them and say: "Our Lord forgive us and our brethren who preceded us in Faith." What they had done is for God to judge.

But there are certain conclusions which we may draw from these events:

Should We Accept Their Hadiths?

Since these three distinguished leaders had legalized for themselves to shed so much blood in order to achieve their ends it would not be logical to take what they had reported of statements and deeds of the Prophet to be authentic.

When a person breaches a legitimate covenant divides the Muslims into two camps leads one of the two camps to start a bloody war he would not be righteous and reliable reporter. When a Muslim has the courage to shed the blood of thousands of innocent Muslims in order to serve his own interest he would not lack the courage to tell the untruth.

Criticism is Much Smaller Sin Than Fighting

If the Muslims are not allowed to say but good about Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr in spite of their war against "Ameer Al-Mumineen" (the Leader of the believers) and the Brother of the Messenger it would not be permissible to say but good about the Muslims who take a critical or an unfriendly attitude towards some outstanding companions. For fighting an outstanding companion is much more abhorable to God than an unfriendly attitude towards him.

The Islamic law does not discriminate among Muslims. What would be applicable to the three leaders should be applicable to the rest of the Muslims.

The criticism of any companion was never forbidden to people. The Muslims who criticize some of the caliphs do not do that because they deliberately want to defame them. They do that because they have a negative opinion of them. They sincerely believe in what they say.

The three leaders on the other hand had fought the Imam while they knew that they were wrong. If we have to respect these leaders and say only good about them it would not be right for us to be hostile to the millions of Muslims for what is much less than killing and fighting.

Critics of the companions are not necessarily devious or transgressors. It is neither logical nor fair for the

Muslims to condemn each other because of their opinions pertaining to the events and personalities of the Islamic history as long as those opinions do not contradict the Holy Qur'an or the well known instructions of the Holy Prophet. Nor is there anything in the known instructions of the Holy Prophet that prevents the Muslims from criticizing companions whose deeds or words disagree with the Qur'an or the Prophet in word or deed.

The Three Leaders Open the Door of Wars Among Muslims

The three leaders are the ones who opened on the Muslim society the doors of the civil wars. They started the first bloody battle in which thousands from both sides fell and through which the unity of the Muslims was destroyed and never restored. It is difficult for our minds to understand how these righteous leaders have the courage to shed so much blood while the Holy Qur'an declares that killing one believer would bring an eternal Divine punishment to the killer:

"And whosoever slays a believer deliberately his reward is Hell forever. God's wrath is against him. He has cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom." The Holy Quran Chapter 4 verse 93

The Battle of Siffin with all its violence and ugliness was only a consequence of the Battle of Basra. Had Mother of Believers Ayesha Talhah and Al-Zubayr assisted the Imam and gone throughout the Islamic provinces urging people to obey the Imam and to walk under his banner Muawiya would not have dared to fight him.

Had these leaders done that Muawiya would have realized that if he fights the Imam he would be waging a losing battle that will end with his destruction and the destruction of his camp and he would have humbly surrendered to the Imam.

But when he witnessed a portion of the people of Iraq sharing with him his opinion and taking an attitude similar to his and that leaders from the outstanding companions preceded him in combating the Imam his hope of a victory against the Imam was heightened.

The Battle of Basra was in fact a main factor in Muawiya's continued defiance of the Imam and his victory at the end. It is true that the Imam obtained a clear victory against his opponents at the Battle of Basra but the losses which both camps suffered had weakened the Imam's camp a great deal. The tribes of the defeated camp remained unfriendly to the Imam carrying grudges against him because of the thousands of men whom they lost in that battle.

The tribes of the Imam's camp also were weakened and lost a great deal of determination to wage a decisive campaign against Muawiya because of their losses in the battle of Basra. Muawiya remained outside the battle waiting and increasing in material and manpower.

Probably the Qureshites had forgotten through the passage of time what they had suffered of losses at the hand of the Imam in the battles of Badr Uhud and Moat.

However the Battle of Basra in which the Qureshites lost seventy of their chiefs had not only revived but also increased their rancor and hatred. It is an understatement to say that the action of the three rebellious leaders had led to the transformation of the Righteous Caliphate into the despotic rule of the Umayyad dynasty.

Had these three leaders not waged that sinister war the Imam could have uprooted the Umayyad plantation from the Syrian land and the Righteous Caliphate could have continued for generations. Having internal peace the Imam could have faced the external adversaries of the Muslim World with his unusual bravery.

The three leaders waged their campaign against Uthman because they feared that the caliphate would be transferred from him to one of his relatives and that would mean the caliphate will rest with the Umayyads. By this a rule of dynasty would be established and Talhah and Al-Zubayr would be deprived of the caliphate. To prevent this they managed to kill Uthman.

But the death of Uthman did not make them closer to their goal. So they waged their bloody campaign to destroy the Imam's caliphate. This also brought them no closer to their goal. They destroyed themselves and the caliphate of the Imam and transformed the caliphate to a rule of Umayyad dynasty the least religious tribe rather than the close relatives of Muhammad whom God purified of all sins.

- [1.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 2 pp. 165–166.
- [2.](#) Dr. Taha Hissein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 39 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 111.
- [3.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 391–and pp. 393–394.
- [4.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 89–90 Al-Tabari in his History part 4 p. 431 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 102 Ibn Abu-Al-Radeed Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.2 p. 506.
- [5.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 506 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 431.
- [6.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 34 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 407 Al-Hakim in his Al-Mustadrak part 3 pp. 119–120 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 39.
- [7.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 107.
- [8.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 120.
- [9.](#) Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 39 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 468 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 111.
- [10.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 467.
- [11.](#) Al Tabari, his History, part 4, p.468
- [12.](#) Al Tabari, his History, part 4, p.468–69
- [13.](#) Taha Hussein, al Fitnat al Kubra, part 2 p. 36
- [14.](#) Sayed Murtadah Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba second edition p. 26.
- [15.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 6 p. 11 (printed in 1965 by the House of Resurrection of the Arabic Books.
- [16.](#) Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 6 p. 195 Imam Ahmad his Musnad part 1 p. 17.
- [17.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 6 p. 195.
- [18.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 6 p. 195.
- [19.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.480.
- [20.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.480.
- [21.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.116.
- [22.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p.127.

- [23.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 115.
- [24.](#) Muslim Sahih Muslim part7 (Book of Zakat) p. 139–140.
- [25.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 103.
- [26.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.482.
- [27.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.486.
- [28.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.499–500.
- [29.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.486–487.
- [30.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 118.
- [31.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.500 and p.501 and p.505 in sequel.
- [32.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.500–501 and p.505 in sequel.
- [33.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.500–501 and p.505 in sequel.
- [34.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 119–120 Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.488–489.
- [35.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.501.
- [36.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp.510–511.
- [37.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.501.
- [38.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.511.
- [39.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.509.
- [40.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 511.
- [41.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 page 19
- [42.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 509 Abdul Fatah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 3 p. 222.
- [43.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul Balaghah part2 p. 431.
- [44.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 513.
- [45.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 509 Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 pp. 48–49.
- [46.](#) The Holy Qur'an chapter 4 verse 94.
- [47.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 124.
- [48.](#) Ibn Majah his authentic Sunan part 1 p. 143.
- [49.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 510–511.
- [50.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 3 pp. 214–216.
- [51.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah 1 p. 86.
- [52.](#) Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 3 p. 219.
- [53.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 127.
- [54.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 126–127.
- [55.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 519.
- [56.](#) Taha Hussein Al Fitna tul Kubra part 2 p. 53.
- [57.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 547–548.
- [58.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 44–45.
- [59.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 pp. 44–45.
- [60.](#) Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh his Commentary on Nahjul- Balaghah part 1 p. 45.
- [61.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 45.
- [62.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 539 mentioned that ten thousand Muslims died at the battle of Bassrah Taha Hussein in his Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 51 men- tioned this estimate and other estimates came to twenty thousand.
- [63.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 82 reported that the Imam mediated between Othman and his opponents and both sides agreed that Othman removed his bad relatives from their offices and stopped giving them and others the public funds. Then Marwan dissuaded Othman from fulfilling his promise.
- [64.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf part 4 p. 70.
- [65.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 509.
- [66.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 12 p. 241.
- [67.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 12 p. 239.

- [68.](#) Ibn Majah his Authentic Sunan part 1 hadith no. 145.
- [69.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 2 p. 220.
- [70.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 120.
- [71.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 78.
- [72.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul- Balaghah part 2 p. 78.
- [73.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul- Balaghah part 2 p. 78.
- [74.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul- Balaghah part 2 p. 78.
- [75.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 pp. 119-120.
- [76.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 pp. 119-120.
- [77.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 79.
- [78.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 79.
- [79.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p. 79.

24. The Alleged Conspiracy

Al-Tabari recorded through a channel including Saif Ibn 'Umar that Muhammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (two reporters) reported that 'Ali sent Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr (a Kufite leader) to Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr after they occupied Basra.

Al-Qaaqaa spoke to them and convinced them to make peace with the Imam and that the two parties should try to seek the killers of Uthman and punish them after the situation calms down and peace prevails.

The report says that the Imam agreed to the proposal and that he left Thee Qar area after he delivered a sermon in which he mentioned the grace of God that was bestowed on the nation by unity after the Messenger of God through the First Caliph then the one who followed him then the one who followed the Second Caliph.^{[1](#)}

The Imam according to the report said also: "Then this event (the assassination of Uthman) took place. It was brought on this nation by groups who sought the material of this world envying those who obtained it by their own merit and they wanted to turn the affairs regressively.

God will fulfill His will and He will punish whom He wants to punish. I would like to inform you that I shall be leaving tomorrow and none from those who assisted in anyway against Uthman should accompany us. Let the fools stay away from me..."^{[2](#)}

The report continues to say that individuals from those who participated in the siege of Uthman including Al-Ashtar Alba Ibn Haitham Uday Ibn Hatam Salim Ibn Thaalabah Al-Absi and Shuraih Ibn Dubai-ah held a secret meeting and Abdullah Ibn Saba (titled Ibn Al- Souda) was with them. (This man is said to have been a Yemenite from Sana-a born from a Jewish father and an Abyssinian mother adopted Islam during the days of Uthman and instigated people against him.)

The conferees realized that they will pay the price of peace with their lives and that 'Ali shall be harsher with them than Talhah Al-Zubayr and Ayesah because he knows more about the Book of God than the three leaders and he was much more adherent to the Divine law especially the laws which deal with criminals.³

The report continues reminding us (as Dr. Taha Hussein said) of the conference of the Qureshite pagans when they conspired against the Messenger of God and Satan attended their conference disguised as an old man from Najd. There was only one difference: The Devil in this report was Abdullah Ibn Saba.

The conferees made several proposals but finally "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) advised them to make the two camps lose the opportunity of agreement by starting a fight at night. By this each of the two camps would accuse the other of starting the fight. The report says that the conferees implemented their strategy with precision and succeeded in inflaming the Battle of Basra.⁴

Many historians after Al-Tabari gave this report great importance and chose it over other reports in spite of the fact that Al-Tabari himself mentioned a number of reports which contradict this report.

Contradicted by Better Reports

He reported that Ammar Al-Duhani reported that 'Ali took a copy of the Holy Qur'an on the day of the Battle of Basra and went through his camp saying: Who shall hold this Qur'an and invite the Bassrite camp to agree that both camps should comply with the contents of the Qur'an?

Then he said: The one who makes this invitation should know that he will be killed by the Bassrites. A young Kufite man said to him: "I shall do it" and the Imam ignored him. Then he repeated his call and the same man repeated the same answer.

The Imam gave him the Qur'an and the Kufite youth extended the invitation and the Bassrites shot him to death with a hail of arrows. The Imam said: "Now it has become legitimate to fight them."⁵

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Zuhri said that when 'Ali received the news of the death of the seventy men from Abdul-Qais (a branch from the tribe of Rabee-ah) he set out hurriedly until he came to Basra saying: "I am saddened by the tragedy of Rabee-ah the listener the obedient who was attacked before my arrival."

When the two camps faced each other Al-Zubayr came on his horse and 'Ali called upon Al-Zubayr. They faced each other and 'Ali asked Al-Zubayr: What brought you here? Al-Zubayr said: "You. And I do not believe that you are qualified for the caliphate; nor do I believe that you have more right to it than we and you killed Uthman." 'Ali said to Al-Zubayr:

Do you ask me for the blood of Uthman while you were his killer? May God make our harshest to Uthman meet today what he dislikes. He reminded Al-Zubayr of the word of the Messenger of God: That

he will fight 'Ali while he is unfair to him. Al-Zubayr left the scene and promised the Imam that he will not fight him.[6](#)

Al-Tabari reported that the Imam said to Talhah: You have brought the wife of the Messenger of God trying to fight with her while you have hidden your wife at your house (in Medina). Did you not pledge your allegiance to me? Talhah said: I pledged my allegiance to you while the sword was over my neck.

'Ali said to his camp: Who shall display this Holy Qur'an and invite the opposite camp to agree with us to abide by its contents and the one who does that should know that he will be killed? A Kufite youth said I. The Imam said to him: Offer them this (the Qur'an) and say to them it is between you and us from its beginning to its end and fear God by refraining from shedding our blood and your blood.

The Kufite youth did what the Imam told him to do and he was killed. 'Ali at that time said: Now the fight is legitimate.

They started fighting and seventy men died and each one of them was holding the rein of the camel.[7](#) This report like the report that preceded it is evidence that the fight did not begin until the Imam offered the other camp peace and surrender of the matter to the Book of God.

This was after the Imam and his two opponents Talhah and Al-Zubayr faced each other and after he debated with them. All this was in front of people and the two camps were witnessing it. This was of course in the daytime. Thus there was no secret conspiracy and no battle that the conspirators started during the night.

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Shi-abi reported that the battle of Basra started during the height of the day till the afternoon.[8](#) Ammar Al-Duhani and Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi narrated witnessable events and consistent with the logic of the events.

Yet these reports were not chosen by the historians who came after Al-Tabari because these reports seem to convict the three leaders and place the responsibility of the Battle of Basra upon their shoulders. The historians chose Saif's report of the conspiracy though it reports something that was not witnessable and at the same time was not consistent with the logic of the events.

The three leaders did not come to Basra for a picnic or for spreading peace. They came to start a war against the Imam and they started the battle before his arrival to Basra. They killed scores of people and occupied the city before the arrival of the Imam to the city.[9](#)

Saif reported a conspiracy that was made in a secret conference attended by Abdullah Ibn Saba and that conspiracy resulted by starting the battle at night according to the plan of the conspirators. The historians chose this report and gave it high importance though Muhammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (whom Saif claimed to be the source of his report) did not claim that they witnessed the conference. These historians did not even ask how Muhammad and Talhah knew about this conspiracy.

History mentions that the Meccan pagans had a secret conference at the "Nadwa" (club in Mecca) in which they conspired to kill the Messenger. The Prophet knew about it through a Divine Revelation. Saif Ibn 'Umar and Muhammad and Talhah on the other hand did not receive a Revelation from God.

It is evident that these historians chose this report because they wished that the contents of this report were real. The reason is that report vindicates the three leaders.

Since this report was given so much importance it is necessary to try to investigate it and see whether it is worth all that credence which it was given by the historians. Therefore I would like to record the following observations:

(1) This report presupposes that Ayesha Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr were serious in seeking the avenge for the blood of Uthman.

Yet the instigation made by the three leaders against Uthman and their admission of making it is a well known fact in history. The three leaders urged the Muslims to kill Uthman and when he died and 'Ali was elected they used his blood only as a means of combating the Imam. Since this was their intention they would not be ready to change their attitude if he agrees with them to punish the killers of Uthman because their target was 'Ali rather than the killers of Uthman.

(2) Saif's report mentioned that the Imam said before his departure from Thee Qar: "I will be leaving tomorrow and you should leave with me. None of the people who assisted in the crisis of Uthman should accompany me and let the fools stay away from me."

If the Imam had uttered these words it would be evident that he did not mean by assistance in the crisis of Uthman a direct participation in his assassination because none of the direct participants in Uthman's murder were in the Imam's army.

The ones whom he meant by these alleged words are those who agitated against Uthman and started the march against him and particularly those who urged people to kill him or participated in his siege. Some of these people were in the Imam's army. If the Imam had issued this order he should have prevented those instigators and participants in his siege from accompanying him (the Imam) to Basra but this was not the case.

Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr

The Imam did not prevent Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr from accompanying him though he knew that Muhammad was one of the leaders of the agitators against Uthman and of the participants in his siege. He was also one of those who climbed the wall and entered his mansion to kill him though he did not participate in his killing.

Historians agree that he held the beard of Uthman and insulted him and called him "Naatha" and that he

said to him: "What did Muawiya and Ibn Abu Sarh and others from your relatives avail you?[10](#) The Imam knew all that yet he kept Ibn Abu Bakr in his company.

Muhammad attended the Battle of Basra with the Imam. He is the one who removed the canopy of his sister Ayesha from the back of her camel when the camel fell down.[11](#) Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr was so close to the Imam that the Imam used to consider him as one of his children. Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr was killed while he was the Imam's appointed governor of Egypt.

[Al-Ashtar](#)

It was clear to the Imam that Malik Al-Ashtar was an outstanding agitator against Uthman. He participated in his siege but he was not a participant in his murder.

Uthman exiled him from Iraq to Syria twice. Al-Ashtar led after that a group of Kufites to prevent Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aus (Uthman's appointed governor) from coming back to Kufa.

Al-Ashtar was the first revolutionary leader who called for 'Ali's election after the death of Uthman. He remained with the Imam and accompanied him to Thee Qar then he went to Kufa and came back with the Kufan army to meet the Imam in Thee Qar. Then he departed with the Imam to Basra and he was the top general in the Imam's army.

It is from the well known facts of history that Al-Ashtar was extremely close to the Imam for the duration of his reign until Al-Ashtar died. He was the Imam's right hand in both battles of Basra and Siffin. Al-Ashtar died by poison plotted by Muawiya while Al-Ashtar was on his way to Egypt. It was the Imam who sent him as his appointed governor of Egypt. [12](#)

[Uday Ibn Hatam](#)

Uday Ibn Hatam who was mentioned in Saif's report as a conspirator and a part of the conference which was attended by Ibn Saba was also close to the Imam and an outstanding supporter. He attended the battles which the Imam faced during his caliphate.

Uday accompanied the Imam from Thee Qar to Basra and the Imam did not prevent him from going with him even after the alleged order that the participants against Uthman cannot accompany him. [13](#)

[Ammar Ibn Yasir](#)

We ought to mention particularly Ammar Ibn Yasir who was an outstanding companion. He was from the leaders of the opposition to Uthman. He called for his removal. His voice was the loudest in criticizing his policy.

He shared with Ayesha Talhah and Al-Zubayr their opinion which called for Uthman's assassination. In spite of all that Ammar was one of the outstanding leaders in the Imam's army. Those who attended the

Battles of Basra and Siffin used to follow Ammar as if he were an Islamic banner. [14](#)

It is well known in history that the presence of Ammar at the Battle of Basra on the side of the Imam was one of the main factors which contributed to the departure of Al-Zubayr from the battlefield. [15](#)

Al-Zubayr knew that the Messenger of God said to Ammar: "Ammar the aggressor party shall kill you." [16](#) Had the Imam ordered those who assisted with anything against Uthman not to accompany him to Basra he would have prevented Ammar from going with him.

Thus as the report of Saif is opposed to the reports of Ammar Al-Duhani Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi it is also opposed to the well known facts of history that the Imam was accompanied to Basra by Ammar Ibn Yasir Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr Malik Al-Ashtar and Uday Ibn Hatem. These distinguished individuals were with him and they were extremely close to him. When a report is opposed to well known facts in history it should be disregarded.

(3) In addition to the aforementioned the Imam was not in need of anyone to ask him to punish anyone who killed a believer unjustly. Had the Imam known the killer (or killers) of Uthman he would have punished him immediately without waiting for any agreement with Talhah Al-Zubier and Ayesah as a price for his peace with the three leaders.

It is well known in history that the Imam was most observant of criminal punishment. He was the one who counseled Uthman to kill Obeidullah Ibn 'Umar when he killed Al-Hirmizan without any evidence that substantiates his involvement in the murder of his father 'Umar. [17](#) The Imam threatened Obeidullah with punishment because of this while still out of power.

His strong adherence to the Islamic principles forced him to enter into the war of Siffin the bloodiest in the history of Islam until that time. It was possible for him to avoid himself that costly war by keeping Muawiya as governor of Syria. But he said: "I would not compromise in my religion." He chose that rather than to deviate from his principles in the least.

Such a leader does not need an agreement with Talhah and Al-Zubayr in order to enforce the Islamic law by punishing killers of a prominent Muslim. Had he viewed that Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr Al-Ashtar and those who instigated people against Uthman deserved punishment he would have done that without delay.

The caliphate in his view was only a means for executing justice and enforcing the Islamic laws. The least of what the Imam would have done to them is to keep them away from him and not make them a part of his army. Since he did not do that and did the opposite by making them his closest associates we infer that they did not deserve any punishment for their attitude towards the Third Caliph and their agitation against him.

The Three Leaders

If he had believed that they were criminals deserving punishment it would not be conceivable that he would agree with Talhah and Al-Zubayr to punish them and leave Talhah Al-Zubayr and "Om Al-Mumineen" (Mother of Believers) unpunished while they were the outstanding agitators against Uthman. They were the first to do that and they continued their way until Uthman died. The Imam would not give different treatments to people of equal crimes.

It seems that the Imam used to believe that only the ones who participated directly in the assassination of Uthman were punishable. We have already mentioned that three of those who participated in his murder were killed at the same hour he was killed. The three were Qutairah Soudan Ibn Hamran and Kinanah Ibn Basheer Al-Tajeebi.

If there were other participants the Imam did not know.

He said in a letter to Muawiya: "I do not know specifically any killer of Uthman. I thought deeply about this matter and I did not see it permitted for me to hand you anyone you accuse from among those who are around me."[18](#)

(4) The sermon of the Imam which Saif's report mentioned speaks clearly that the Imam believes in the soundness of Uthman's policy and his administration of public funds and that he approved Uthman's appointment of his relatives. The report mentioned that the Imam said in his sermon: "God has bestowed His grace on the nation by the unity through the three Caliphs one after another.

Then this event (assassination of Uthman) took place. It was brought on this nation by people who sought the material of this world. They were envious of those who were given it by God meritoriously for their virtues. These material seekers were trying to turn the affairs of the nation regressively."

Thus the Imam according to this report was speaking of the soundness of the policy of Uthman and accusing those who opposed him of trying to turn the national affairs regressively. They did what they did just for the sake of the worldly material and out of jealousy of Uthman and his appointed officials to whom God had given the materials of the World meritoriously and for their virtues.

There is no doubt that this is in conflict with what was known in history with utmost certainty that the Imam did not approve Uthman's policy in handling the public funds; nor did the Imam approve Uthman's appointments of his relatives. The Imam mediated many times between Uthman and his opponents asking him to dismiss his relatives and change his policy and many times Uthman promised to change and reform in response to his mediation then Marwan would prevent Uthman from fulfilling his promise.[19](#)

Had the Imam believed in the soundness of Uthman's policy and the policy of his appointed governors the Imam would not have insisted on the dismissal of Muawiya and waged for his dismissal the Battle of

Siffin which had no equal in the history of Islam before that time.

All these aspects substantiate clearly that the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar was a fabrication made up for covering the reality and acquitting the three leaders of the responsibility of the Battle of Basra. It aimed also at ruining the reputation of the supporters of the Imam such as Al-Ashtar and others by accusing them of starting the war for their selfish purposes and upon the counsel of a hypocrite who was alien to the Islamic nation.

Any serious student of the Islamic history knows that Al-Ashtar and the rest of the revolutionary leaders were among the most noble Muslims in their intention and adherence to the ideals of Islam and who gave their souls for the pleasure of God.

Did Abdullah ibn Saba exist?

However there are reasons to doubt the very existence of Abdullah Ibn Saba. I do not think that this man was but a fairy-tale and was admitted into the history of Islam for covering undesirable informations. The defenders of Uthman and his policy wanted to attribute the revolution which was made against him to a Jew who is alien to Islam.

They alleged that he organized through secret conspiracies elaborate cells in Basra Kufah Egypt and Damascus for a revolution against the Caliph.²⁰ They said that this alleged man claimed that the Prophet Muhammad will come back and that he tried to substantiate the return of the Holy Prophet to this world by comparing it to the return of Jesus to this world in the future. Since Muhammad is more important than Jesus he would be more entitled than Jesus to return. They said that Ibn Saba supported the idea of the return of the Prophet by the following verse:

"Certainly the One Who commanded you to convey the Qur'an (to mankind) shall return you to a new coming..." The Holy Quram Chapter 28 verse 85²¹

Who Was the First to Speak of the Prophet's Return?

I would like to state clearly that attributing the idea of the Prophet's return to the imaginary Ibn Saba is an obvious distortion of the truth. Was not 'Umar the first one who proclaimed the doctrine of the Prophet's return?

History testifies and no historian or hadith-reporter would deny that 'Umar stood at the Mosque of the Prophet when the Prophet died and said:

"Some hypocrites allege that the Messenger of God died. The Messenger did not die. He only went to his Lord as Moses son of Imran went to his Lord. He left his people for forty nights then he returned to them after it was said that he died. By God the Messenger of God will return as Moses returned. He will sever the hands and legs of the men who alleged that he died." (The Brother of the Prophet Muhammad

vol.1 p. 161 (and Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 655)

Would any Muslim accuse 'Umar of learning this doctrine from Abdullah Ibn Saba?

If anyone after 'Umar believed in the return of the Prophet we should assume that he learned that from 'Umar rather than from Ibn Saba.

They also mentioned that this imaginary Jew was the one who spread the doctrine of 'Ali's executorship and successorship to the Messenger.²² They said also that he taught Abu Dharr while in Damascus the theory that prohibits treasuring gold and silver and that what is collected from Zakat and other Islamic taxes are Muslims' fund rather than God's fund.²³ They also said that Ammar Ibn Yasir went to Egypt and met Ibn Saba and that Ibn Saba turned him against Uthman. ²⁴

These allegations contradict well known historical facts and very substantiated truths. From these facts is that Uthman did not follow the policy of the Two Caliphs before him though he pledged to Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf and the nation at the time of his selection that he will follow their policy.

It is well known in history that the Messenger exiled Al-Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Aws and his family and said: Al-Hakam shall not live with me in Medina forever. Uthman brought back the exiled of the Prophet and his children.

He gave them large amounts from the public funds.²⁵ He gave them hundreds of thousands of dirhams. He made Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his main advisor and actually he was the real caliph.

It is a well known fact of history that Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh deserted the Faith after he declared his Islam and that the Messenger of God ordered his execution.²⁶ It is also known in history that Walid Ibn Aqabah Ibn Abu Mo-eet was a transgressor and used to drink intoxicants.²⁷ The Holy Qur'an testifies to his transgression.²⁸

Yet Uthman appointed Ibn Abu Sarh as governor of Egypt. He gave him the fifth of the spoils of North Africa.²⁹ Uthman also appointed Walid governor of Kufa. He did not dismiss him until the Muslims testified that he was found drunk while he was leading the congregational prayer at the main Mosque of Kufa.³⁰

It is also known that Uthman exiled Abu Dharr³¹ and beat up Ammar Ibn Yasir until Ammar fainted.³² He also ordered Abdullah Ibn Masud to be thrown out of the Mosque and his ribs were broken.³³ He penalized these three outstanding companions only because they were critical of his policy.

Uthman also exiled a number of good people from Kufa to Syria because they criticized his policy and that of his appointed officials from the Umayyads.³⁴ There are no prescribed punishments in Islam for critics who demand reform from a ruler.

The masses of the people resented punishment of these people by exile. Exile according to the Holy

Qur'an is a punishment for those who are at war with God and His Messenger and those who spread corruption in the land.

These exiled Muslims were neither at war with God and His Messenger nor were they from the corruptors of the land. They were only critics of the Caliph because he used to give any member of his clan tens or hundreds of thousands of dirhams from the public funds and grant them vast pieces of land from the public property.[35](#)

It was only expected that the companions and the rest of the Muslims would frown at these arbitrary actions after they witnessed the way of the Messenger and the two Caliphs after him. It was only a matter of course that resentment would grow and that people would demand from the Caliph to change his policy and dismiss his appointed officials who were his relatives. It was also expected that the resentment would be transformed into a revolution after he refused to change.

The companions and other outstanding Muslims were not in need of an alleged Jew to call for a revolution. The existence of such a Jew in relation to the causes of the revolution was of no effect and similar to the existence of a fifth leg of a chair.

To say that Uthman adopted the policy that was approved by the companions and the rest of the Muslims and that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who instigated people against him is an invitation to the denial of well established facts of history.

The attribution of the revolution against Uthman to Abdullah Ibn Saba cannot be true unless we say that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who counselled the Caliph to commit the numerous violations which he committed and which brought about the revolution. Thus we ought to ask the following questions: Did Ibn Saba advise the Caliph?

Did he persuade the Caliph to give his relatives the public funds and make Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his prime minister? Did he convince him to exile companions such as Abu Dharr and other prominent Muslims such as Malik Al-Ashtar? Did Ibn Saba counsel him to beat up outstanding companions?

These and other illegal actions are the true causes of the revolution. Unless Ibn Saba is the one who convinced Uthman to commit all these mistakes and refuse to change them he could not be a cause of revolution. Of course the historians who adopted the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar (which created the tale of Ibn Saba) would not accept any relationship between Uthman and Ibn Saba.

Was Ibn Saba in Medina?

The people who accepted the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar have forgotten that the agitation against Uthman did not start in Basra or Kufa or Egypt. It rather started in Medina and that Ayesha and Talhah and Al-Zubayr were the most outstanding agitators against Uthman. Was Ibn Saba the motivator of these people to oppose Uthman and to call for his murder?

The report of the conspiracy of Ibn Saba says that Ibn Saba met Abu Dharr in Damascus and urged him to oppose Uthman and Muawiya. But Abu Dharr started his critical campaign while in Medina before he went to Damascus. He was exiled to Damascus because of his critical campaign against the Caliph.^{[36](#)}

Saif's report says also that Ibn Saba is the one who taught Abu Dharr to say that the revenues of Zakat and other Islamic taxations are the revenues of the Muslims rather than the revenues of God. Yet history tells us that when Abu Dharr was brought back to Medina from Damascus he was still saying that these revenues are revenues of God.

It is reported that when Abu Dharr came to Medina he faced the Caliph and he reported in the presence of other companions that he heard the Messenger of God saying:

"When the men from the children of Abu Al-Aws become thirty they will make the revenue of God rotate among them the servants of God their slaves and the religion of God interpolated."^{[37](#)}

However saying that Abu Dharr learned some religious doctrines from an alien hypocrite seems to be extremely ugly and obviously fabricated. Abu Dharr was an outstanding companion of the Prophet. He embraced Islam before all the Medinite and most of the Meccan companions.^{[38](#)}

He accompanied the Holy Prophet and his companionship was long. He memorized the Holy Qur'an and he heard from the Messenger and understood what he heard. He reported the statements of the Messenger and his deeds accurately. He was well aware of what he was reporting. He was extremely true and devoted and the Holy Prophet loved him very much.

Al-Tirmidhi reported that the Messenger said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer than Abu Dharr."^{[39](#)} He reported also that the Holy Prophet said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer and more loyal than Abu Dharr. He walks on earth with the immaterialistic attitude of Jesus son of Mary"^{[40](#)}

It is reported by Ibn Majah that the Messenger said: "God commanded me to love four persons and He informed me that He loves them. When he was asked: Who are they? The Prophet said; 'Ali is from them (repeating that three times) and Abu Dharr Salman and Al-Miqdad."^{[41](#)}

Abu Dharr was so concerned with the purity of the Islamic teaching to a degree that he did not allow Kaab Al-Ahbar to give a verdict in Islamic law though Kaab Al-Ahbar was highly respected by 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Uthman. Many times the two Caliphs asked him about things in religion and they used to listen to what he said.

It is reported that Abu Dharr said to Uthman after he came back from Damascus to Medina: "It is not sufficient for a man to pay only Zakat. He should add to that by helping the needy and feeding the hungry and spending in the way of God." When Kaab Al-Ahbar commented that "Whoever fulfills his prescribed duty does not have to add anything to it" Abu Dharr became angry and said to Kaab: Son of

the Jewish lady who are you to say this? Do you want to teach us our religion? Then he hit him with his rod on his neck.[42](#)

A man that does not allow Kaab (who was highly regarded by 'Umar) to give a verdict in religion is not expected to follow the opinion of a Jew who adopted Islam during the time of Uthman and did not see the companions of the Messenger nor did he know the Islamic instructions.

If Abu Dharr and Ammar agreed with Ibn Saba Ibn Saba must be right. The Holy Prophet testified for the truth of these two companions.

It is reported that Ayesah said that the messenger of God said: "Whenever Ammar is given the choice between two alternatives he always chooses the most righteous of the two alternatives."[43](#) Abdullah Ibn Masud was consulted: Whom should we follow when the Muslims are divided? He said: "Follow Ammar. He will never part with the truth..."[44](#) The Prophet told Ammar: "Ammar be cheerful the aggressor party will kill you."[45](#) He also said: "Paradise longs for three persons: 'Ali Ammar and Salman."[46](#)

When the Messenger of God testified for the distinction of a companion of this kind such companion must have been right. And if these two companions had agreed with any person about a religious matter the one with whom they had agreed must have been right. If the two companions agreed with a person who was a new convert he and not they must be the learner. He would be learning from the two companions.

If Ibn Saba were in existence and if he had met Abu Dharr and Ammar (as Saif's report alleged) it would be logical to assume that he did not teach the two companions anything and that he learned from them.

If he had spoken of 'Ali's executorship and his succession to the Messenger he would be only following the two companions. Ibn Saba did not hear the Messenger but Abu Dharr and Ammar heard him saying at Ghadir Khum: "Whoever I am his "Mawla" (leader) 'Ali is his Mawla."[47](#) The two companions heard the Messenger saying: "I am leaving for you that which if you uphold you will never go astray: The Book of God and the members of my House.

Beware how you shall treat them after me.[48](#) These two companions no doubt understood from the statement of the prophet that the Messenger was appointing 'Ali his successor.

To Discredit Abu Dharr and Ammar Is To Discredit The Prophet

As we conclude our discussion and analysis of Saif Ibn 'Umar Al-Tameemi's report we come to the following conclusions:

1) The subscribers to Saif Ibn 'Umar's report who are trying to smear the Shi'ite Muslims are actually smearing Abu Dharr and Ammar Ibn Yasir before they smear the contemporary Shi'ites.

2) The two companions were following the line of the Prophet because he testified to their righteousness truth and rightfulness. The Shi'ites follow the same line.

3) This means that he who discredits the two companions actually discredits the Prophet himself.

I do not believe that Ibn Saba ever existed. I believe that he was only a fabricated story to ruin the reputation of the "Shi'ites" (the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet)

Dr. Taha Hussein observed that what was reported about "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) was obviously made up and fabricated. It was invented when the debate between the Shi'ites and other Islamic schools was in progress.

The enemies of the Shi'ites wanted to admit into the teaching of this school a Jewish element for the sake of destroying their reputation. Taha Hussein said: Ibn Al- Souda was nothing but an imagination.

And if he had truly existed he was not that important as the historians try to portray him and describe his activity during the days of Uthman and in the first year of the caliphate of 'Ali. He is an imaginary person treasured by the enemies of the Shi'ites in order to harm the Shi'ites.[49](#)

The Source Of The Legend

The source of the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba or Ibn Al-Souda was Saif Ibn 'Umar Al-Tameemi who lived in the second century after the Hijra. Al-Tabari Ibn Asakir and Ibn Abu Bakr took the story of Ibn Saba from Saif Ibn 'Umar. The rest of the historians such as Ibn Al-Athir Ibn Kutheyer Ibn Khaldoon and Abu Al-Fida took the story from Al-Tabari.

This Saif Ibn 'Umar was one of the forgers of the hadiths and the reports of the events of history. The Muslim scholars who are specialized in Hadith have expressed their opinion about Saif: Ibn Mu-een (died in 277) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Al-Nisa-i (died in 303) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Abu Dawud (died in 317) said: Saif is nothing.

Al-Hakim (died in 405) said: Saif is abandoned and accused of being heretic.

Ibn Hayyan said: Saif reportedly forged stories and attributed them to reliable reporters and he was accused of being heretic.

Al-Dar Qutni (died in 385) said: Saif is a weak reporter and was abandoned.

Ibn Hajar (died 850) said: Saif is a weak reporter.[50](#)

This Saif reported many Hadiths which are opposed to the well known facts of history and to the facts

which are reported by numerous reliable reporters. He also reported events which are inconceivable.

The resentment of 'Ali towards the election of Abu Bakr was reported by outstanding hadith-reporters and this is known to the students of history. What Al-Tabari reported through Saif Ibn 'Umar about 'Ali's election of Abu Bakr is the following:

"Ali was at his house when he was informed that Abu Bakr is receiving the pledge of allegiance. 'Ali hurriedly left his home without having his cloak on him because he did not like to lose time. He came to the mosque and pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr then sat with him and sent after his cloak. When it was brought to him he put it on and remained with Abu Bakr."[51](#)

It is a well known fact of history which was reported by numerous reliable sources that 'Ali did not accept the caliphate of Abu Bakr at the beginning and refused to give him the pledge of allegiance and he continued to do so until his wife Fatima Al-Zahra died. Al-Bukhari and Muslim through their channels to Ayesha reported the following:

"... Fatima daughter of the Messenger of God sent to Abu Bakr asking him for her inheritance from her father out of what God has given him in Medina Fadak and what remained from the "fifth of Kheibar"... ; Abu Bakr said: The Messenger of God said: "We (the Prophets) are not to be inherited (materially); what we have left is (or as) charity."

Abu Bakr refused to give Fatima anything. She was outraged by what he did and she refused to speak to him until she died. She lived six months after the Messenger of God. When she died 'Ali buried her at night and did not inform Abu Bakr of her death. 'Ali prayed on her.

People were warm towards 'Ali when Fatima was still living. When she died 'Ali lost that warmth. Thus he sought to make peace with Abu Bakr and he pledged his allegiance to him."[52](#)

Of Saif's reports of events which are inconceivable are the following: Al-Tabari reported that Saif said that Abu Bakr sent Al-Ala Ibn Al-Hadrami to fight the deserters of the faith in Al-Bahrain and that he and his army went through Al-Dahna and that their camels ran away from them in the desert during the night and that they became thirsty. Then water appeared to them. They drank from it and washed then their camels came back.

Abu Huraira filled a container of his with water but he left it near the water. When they departed from that place they came back to it. They did not find the water but Abu Hurairah found his container.

Saif also reported that Al-Ala and his army went to Daraan traveling by sea on their camels for twenty-four hours and the water of the sea did not cover the hooves of the camels. He mentioned also that after the army passed through the sea it was able to obtain victory against the people of Daraan.[53](#)

But Al-Baladhuri on the other hand reported the invasion of Al-Bahrain through a source other than Saif and mentioned that Al-Ala invaded Zarah and Daraan during the reign of 'Umar (rather than the reign of

Abu Bakr).

He reported that the inhabitants of Zarah made a peace treaty with Al-Ala and that they agreed to give him a third of the city and a third of what was in it of gold and silver; that he would take half of what belongs to them outside the city and that Al-Akhnas Ibn Al-Amiri said to him that they did not include in the peace treaty what they had in Dareen.

Thus he advised him of a shallow passage between Zarah and Dareen in the sea and that Al-Ala and his army went through that shallow passage and invaded Dareen.⁵⁴ Al-Tabari reported through Saif that when Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and his army arrived to a place called Othaib Al-Hijanat he sent Assim Ibn Amr to the lower part of the Euphrates.

Assim came to Maisan seeking sheep or cows but he did not find any. The cows fortified themselves by going into a wooded area. Assim went and looked until he found a man near the area. He asked him about the cows and the sheep and the man swore to him that he did not know anything about their location.

But the man was the shepherd of those animals. Upon this a bull spoke clearly in Arabic saying what means: "By God he lied to you; We are here." Assim went in and drove the cows out and brought them to the camp.⁵⁵

Thus we find that Saif reports in the two stories what is unbelievable. A water appears and the whole army drinks from it. Then it disappears shortly after they leave it; an army goes through the sea for twenty-four hours and the water of the sea does not cover the hooves of the camels and a cow speaks the grammatical Arabic language.

This is only some of Saif's fabricated lies. It is amazing that Al-Tabari who was an outstanding Muslim historian relied upon Saif's reports while his own reports testify to Saif's incredibility.

Ibn Saba was nothing but one of his fabricated lies. He tried to cover up the truth by alleging that the revolution against Uthman was not caused by Uthman's mishandling the public funds and giving it to his relatives and friends and appointing his transgressor relatives as governors of the Muslims.

He tried to say that the cause of that revolution was the conspiracies of Abdullah Ibn Saba who never was mentioned by any reliable historians before Saif Ibn 'Umar.

Saif wanted to acquit Ayesah Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr from the responsibility of the Battle of Basra. Thus he invented the story of a conspiracy by Ibn Saba and his followers for starting the Battle.

Al-Tabari and the historians who followed him in recording the story of Saif Ibn 'Umar should have asked themselves the two following questions: 1. If Ibn Saba had existed and had such revolutionary and destructive activity why did not Ayesah mention him and his activities when she went to Basra

trying to turn people against 'Ali and his followers?

Why did she not mention that those who made the revolution against Uthman and those who killed him were followers of a Jewish Arab that was conspiring against Islam and that these conspirators were the followers of 'Ali and the callers for his election?

She did not mention that though she came to Basra for the sole purpose of turning its inhabitants against 'Ali. Had the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba been truthful Ayesha would have made it the main theme of her speeches. Had she mentioned that she would have hurt 'Ali and his followers a great deal.

It could be said that Mother of the Believers was not aware of the intrigues and conspiracies of Ibn Saba because he used to work secretly. But the report which speaks of Ibn Saba says also that he came to Basra and formed a revolutionary cell in it and that Abdullah Ibn Amir who was the Umayyad governor of Basra expelled him from Basra when he discovered his subversive activities.[56](#)

Abdullah Ibn Amir was with Ayesha when she departed from Mecca and he was with her when she came to Basra. Why did he not give her that information about Ibn Saba if Ibn Saba had really existed? Tens of Umayyads were with Mother of the Believers and these people were fully aware of the situation of the Islamic cities and communities and what was taking place in them.

These Umayyads were the rulers of the cities during the time of Uthman and they were not simple people.

Ayesha did not mention Abdullah Ibn Saba and his activity before the Battle of Basra nor on the day of the Battle. Nor did she mention anything about Ibn Saba and his activities after the Battle though she lived a good number of years afterwards.

None of the Umayyads who accompanied her (such as Abdullah Ibn Amir and Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam who were arch enemies of the Imam) ever mentioned anything about Ibn Saba and his activities. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true the voices of these people would have filled the Muslim World.

Granted that Ayesha did not mention Ibn Saba because she did not know about his intrigues and conspiracies but why did Muawiyah refrain from mentioning that? The report which speaks of Ibn Saba mentioned that he went to Damascus and that he turned Abu Dharr against Muawiyah and Uthman and that Ibn Saba spoke of his destructive opinions to two other companions of the Prophet: Abu Al-Darda and Abadah Ibn Al-Samit.

The report added that Abadah resented the statements of Ibn Saba and took him to Muawiyah and informed Muawiyah that Ibn Saba is the one who turned Abu Dharr against him... and with this information Muawiyah drove Ibn Saba out of Damascus.[57](#) Ibn Saba later went to Egypt and Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh (the governor of Egypt) also knew about Ibn Saba.[58](#)

Muawiyah used to give large amounts of money to people in order to defame the Imam by inventing

stories that would damage his reputation and the reputation of his followers. Muawiya was the one who decreed that the Imam 'Ali should be cursed every Friday at every Islamic Mosque.

This order was issued after the death of the Imam. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true Muawiya would have considered it most important and would have held it by his two hands and he would not have failed to mention it every day.

Yet history does not mention that Muawiya or anyone of his appointed governors ever spoke one word concerning Ibn Saba.

History has preserved numerous messages from Muawiya in which he directed whatever he could of false accusations towards the Imam. His main goal in those messages was to smear the Imam by saying that he protected the killers of Uthman and those who participated in the revolution against him.

Yet he did not mention in any of those messages that the killers of Uthman or the participants in that revolution had any relation with a man named Ibn Saba. Had the legend of Ibn Saba had any truth to it the pen of Muawiya would have flown with it and it would have come on his tongue and the tongues of his followers during the days of his reign and the reign of the rest of the Umayyads.

The truth is that Ibn Saba was not dangerous to the unity of the Muslims or a cause in dividing the Muslims because Ibn Saba did not exist. The fact is that one of the main reasons for dividing the Muslims and spreading animosity among them was Saif Ibn 'Umar who invented the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba.

Saif elaborately fabricated the story and Al-Tabari accepted it. Thus it was spread and became popular among the Muslim masses. This fabrication brought a mutual hatred among the Muslims and divided them into two parties separated by considerable distance.

Only God knows how many innocent Muslims lost their lives as a result of the poison with which Saif Ibn 'Umar sprayed the Islamic atmosphere through his fabrications.

[1.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, p. 493.

[2.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, p. 493.

[3.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, pp. 493-494.

[4.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, pp. 493-494.

[5.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H. p. 509.

[6.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H.

[7.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H. p. 509.

[8.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 512.

[9.](#) Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 pp. 36-37.

[10.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 89-90.

[11.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 533 and he mentioned that Ammar Ibn Yasir aided Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr in the removal of the canopy.

[12.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 178.

[13.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 4 p. 119 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 525 mentioned that Oday Ibn Hatam and Al-Ashtar

were the ones who reached the camel of 'Aisha in order to end the Battle of Bassrah.

- [14.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 157.
- [15.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 107.
- [16.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 pp. 323–333.
- [17.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 239.
- [18.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 68.
- [19.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 81–82.
- [20.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.) pp. 340–341.
- [21.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.) pp. 340–341.
- [22.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 340.
- [23.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 283.
- [24.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 341.
- [25.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf part 4 p. 28.
- [26.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 409.
- [27.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 53–69.
- [28.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 296.
- [29.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 46.
- [30.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 53.
- [31.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 56 and Al-Tabari his History part 4.
- [32.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 1 p. 161.
- [33.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 161.
- [34.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 70–71.
- [35.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 49.
- [36.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol. 1 p. 240.
- [37.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol. 1 p. 241.
- [38.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 133.
- [39.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 4 p. 334 (hadith no. 3889)
- [40.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 334 (hadith no. 3890)
- [41.](#) Ibn Majah his authentic Sunan part 1 p. 53 (hadith no. 129)
- [42.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 284.
- [43.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 pp. 332–333.
- [44.](#) Yousof Ibn Abdul-Barr Al-Istea-Ab part 3 p. 1139.
- [45.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 332–333.
- [46.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 4 p. 332 (Hadith no. 3884)
- [47.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 110.
- [48.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 109.
- [49.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 pp. 98–99.
- [50.](#) Sayed Murtadha Al-Askari in his book Abdullah Ibn Saba p. 26.
- [51.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 (Event in the 11th year A. H.) p. 201 (conveyed by Sayed Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba)
- [52.](#) Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 5 p. 177 (chapter of Battle of Khaibar). Muslim also reported it in his Sahih part 12 p. 77.
- [53.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 conveyed by Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba.
- [54.](#) Al-Baladhuri Futooh Al-Buldan pp. 92–93 (conveyed by Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba p. 117)
- [55.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 p. 12.
- [56.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 72.
- [57.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 283.
- [58.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 341 (Events of 35th year A.H.).

25. The Battle of Siffin

The Imam came to Kufa after the end of the Battle of Basra and he made Kufa his capital. The people of Kufa were the builders of his army whose support was indispensable in defeating his opponents in Basra. There were no other people upon whom he could rely.

The majority of the people of Basra were against him and they were not expected to become sincere towards him after the war of Basra had eliminated many of their loved ones.

People of Hijaz were not reliable because they were few compared to the people of the rest of the Islamic provinces. People of Syria were followers of his enemy Muawiya. The Muslims of Egypt were incapable of offering what he needed of an army for subduing the secessionists.

The Imam stayed about four months in his new capital preparing what he needed to meet Muawiya the most dangerous among his opponents to the unity of the nation.

He was the most capable among them to challenge the authority of the Imam and their least scrupulous in religion. Muawiya had declared before the Battle of Basra his refusal to join the electors of the Imam and his challenge to his authority.

By this he actually separated Syria from the body of the Islamic State and declared its secession. He added to this his hostility to the central authority and that he was at war with that authority using revenge for the blood of Uthman as an excuse. His secessionist movement started before the movement of the three leaders.

The Imam sent after he was elected a message to Muawiya which was carried by his messenger Subrah Al- Juhani informing him of his election by the companions and asking him along with his followers to join his electors. Muawiya after a long silence sent Qubaisah Al- Absi and gave him a sealed letter addressed from Muawiya to 'Ali. He ordered him to enter Medina raising the letter and holding its lower part and told him what to say.

When Qubaisah entered Medina people knew that Muawiya was defiant. He gave what was in his hand to the Imam. The Imam opened it and did not find anything in it and the following dialogue took place:
The Imam: What did you leave behind you (in Damascus)?

Qubaisah: (after he asked for and was given immunity): I left behind me angry people who would not be satisfied but with a death punishment for Uthman's blood.

The Imam: Whose death? Qubaisah: Yours! I left also sixty thousand old men crying under the shirt of Uthman which is hung on the pulpit in Damascus.

The Imam: Do they want me to pay for the blood of Uthman? Am I not bereaved by the death of Uthman? God I declare to Thee my innocence of the blood of Uthman. By this the killers of Uthman have been spared unless God wants the opposite. For if He wants something He would necessarily have it.¹

The answer of the Imam to this obvious challenge was to start mobilization of soldiers for subduing this dangerous defiant. He gave the banner to his son Muhammad Ibn "Al-Hanafeyah" (the mother of Muhammad)

He gave the leadership of a portion of his army to Abdullah Ibn Abbass. He gave 'Umar Ibn Abu Selemah the leadership of another portion of his army. He appointed Abu Leila Al-Jarrah the commander of his advancing division.

He appointed Qutham Ibn Abbass his successor in Medina. He wrote to Qais Ibn Saad his appointed governor of Egypt Uthman Ibn Hunaif his appointed governor of Basra and Abu Musa Al-Ashari his appointed governor of Kufa to try to mobilize people for a march on Syria.² He called upon the people of Medina to participate in that Holy mission. He spoke to them saying:

"Certainly our safety would be secured within the authority of God. Give Him your obedience truthfully and willingly. By God you either do that or God will remove from you the authority of Islam; then He will not bring it back to you until the authority of Islam shrinks and recoils in Medina.

Stand up to these people who want to divide your nation. May God reform through you what people of other areas had corrupted and by this you would be paying only what is due from you."³

The Imam went on preparing for the march on Syria trying to mobilize all that which was within his reach for the confrontation with this aggressor party. But the news of the departure of Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr to Basra came to the Imam. Thus he was forced to delay his march on Syria until after the conclusion of the emerging crisis.⁴

The Imam did not delay his march on Syria because the three leaders were more dangerous to the caliphate than Muawiya. He did that because the departure of the three leaders to Iraq added to the danger of Muawiya a dealt with soon the Imam would be deprived of all military and financial assistance which he needed to subdue the main enemy Muawiya.

The three leaders with all their forces would not represent a great danger against the unity of the nation if they were alone challenging the authority of the Imam. The Imam would be able to subdue their forces easily if they were alone without Muawiya. Their rebellion was extemporaneous.

They did not have what Muawiya had of resourcefulness strong army and wide popularity in a large Islamic province. As a matter of fact people of Basra were divided in their loyalty towards them and a party from the people of Basra fought them as soon as they entered and before the Imam came to confront them.

Muawiya on the contrary was dangerous by himself even if the three leaders were not with him. He was wily and resourceful. His movement was not extemporaneous. He prepared for it for two decades.

He was in a province whose inhabitants were obedient to his order. He had a huge and well organized army ready to comply with his command. He was capable of challenging the authority of the Imam even if he did not have any helpers from outside Syria.

Therefore the biggest concern of the Imam after he finished the Battle of Basra was to prepare for facing this enemy who was dangerous to the unity of the nation and its future.

To leave no excuse for Muawiya the Imam sent him a message with Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali inviting him to join the majority of the Muslims who elected him.

He mentioned in that message that those who elected him were those who elected Abu Bakr 'Umar and Uthman and that the right of the decision about the caliphate was only for the migrant and the Medinite companions. If they elected a man their election would be binding to the rest of the Muslims.

If anyone tries to break away by accusation or innovation they would bring him back. If such a person persists in his secessionary way they have to fight him for taking a road other than the road of the believers. The Imam also said to Muawiya in this message the following:

"Talhah and Al-Zubayr elected me then they broke their covenant with me. Their breach of covenant is like their faith desertion. I fought them after I left no excuse for them until the truth came and the cause of God prevailed while they were averse.

"I invite you to join the Muslims by pledging your allegiance to the new administration. I prefer peace but if you persist in your opposition I will fight you seeking the help of God against you..."

The excuse which Muawiya used in his deceptive movement for reaching the caliphate was the blood of Uthman and that the Imam did not punish the killers of Uthman though they were around him. The Imam therefore included in his message what refutes his argument.

"And you have spoken repeatedly about the killers of Uthman. Join the rest of the Muslims who elected me then ask me to try the ones whom you accused. I will judge between you and them according to the Book of God..

"Muawiya if you look at the matter through your mind rather than your selfishness you will find me the most innocent in relation to the blood of Uthman and that I was completely isolated of his affairs unless you deliberately make false accusations. You may do that if you want to. You ought to know that you are from the ones who were freed by the Prophet at the conquest of Mecca who are forbidden from reaching the caliphate. They cannot be a factor in deciding the leadership. Nor would they be consulted in the Islamic affairs or elected by the Muslim electors. I have sent to you Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali. He is faithful and a migrant with a good past.

Pledge your allegiance to me through him and there is no power but by God."⁵ Jareer carried the message to Muawiya and added his own power of persuasion. Muawiya however refused to answer him positively or negatively trying to gain time in preparation for the future. Finally his expected answer came.

It was not expected that any mediation or means of convincing would succeed in bringing Muawiya to the right road. He believed that he is in a strong position to challenge the Imam and he would not do anything else.

He had under his leadership about one hundred thousand fighters and he was still with all his financial and manpower. He did not enter any battle and he did not suffer any loss of property funds or men. The Imam on the other hand was forced to enter the bloody Battle of Basra in which his supporters had to pay a great deal of their blood and wealth.

The enemies of the Imam were on the increase and the supporters of Muawiya were in a continuous increase.

The Syrian treasury was in Muawiya's hands and he used it as he used his own funds purchasing with it the conscience of the seekers of selfish interests and they were numerous.

The Opportunist Amr

The wily Amr Ibn Al-Aws was most outstanding among those who sold their principles and conscience. The co-operation between Amr and Muawiya was a very distinguished event in the history of opportunism. History knew (and Muawiya who was seeking to avenge the blood of Uthman also knew) that Amr Ibn Al-Aws was from the outstanding agitators against Uthman.⁶

This did not prevent Muawiya from covenanting the wily Amr for an alliance against the Imam with the pretext of seeking the avenge for the blood of Uthman of which Amr was guilty.⁷ The price Muawiya had to pay to Amr for his alliance with him was the governorship and the tax revenues of Egypt as long as Amr lived if Muawiya wins the struggle against the Imam.⁸

The Imam was determined to try to subdue Muawiya and his followers and bring them back to the bulk of the nation and thwart their secessionary movement. He led his army to Syria and when he came to the land of Siffin he found Muawiya and his army had already occupied the bank of the Euphrates. The Imam was forced to camp away from the water.

Idealist Versus Opportunist

Muawiya would not hesitate to use for his end any means even if it is extremely criminal. He occupied the bank of the Euphrates and thought he could prevail against 'Ali and his army through the terrible weapon of thirst. He decided to prevent his opponents from reaching the water.⁹ Thus 'Ali and his army

had to surrender or die of thirst. Thirst would make them easy victims and Muawiya's army in possession of supplies food and water would be able to destroy 'Ali and his army. Muawiya thought victory was within his reach. Destroying scores of thousands of Muslims through this method would not shake the conscience of Muawiya because his conscience was dead.

It would not shake his conscience to kill 'Ali and his two sons Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein members of the House of the Prophet. Nor would it shake his conscience to kill them by thirst though it meant killing by thirst the majority of the companions of the Messenger who were "Badrians" and "Uhudians."

Why should the conscience of Muawiya be shaken for committing such an ugly crime? Is not his aim to defeat the truth and the people of the truth? What is the difference between one death and another death? There is not any difference in the eyes of Muawiya between reaching victory through the sword or through annihilation by the weapon of thirst.

The annihilation of 'Ali and his camp through thirst was preferable to Muawiya over killing them by sword.

Fighting 'Ali and his camp by conventional weapons does not secure Muawiya's victory but annihilation through thirst would definitely secure it.

However Amr Ibn Al-Aws his chief advisor counselled him not to try such a terrible weapon yet Amr was not more righteous than Muawiya. Amr thought that this method in spite of its ugliness would not secure victory. It may bring him only failure and curse. 'Ali the man of unusual bravery would not die from thirst while he is in command of a huge army. But Muawiya refused the advice of his ally. [10](#)

The Imam told Muawiya in a message that he did not come to fight for water. He came to uphold the truth and defeat falsehood. He came to bring the Muslims together after the leaders of falsehood put them in two separate camps. Muawiya did not take the Imam's message seriously and he did not leave the Imam any open avenue but to fight for water. [11](#)

The Imam waged a battle for the water and this was his first Holy Battle against Muawiya and his camp. He succeeded in occupying the bank of the Euphrates and driving the Umayyad army away from the river. By this the situation was reversed. Now it became possible for the Imam and his army to do to their opponents what their opponents were trying to do to them. It became possible for the Imam to annihilate his opponents by their own weapons. Would the Imam do that?

Here the history of war kneels to glorify 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Here 'Ali stands among the leaders of nations towering like a mountain as he gives generations of humanity his impressive lesson. The religion of Islam stands against all kinds of wars of genocide and annihilation. The leaders of the nations of the twentieth century have legalized the annihilation of civilians through atomic bombs and so far have failed to prohibit the use of such weapons.

The faith of Islam (over fourteen centuries ago) had prohibited what was much less than a nuclear war. It prohibited killing children women elderly people and blind enemies. It prohibits the demolishing of houses of the enemies and destruction of their orchards. [12](#)

I cannot conceive that anyone after the Messenger could take the attitude of the Imam 'Ali towards his enemy after his enemy had given him every justification to annihilate him and his army by his own weapon.

The leaders of the Imam's army and their soldiers shouted: Prevent them from water as they prevented us from water. The Imam replied: "God has given you victory against them because of their injustice and aggression. Certainly the issue is more important than depriving them of water." [13](#)

Then he sent to Muawiya this message: "We shall not treat you as you treated us. Come to the water we are equal." [14](#)cdxxxi

New Efforts for Peace

The Imam tried again to bring about peace. His aim was to avoid shedding blood and to bring the Muslims back to unity. His ambassadors went to Muawiya but mediations and negotiations failed to bring any result.

Muawiya was hoping to be the ruler of the Muslim World and nothing would stop him from trying to reach that end.

Skirmishes between the two camps were started and remained limited. A regiment from one side and a regiment from the other side faced each other on one day. On the following day another two regiments faced each other.

The situation continued this way until the month of Muharram began. All hostilities ceased in observation of the sanctity of the month. The Imam went back to his peaceful efforts during the month of Muharram and the result was not better than in his previous efforts. [15](#)

As the month of Muharam ended the two camps went back to their skirmishes and limited battles. The Imam wanted to prevent both camps the expected heavy losses if the two armies faced each other in a decisive battle.

These battles did not prevent men from the two camps to meet and debate each other. Most of the tribes were living in both provinces: Iraq and Syria. Thus they had their special blood relationship. Muawiya contacted a number of leaders of the Iraqi army. He sent them his messengers and spoke to some of them directly trying to persuade them by promising them important rewards if they leave the camp of the Imam and join him. [16](#)

The followers of the Imam also tried to persuade their relatives in Syria to join the camp of the truth. The Imam however did not allow himself to try to buy his opponents with public funds or to promise their ambitious leaders important positions.

There were many people looking for their interests among the followers of the Imam. It would be sufficient to mention men such as Ashaath Ibn Qais about whom Abu Bakr said: Whenever Ashaath sees an evil he assists it." History records that Muawiya sent his brother Utbah to Ashaath trying to attract him. He offered him proposals and Ashaath was not unreceptive.

Finally the Imam decided to meet Muawiya in a decisive battle. The two huge armies met and the most important battle the Muslims had ever waged until that time began. The two armies fought each other all day and a big portion of the night.

They resumed the battle on the following day and the right wing of the Imam's army was defeated and ran away. By this the core of his army was weakened. Thus the Imam had to move from the heart of the army to its left side where the fighters were from the tribe of Rabi-aah. [17](#)

When the Rabi-ites witnessed the Imam among them they realized the magnitude of their responsibility towards the protection of the Imam. They fought bravely fearing that the Imam might be killed while he is among them and that this will put them in an eternal shame. Therefore they decided to prevent that at any cost. [18](#)

Malik Al-Ashtar went on trying to bring the retreaters back. They heard his voice and came back. The army was back again in action and the war went on with its utmost cruelty and ugliness for the whole day and night. [19](#)

Martyrdom of Ammar Ibn Yasir

On that day when the right of the Imam's army retreated an outstanding companion of the Holy Prophet Ammar Ibn Yasir who was 93 years old stood between the two camps. He spoke loudly saying: By God if they hit us until they drive us from here to the orchards of Hejar we will continue to believe that we are the people of truth and that they are people of falsehood. [20](#)

Then he said pointing to the banner of Muawiya: "By God under the banner of the Messenger I fought the man of this banner three times and the man of the banner is not more righteous now than before." [21](#)

Ammar had an appointment with his martyrdom at the hands of the aggressor party. The Messenger of God said to him in the presence of many companions. "Son of Sumayah (Sumayah was Ammar's mother) the aggressor party shall kill you." [22](#)

This statement was well known to the companions. Amr Ibn Al-Aws was one of the reporters of this hadith and people of Damascus heard that from him. His narration of this hadith caused a deep

disturbance in the camp of Muawiya days before the decisive battle began.[23](#)

Muawiya blamed Amr for reporting this hadith. He expected Ammar to be with the Imam and through his presence Muawiya's followers will discover that they belong to the aggressor party.

Ammar asked for a drink before he entered the decisive battle of Siffin during which he obtained his martyrdom. A lady brought him milk mixed with water.

When he saw the drink he exclaimed "Allahu Akbar" (God is The Great). This is what my beloved the Messenger of God promised me when he said: Ammar the aggressor party shall kill you and your last drink in this world will be milk.[24](#)

He took his drink then he rushed on saying: Who wants to go to Paradise? Paradise is under the shades of the spears. He who is thirsty comes to the water and the water will be drunk today. Today I will meet my beloved ones: Muhammad and his party."[25](#)

Ammar went on fighting and urging Hashim Ibn Utba Ibn Abu Waqass to advance (Hashim was the bearer of the banner of Ammar's regiment. He was of the best of the Qureshite warriors and very beloved by the Imam. He lost one of his eyes at one of the battles.) Ammar sometimes joked with him saying: One-eyed advance.

Then he tells him: Advance I redeem you with my father and mother. And Hashim calms Ammar down saying: Take it easy "Abu Yaqthan" (Ammar's code name). The war makes you move too fast.[26](#) But neither the words of Hashim nor the ninety three years could minimize the speed of Abu Yaqthan. He wanted to hurry to Paradise.

He had an appointment with his beloved the great Messenger. He wanted to meet him and he did.

Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit the man of two testimonies (The Prophet had made his testimony equal to the testimony of two men) was with the Imam in Siffin but he did not fight. When Ammar was killed Khuzaimah realized that the aggressor party is the camp of Muawiya. He entered his tent. He took a bath and put his armor on then he went fighting until he died.[27](#)

The Big Conspiracy

The war continued with all its violence and intensity during the third day and weakness became obvious in the camp of Muawiya. The Imam's army almost reached the tent of Muawiya. He wanted to run away but he felt ashamed and so he stayed.[28](#)

Before noon while the battle was progressing in its intensity victory became within the reach of the Imam's camp. While his army was about to defeat the aggressor party copies of the Holy Qur'an were hoisted in Muawiya's camp and voices were heard saying:

This is the Book of God. It is between you and us from its beginning to end. Remember God. Remember God for the future of the Arabs. Remember God for the future of Islam. Who shall protect the borders of Syria if the Syrian people perish? Who shall protect the borders of Iraq if the Iraqi people perish? [29](#)

Muawiya had already despaired from obtaining a military victory. He was facing a decisive defeat on the battlefield. Now he resorted to the Holy Qur'an. The invitation to accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an was not an invention of Muawiya and Ibn Al-Aws.

You may recall that the Imam called upon the camp of Ayesha Talhah and Al-Zubier at Basra before the beginning of its battle to surrender to the Holy Qur'an. A youth from Kufa volunteered to carry the Holy Qur'an face the people of Basra and invite them to accept the rules of the Holy Qur'an. His invitation was rejected and the youth was killed.[30](#)

Muawiya and Ibn Al-Aws had decided to resort to the invitation of the rule of the Holy Qur'an when they realized that their military defeat was inevitable.

Muawiya evidently had prepared the atmosphere for such an invitation through his secret contact with some of the leaders of the Imam's army particularly Ashaath Ibn Qais the head of the tribe of Kindah whose members were numerous in Kufa.

Muawiya was almost certain that hoisting the copies of the Holy Qur'an would lead to a division in the Imam's camp whether the Imam would accept or refuse the invitation. What Muawiya expected happened. Voices from the Imam's camp were raised asking to stop the fight and accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an.

Those who wanted to stop hostilities were three categories. Each of them had a motive that differed from that of the other two categories. The scrupulous category was made up of religious fanatics. They thought that rejecting the invitation to the rule of the Book and continuing the battle would be a major sin which Muslims are not supposed to commit. They forgot that their Imam is the most knowledgeable of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic law and that he is the most adherent to the Islamic principles.

This category included a great number of readers of the Holy Qur'an who thought that they knew all the Islamic law and appointed themselves as the protectors of Islam. This kind of religious people are numerous in every generation.

There was another category of people who were anxious to stop the fight led by conspirators who were collaborating with the enemy believing their co-operation with the enemy will bring them some material wealth or high positions.

The third category believed that their obedience to the Imam in the two battles of Basra and Siffin had cost them dearly because they paid with the blood of their children brothers and relatives. Their main concern was to save their lives. They could not care less for what happened to Islam and the Muslims.

The Imam stood up trying to show them the right road saying to them: The resort to the Holy Qur'an is only a conspiracy planned by Muawiya and his advisors. I know them as young and old. They never were people of the Qur'an or religion. All they wanted was to avoid the catastrophe of defeat.[31](#)

There was within the camp of the Imam some people who had both sincerity and wisdom (these were a minority compared to the others.) These people agreed with the Imam and urged him to continue the war and to ignore the many voices which were calling for cessation of hostility.

These people were led by Malik Al-Ashtar. But their voices were drowned by the voice of the majority who wanted to end the battle.

Al-Ashtar was still pushing hard towards Muawiya seeing that victory was within his reach but those who wanted to end the war surrounded the Imam. They threatened to desert him and to fight him and even to take him as a captive and hand him to Muawiya.[32](#)

They asked him to order Al-Ashtar to discontinue his march. The Imam found himself between two alternatives. If he continued the war he would be forced to fight his enemy and the biggest portion of his own camp with only a minority that was still obedient to him.

Otherwise he could discontinue the war and victory would slip from his hand. He chose to discontinue the war feeling that his obedient followers may be annihilated without reaching a result which would improve the just side.

The Imam found himself facing a coup by which his authority came to an end. Al-Ashtar came back from the front and urged him to fight those who disobey him with those who obey him. The Imam said: "Malik I was a leader but now I have become a follower."[33](#) However the conspiracy was twofold: Discontinuation of war and the acceptance of the invitation to the rule of the Holy Qur'an through two arbiters.

The arbiters from the Iraqi camp had to be Abu Musa Al-Ashari who was the governor of Kufa before the beginning of the Battle of Basra. The reader may remember the efforts which this man made to prevent the people of Kufa from joining the Imam in his confrontation with the army of the three leaders at Basra.

Muawiya achieved all that through the stupidity of the religious fanatics along with some traitors in the Imam's army. The collaborators and the fanatic readers acted and sounded as if they were burdening the Imam instead of Muawiya with the responsibility of the war.

Their efforts were directed at challenging the authority of the Imam and preventing him from choosing any arbiter that inclined to his opinion or thought of resuming the fight.

Muawiya chose Amr Ibn Al-Aws to be his representative and none of the people of his camp argued with him. The Imam chose Abdullah Ibn Abbas but Al- Ashaath and his followers said: No two men from Mudhar (the Arab tribes who are neither Rabi-ites nor Yemenites) shall rule us (meaning that Amr Ibn

Al-Aws and Abdullah Ibn Abbas both are Qureshites non-Yemenites and non-Rabi-ites). The fact is that they did not refuse Ibn Abbas for being a Mudharite. His being a Mudharite was taken by Ashaath as a pretext to cover up his intentions. Had Ibn Abbas been against the Imam Ashaath would have accepted him.

This became obvious when the Imam nominated Malik Al-Ashtar who was a Yeminite. Ashaath rejected him and so did his tribe saying: Did anyone burn the earth other than Al-Ashtar? They meant that Al-Ashtar was in agreement with the Imam and wants to go back to war in order to defeat the aggressor party. Ashaath and his tribe were actually assistants and collaborators with the aggressor party.

They joined the Imam reluctantly. They did not like his reign or his victory or everything he stood for. In fact these people were more harmful to the Imam and more dangerous to his cause than his own enemy Muawiya.

The Imam was forced to accept the arbitration. He was forced also to accept Abu Musa as the representative of his camp and the documents of arbitration were written and signed by the two sides. Ashaath was extremely pleased with obtaining such a document and he went from one division to another of the Iraqi army reading it to them.[34](#)

The Two Arbiters

The important points of the document of arbitration were the following:

1. The two arbiters will validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates and that they will follow what they find in it.
2. They should follow the instructions of the Holy Prophet which unite the Muslims and do not separate them.
3. The two arbiters promise God and covenant Him that they will try to bring peace to the nation and will not turn the nation back to division and war.
4. The deadline for their deliberation will be the month of Ramadan (and if they choose to make the decision before that date or choose to delay it for the interest of the nation they could do that.)
5. The place of their meeting will be equal in distance between Kufa and Damascus and Hijaz.[35](#)

The Holy Qur'an and the hadiths which bring unity to the nation validate the right of 'Ali who was elected by the companions of the Prophet and who was "brothered" by the Messenger and declared to be the leader of every believer. They invalidate the untruth of Muawiya who divided the nation and shed the blood of the Muslims for his own interest.

Yet the two arbiters were not expected to validate a truth or to invalidate a falsehood. Neither of the two

companions was neutral in the dispute about which they came to issue a fair decision. Ibn Al-Aws was the second in command of the camp which was fighting the Imam. Al-Ashari was one of five people who were opposed to the Imam and his policy before the beginning of the Battle of Basra.

During that period Muawiya was preventing the extension of the Imam's authority to his province and declaring his armed disobedience. The Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr were occupying Basra and hoping to extend their influence to Kufa.

While Muawiya and the three leaders were doing that Abu Musa was preventing people of Kufa from assisting the Imam in retrieving what the three leaders had usurped from the area of his authority.[36](#)

Abu Musa was taking this stand while the Imam was sending to him and to the people of Kufa his messages and messengers asking people of Kufa to come to his assistance in retrieving his right. Abu Musa was satisfied to keep Basra under the authority of the three leaders because he was collaborating with them. He actually was in open defiance of the Imam covering his intention with his deceptive methods of calling upon people to avoid fighting.

Yet the Holy Qur'an clearly invites the believers to fight any Muslim community that commits aggression against another Muslim community.[37](#) Had Abu Musa had his way during that period he would have prevented the people of Kufa from joining the Imam and the Imam's reign would have ended in the first year after his election.

Trusting Abu Musa and Amr Ibn Al-Aws on the right of the Imam was in fact trusting an enemy on the right of his enemy.

What was expected finally took place. The two arbiters continued in their deliberation for a long time. The result of their deliberation was that they agreed to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muaweyeh.

Abu Musa was the first to declare his decision of invalidating the leadership of the two men. Ibn Al-Aws stood after him to declare the invalidation of the leadership of the Imam and the establishment of the leadership of Muawiya. Abu Musa accused Amr of being treacherous breaching an agreement with him.

Had Ibn Al-Aws not been treacherous and agreed with Abu Musa to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muawiya their invalidation would have had an adverse effect on the Imam rather than Muawiya.

The Imam was the Caliph and Muawiya was only the governor of Syria. Thus invalidating Muawiya's caliphate would be meaningless. What does it mean to overthrow a man from an office he does not occupy?

Had the decision of the two arbiters been in accordance with the stipulation of the document of arbitration the deceptive act of Ibn Al-Aws against Abu Musa would have been considered an assistance

to the Imam rather than to Muawiya.

Had not Ibn Al-Aws done that the harm to the Imam from the legal point of view would have been greater because their decision would be binding on the Imam and unharmed to Muawiya. For invalidating Muawiya as a caliph does not deprive him of any position he had.

Had their decision been in agreement with the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet the deception of Ibn Al-Aws would have been the only barrier from making their decision binding because it proved that they were in disagreement in their ruling.

But the decision of the two arbiters was opposed to the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet even if they had agreed. The Holy Qur'an declares the following:

"If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them. But if one of them transgresses beyond the bounds against the other then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. If it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just." The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 10.

The party of Muawiya was the aggressor party which refused to obey the command of God. 'Ali was the legal Caliph by the appointment of the Holy Prophet according to the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet.

He was also the Caliph by a general election which he received from the overwhelming majority of the companions and the inhabitants of Medina Mecca Iraq Egypt Yemen and the rest of the Islamic provinces with the exception of the inhabitants of Syria who were ruled by Muawiya. Since he was the legal Caliph it was the duty of the Muslims to obey him. The Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to obey the leaders from among them:

"O you who believe (in Islam) obey God the messenger and the people of authority from among you..." The Holy Qur'an chapter 4 verse 58.

The Holy Prophet declared that 'Ali is the leader of every believer and prayed to the Almighty that He love whoever loves 'Ali and to be hostile to whoever is hostile to 'Ali.³⁸ Muawiya was hostile to the Imam. He fought him and he legalized shedding his blood. And if God responds to the prayer of His Prophet (and no doubt He does) then Muawiya is an enemy of God by being the enemy of 'Ali.

Muslim in his Sahih reported that the Holy Prophet said "Whoever comes in an open rebellion and parts with the community then he dies he will die a pre-Islamic death."³⁹ Muawiya no doubt was out of obedience to the legal Caliph.

If anyone has hesitated in judging that Muawiya was the leader of the aggressor party he should remember the authentic hadith (whose authenticity is well established) which reported that the

Messenger said to Ammar Ibn Yasir while many companions were listening: "Ibn Sumayah the aggressor party shall kill you."⁴⁰ The party of Muawiya is the party that killed that outstanding companion who was a beloved of the Prophet.

This hadith was so well known that Al-Zubayr had a tremor with which the arms he was carrying started to shake at the Battle of Basra when he knew that Ammar was in the Imam's camp. He feared that Ammar will be killed at that battle then Al-Zubayr will be from the aggressor party.⁴¹

When Amr Ibn Al-Aws at the Battle of Siffin was informed that Ammar was killed he refused to believe it and when he witnessed the body of the martyr the color of Amr's face was changed. Then he said: Are we the ones who killed him? The one who killed him is the one who brought him⁴² and so Muawiya said.

When the Imam heard of that he ridiculed it saying: "Then the Messenger of God is the one who killed his uncle Hamzah because he is the one who brought him to the Battle of Uhud." There is no doubt that Abu Musa heard the hadith.

He knew that Ammar was killed and he knew that Muawiya and his party were the aggressor party and that 'Ali is the well guided Imam but all that did not prevent him from deciding to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and overthrow him. This was only because he was an enemy of the Imam. I do not want to say that he did not value what he knew of the Book of God and the words of the Messenger but I would say that his hatred of the Imam blinded him.

- ^{1.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 104.
- ^{2.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 104-105.
- ^{3.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 105.
- ^{4.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 5
- ^{5.} Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsud 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib part 4 pp. 31-32.
- ^{6.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 141 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 560.
- ^{7.} Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib part 4 pp. 44-45 And Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 62-63 (8th edition) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 460-461.
- ^{8.} Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 39.
- ^{9.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145 Al-Tabari his History part 21 pp. 571-572 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 71.
- ^{10.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 542.
- ^{11.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145.
- ^{12.} Al-Hurr Al-Amili Wasa-il-al-Shi'ah part 11 pp. 43-44.
- ^{13.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 145-146 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 572.
- ^{14.} Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 4 p. 190.
- ^{15.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 149.
- ^{16.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 148.
- ^{17.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- ^{18.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- ^{19.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- ^{20.} Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 257.
- ^{21.} Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 257.

- [22.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259.
- [23.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259 Ibn-Al-Athir also reported this in his Al-Kamil part 3 p. 158.
- [24.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 258 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 78.
- [25.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 258 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 78.
- [26.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 161.
- [27.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259.
- [28.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 154.
- [29.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 160-161.
- [30.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 509.
- [31.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 161.
- [32.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 161.
- [33.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 163.
- [34.](#) Al-Tabari in History part 5 p. 55.
- [35.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf (conveyed by Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 83-84. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 162-163.
- [36.](#) See chapter 23 of this book section 3.
- [37.](#) The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 10.
- [38.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 110. The Hadith was reported by more than one hundred companions.
- [39.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 12 p. 241.
- [40.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 233.
- [41.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 510-511.
- [42.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 pp. 253-254.

26. Al-Khawarij (The Seceders)

The group of readers of the Holy Qur'an who attended with the Imam the Battle of Siffin were the first to call for discontinuation of the war. They were the most insistent on accepting the arbitration and the most violent against the desire of the Imam in continuing the war and refusal of the invitation for arbitration.

But these readers after the document of arbitration was signed swiftly reversed their attitude and turned one hundred and eighty degrees. They viewed that they had committed a grave error in cessation of hostilities and accepting the arbitration of men concerning the religion of God. They viewed that the duty of the Imam and their duty was to go back to war immediately without waiting for the decision of the two arbiters.

Probably they thought after deliberation that the rule of God was clear. Muawiya and his camp were the aggressor party which resorted to war to protect its falsehood. They did not resort to the rule of the Holy Qur'an because they wanted to surrender to its rule but because they believed that their defeat was inevitable.

The rule of God is clear in this matter. There would be no room for accepting the arbitration of two men and letting them try to deliberate and issue a judgment or verdict in a matter which is so clear that it

leaves no place for forming any new opinion.

These fanatics forgot that they were the ones who challenged the authority of the Imam and pushed him by force to stop the war and to accept the arbitration and to sign its document. Now they were trying to force him to breach that covenant which he signed and made God and people witnesses on his acceptance.

These religious fanatics raised the slogan of "La Hukma Illa Lillah" (There is no rule but that of God). They meant by this slogan that Islam does not approve choosing two arbitrators for settling a dispute between two Muslim parties. Rule belongs only to God and it is not legal for men to issue a rule in religious matters.

It is amazing that this slogan had attracted thousands and thousands of Muslims who claimed adherence to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. Yet an arbiter of a matter about which two Muslim parties differ is nothing but a judge who is expected to settle that dispute and declare that one of the two sides is right.

That the two arbiters are two judges is what the document of arbitration spoke of. It started as follows: "This is what 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib and Muawiya Ibn Abu Sufyan litigated for. 'Ali litigated for the people of Iraq and those who are of their followers of believers and Muslims..."¹

When did the faith of Islam forbid litigation and appointment of judges and the judges' exercise of their mission in settling disputes? How would disputes be settled if litigation is forbidden? Did the "Khawarij" (Seceders) believe that the Messenger and the Caliphs were not exercising the mission of judges and appointing judges? The legality of issuing a judgment and the necessity of that is only self-evident in our religion.

The Seceders raised the slogan of "There is no Rule but that of God " and I do not think they understood its meaning. Probably they took this slogan from the following Qur'anic verse:

***"Certainly the rule belongs only to God. He commanded that you shall not worship but Him..."
The Holy Qur'an chapter 12 verse 41.***

Yet what the verse speaks of is one thing and what the Seceders understood from the verse is something else. The verse meant that the Almighty is the One Who reveals the principles and rules of the religion. He commanded that we (His servants) worship none but Him.

An arbiter or a judge is not the revealer of the religion or a worshipped person. He is only a man whose mission is to apply the rules of God.

If he does that and rules according to what God has revealed the Muslims are supposed to surrender to his rules. If he rules p a way contrary to what God has revealed the Muslims are supposed to disobey him.

It is amazing that this extremist party had forgotten that the Almighty said to His Messenger and to the followers of His Messenger:

"And judge between them according to what God has revealed and follow not their illegitimate desires..." The Holy Qur'an chapter 5 verse 53.

The Almighty said also to the people of the Gospel:

"And the people of the Gospel should judge according to what God has revealed in it and whoever rules not in accordance with what was revealed would be the transgressors." The Holy Qur'an chapter 5 verse 51.

He also said to the believers:

"Certainly God commanded you to deliver the trusts to whom they belong. And if you judge among people judge equitably." The Holy Qur'an chapter 4 verse 58.

Had the document of arbitration imposed on the Muslims to obey the two arbiters even if they were devious judging in contradiction with the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet the attitude of the Seceders would have some justification. But the document declared that the arbiters have to validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates.

If they do not find in the area of their disagreement an instruction from the Holy Qur'an they should resort to the authentically reported teaching of the Holy Prophet which unites and does not divide. If the two arbiters abide by the stipulation of the document they would be ruling according to what God has revealed.

Had the rebellious extremists said that the two chosen arbiters were not qualified to issue a judgment they would have been right and this was the Imam's opinion. But the extremists were the ones who forced him to accept the two arbiters while he knew they were the worst choice.

Ibn Al-Aws was an arch enemy of the Imam. Abu Musa was extremely limited in knowledge and understanding. His past during the days of 'Umar and Uthman indicates his unscrupulousness in religion.

His recent past at the beginning of the reign of the Imam indicates that he was following selfish interests. He hated the Imam and did everything in his power to discourage people of Kufa from supporting the Imam to regain his authority in Basra.

The two arbiters undoubtedly were not qualified to decide in a matter about which the nation was divided. Yet the Imam was not responsible for choosing them. He accepted the invitation for the arbitration and accepted the two arbiters under pressure and unwillingly. These extremists themselves were a very important part of the power which forced the Imam to do that.

However the lack of qualification of the two arbiters for making a decision does not prevent their commission as arbitrators because the acceptance of their decision was conditioned by their adherence to the teaching of the Holy Book and the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

Violent Extremism

The truth is that the Seceders never were moderate in any of their stands. At the beginning they were the most zealous for arbitration and they threatened the Imam with war if he insisted upon the continuation of the war.

They considered his continuation of the battle after he was invited to accept the rule of the Book of God an unforgivable major sin and a disbelief in Islam.²

As soon as the document of arbitration was signed the Seceders moved from the extreme right to the extreme left.

They declared that the acceptance of arbitration and the discontinuation of the battle is an unforgivable sin or rather a disbelief in Islam.

They went on moving from one extreme to a bigger extreme. They appointed themselves protectors of the faith and the Islamic law which they did not know. They made themselves inquisitive judges condemning people for their opinions.

They put people to death because they disagreed with them. The Declaration of the Faith: "There is no God but the Almighty and Muhammad is His Messenger" (through which the Prophet secured sanctity of the life and property of its pronouncer) was declared by the Seceders to be insufficient. Neither this nor the compliance with all of God's commandments could represent in their views a religious security.

They invented a new law through which they could test the faith of every Muslim namely: The repudiation of 'Ali and Uthman. Whoever repudiates the two Caliphs his life would be protected and whoever fails to do so would be condemned to death.

Thus repudiation of the Imam 'Ali the Brother of the Messenger and the "Mawla" (guardian) of every believer became an article of the Islamic Faith in the view of these rebels.³

The Imam came back from Siffin and these extremists also came back separating themselves from his army.

They camped at Harura and to that place they were related afterwards and called: Haruris. The Imam tried to convince them to rejoin his army and he almost succeeded in reaching that goal. They came back to Kufa but they were hoping that the Imam will go back to fight Muawiya without waiting for the result of the arbitration. But the Imam was too righteous to breach a covenant he signed.

When they knew of his determination to honor the document of arbitration they left Kufa after they wrote to those who shared with them their opinion in Basra.

They promised each other to meet at the Land of Nahrawan.⁴ Five hundred from the Bassrites joined them at that place.

The Imam wanted to go back to resume his campaign against Muawiya after Abu Musa and Amr Ibn Al-Aws ended their mission with disagreement and their deviation from the right path became obvious.

He sent to the Seceders a message calling upon them to rejoin him in his new campaign against Muawiya as they used to urge him to do. But now they refused his invitation accusing him of trying to avenge for himself because the rule of two arbiters did not come in his favor.⁵

The Imam wanted to leave them alone and go back to the battlefield. He called upon the Kufites and the Bassrites to join him in his military campaign. Sixty-two thousand Kufite volunteers responded to his call along with three thousand and two hundred from Basra.

The Seceders in the meantime were waging a campaign of terror unprecedented in the history of the Muslims.

They were interrogating people and killing anyone that refused to repudiate the Imam.

They arrested Abdullah Ibn Khabbab Ibn Al-Arath (companion of the Holy Prophet) and his wife. They asked him about 'Ali before the arbitration and after the arbitration. The man replied saying: "Ali knows more about God than you do. He is more adherent to the religion and more farsighted than you."⁶

They said: "You follow your selfish desire. You glorify men because of their names and not because of their deeds. By God we shall kill you in a way with which we never killed anyone before."

They handcuffed him and took him with his wife (who was pregnant and about to give birth) to the orchards of Mawaqeerpalm. They slaughtered him and his blood ran into the river. When they came to his wife she asked: Do you not fear God? I am a lady!! They cut her abdomen.⁷

They also killed three other women from the tribe of Tay as well as a well-known righteous lady called: Mother of Sinan Al-Saidawayah.⁸

The Imam received this disturbing news while he was about to leave for Syria to resume his campaign against Muawiya. He thought that it would be very dangerous to the people of Kufa and the rest of Iraq if he went on his mission and left these cruel terrorists behind him doing to the people what they were doing. He found it necessary to try to deal with the new danger before leaving for Syria.

The Imam led his army to Nahrawan where the Seceders were camping. He sent them a message demanding from them to hand him the killers of the Muslims in order to punish the criminals for their

crimes. He told them that if they do that he will leave them and go to face the people of the west hoping that God may change their hearts and their thinking.

The defiant answer was: "We all killed them and your blood and the blood of your followers are not sacred to us."⁹ The Imam came to face them in person and spoke to them saying: "You the band that was driven out of the right road by the hostility of arguments and stubbornness and were prevented from seeing the truth by your blind emotion..

I warn you not to become in the future objects of curse by this nation laying at this valley... without any authority from your Lord or a clear evidence.

"Do you not know that I prohibited you from accepting the invitation of arbitration and informed you that it was a conspiracy against you? Did I not tell you that the leaders of your enemies are not people of religion and you disobeyed me?

"When I did what you wanted I stipulated that the two arbiters shall validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates. They disagreed with each other and disagreed with the rule of the Book and the Holy Prophet. We rejected their decision and we are now on the original position. How did you come to your position?"¹⁰

They said; "We have accepted the invitation for arbitration and when we did that we committed a sin and by this we became unbelievers. And we repented. If you repent we will be with you and from you and if you refuse to repent we will be against you and we will fight you."

He said "... Do you want me to call myself an unbeliever after I believed in the message of the Holy Prophet migrated with him and endeavored in the way of God? Should I do what you are asking I would be of the misguided party."¹¹ Then he left them.

The logic of the Seceders is amazing. They say that they committed a sin by the acceptance of the invitation of arbitration and by this they became unbelievers. Did they mean that whoever commits a sin becomes an unbeliever? If this is what they meant then a person has to be completely sinless in order to be a Muslim. This means that they believed that all Muslim generations were unbelievers.

Prophecies

However what was recorded in the books of history about the battle of Seceders and what the books of Hadith contained indicate that the Imam was not surprised by what happened to these people. He was expecting the battle and he knew its location its outcome and its details before it happened. He spoke of all that as if he were reading from a book.

The Seceders went towards the bridge of the river while the Imam was praying at a place remote from the river.

When some of his companions came to inform him that the Seceders had already crossed the river he said: "They will never pass the river." As he said that one of his companions went to verify the word of the Imam. He looked at them from a distance because he was afraid to come close to them. He thought that they had crossed the river.

He came back to the Imam verifying the news of their passage. The Imam said: "By God they will never cross the river and they will die before coming to the river."¹² People doubted the words of the Imam and some of them became suspicious.

When they went towards the Seceders to verify what he said and found them away from the river the companions of the Imam exclaimed saying: "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great). When they informed the Imam of their doubt and what they found he said: "By God I never lied nor has my word ever been disproved."¹³

The Imam did not only have the knowledge of the location of the battle but also he was aware of its minute details. He told his companions before its beginning: "By God you will not lose ten men from among you and their balance after the end of the battle will not amount to ten." And the result of the battle came to show the truth of his prophecy.¹⁴

He gave Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari the banner of safety.

Abu Ayyoub called the Seceders saying: "Whoever comes to stand under this banner would be safe and whoever did not commit murder and did not attack people and left this place for Kufa or Al-Mada-in would be safe. Whoever leaves this community would be safe. We do not want to shed your blood. We want to punish the killers of our brothers from among you." Many of them left the camp and about half their number remained determined to fight.¹⁵

The Imam ordered his companions not to start the battle against the Seceders but they exclaimed: "Let us travel this evening to Paradis." The Seceders attacked the army of the Imam and the army of the Imam split itself into two portions and they put the Seceders between them.

The marksmen received them with their arrows. The cavalry from the two sides closed in on them. The foot soldiers came to them with their spears and swords. The Seceders perished in one hour as if God told them: "Die" and they died.¹⁶

It became obvious to the companions of the Imam that his prophecy was completely true. The army of the Imam did not lose more than eight men and the balance of the Seceders did not amount to ten.

There was another prophecy which was more important but the companions of the Imam could not verify it after the end of the battle. The Imam informed his companions before the appearance of the Seceders that a group of Muslims will depart from religion as an arrow departs from its bow. The mark of these people is a man with a defect.

When the Imam finished the battle he ordered his companions to seek that person. They did but they did not find the man. Some of his companions said: "The man with the defect is certainly not among the dead."

The Imam repeatedly said: "By God he is among them. By God I never told a lie nor has my word ever been disproved." Finally he personally went accompanied by some of his companions searching for the described man.

They found him in a pit on the bank of the river among fifty corpses. When he drew him out he looked at his arm.

He found a lump of flesh like a woman's breast. When that flesh is extended it extends until it becomes completely parallel to the other hand. If left it shrinks until it takes its original shape! When the Imam found what he sought he exclaimed: "Allahu Akbar " then he said: "By God I never told a lie; nor was I ever proven to be untrue. Had I not feared that you may neglect your devotional duties I would have informed you of what God on the tongue of His Prophet said about the people who fight these Seceders while knowing their deviousness and acknowledging the right on which we are standing."[17](#)

The historians and the hadith-recorders reported that the Messenger informed his companions about the appearance of these Seceders and that he described them graphically. Al-Bukhari recorded in his Sahih that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri said:

"While we were with the Messenger of God when he was distributing some of the public funds among the Muslims Thul-Khuwaissirah (a man from Bani Tameem) came to him and said: "Messenger of God be just. The Prophet said: "Woe to you. If do not execute justice who does? I would have failed and lost if I did not execute justice." 'Umar asked the Messenger to permit him to kill that man. The Messenger said: "Leave him. A group will follow the path of this man. Your prayer and your fast would look too small compared to their prayers and fasts.

They read the Holy Qur'an but the Holy Qur'an does not go beyond their throats. They depart from religion as an arrow departs from a bow. Their mark is a man one of his two arms looks like a woman's breast or a lump of flesh. The Seceders antagonize the best group of people.

"I bear witness that I have heard this hadith from the Messenger of God as I bear witness that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib fought them and I was with him. He ordered his companions to seek that man and he was brought out and I saw him exactly as the Holy Prophet described him."[18](#)

Muslim in his Sahih reported that Zayd Al-Juhani was in the army of the Imam which fought the Seceders. 'Ali said: "O people I have heard the Messenger of God saying: A group of people part with my nation. They read the Holy Qur'an. Your reading compared to their reading is nothing and so is your prayer and your fast compared to their prayer and fast. They read the Holy Qur'an and think that it is with them but it is against them. Their prayers do not go beyond their throats. They depart from Islam as an

arrow departs from a bow. If the army that fights them knows what came on the tongue of the Messenger for them they may neglect their duties in reliance on what God promised them of great reward. The mark of this group is a man who has an upper arm only. There is at the end of his upper arm something resembling the end of a breast with some hair coming out of it.

‘Ali said: "Seek that defective man." They sought him but they did not find him. ‘Ali had to seek him by himself until he came to a group of corpses lying one above another. He commanded his men to bring those dead men out. They did and found the man they were seeking down at the bottom. The Imam exclaimed: "Allahu Akbar." Then he said: "God has fulfilled His Promise and His Messenger has delivered."¹⁹

- ^{1.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 162.
- ^{2.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 171–173–174.
- ^{3.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 172–173.
- ^{4.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 170.
- ^{5.} Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 104 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 171.
- ^{6.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 172–173.
- ^{7.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 172–173.
- ^{8.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 172–173 Al-Tabari his History part 5 pp. 81–82.
- ^{9.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3. p. 173 Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 83.
- ^{10.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 173 Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 84.
- ^{11.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 173–174 Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 84.
- ^{12.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 174.
- ^{13.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 174.
- ^{14.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 174.
- ^{15.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 174 Sheikh Muhammad Abdo recorded in his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 107 that only nine of the Seceder survived and only eight of the Imam's army died.
- ^{16.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 175.
- ^{17.} Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 175 Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 88.
- ^{18.} Al-Bukhari his Sahih Book of the Beginning of the Creation.
- ^{19.} Muslim his Sahih Book of Al-Zakat.

27. Martyrdom

When the Seceders were annihilated one of the companions of the Imam said to him: "Ameer Al-Mumineen the Seceders have perished completely." The Imam said: "No by God they are still sperms in the bodies of men and wombs of women. Whenever a "horn" of them appears it will be cut off until their last generation becomes thieves and robbers."¹

The Imam was not deceived by his victory against the Seceders. He did not believe that their death meant the death of their doctrines or that it represented a drastic solution to their problem. He was fully

aware that doctrines and principles do not die by the death of their innovators. His combat of the Seceders was nothing but a temporary measure the purpose of which was to slow their speedy movement and to lighten their growing danger. His combat of the Seceders was only a mission with which the Messenger commissioned him and made clear to him its details descriptions and marks more than two decades before its time.

The Messenger commissioned the Imam 'Ali with that mission only because it is a sacred duty which represents the defense of the freedom of belief and the defense of the innocent lives and blood which the Seceders went on shedding for no reason except that their victims did not believe in their falsehood.

The Imam himself with all of what the Holy Messenger said about him of being the ally of the truth did not believe that he should force the Muslims to share with him his opinions or to follow the right road.

On the contrary he used to excuse his opponents and acknowledge their right in the freedom of thinking. He is the one who said: "Kill not the Seceders after me; the one who sought the truth and missed it is not like the one who sought the falsehood and acquired it."[2](#)

Had the Seceders believed in their wrong doctrines without attempting to impose it by force on the rest of the Muslims the Imam would have left them alone and this was his wish. But they prohibited the Muslims to speak the truth or to believe in it. They forced them to believe in the falsehood and to take it as a religion. They went on killing people because they did not believe in their innovation.

The Battle of Nahrawan succeeded in stopping the speed of the movement and its growing danger against the Muslims. But as the Imam expected it did not succeed in eliminating that danger. Nor did it succeed in restoring the determination of the Imam's army to fight the unjust Umayyad party.

The Imam tried after the Battle of Nahrawan to go directly to the land of Syria to face Muawiya in a decisive battle. But the army and its leaders expressed their desire to camp at Nukhailah near Kufa for a short rest through which they could regain their strength and renew their weapons and rest their animals of transportation.

As they camped at Al-Nukhailah they started to desert their camp gradually and secretly entering into Kufa as groups and individuals and they never came back. The Imam was finally forced to enter Kufa urging them day after day to go and face their enemies but they hated to go and they remained at their homes.[3](#)

It is not difficult to know the causes of the failures of these people to perform their duties. The righteous men who were the brains of the revolution such as Ammar Ibn Yasir Malik Al-Ashtar Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit (the man of two testimonies) Abdullah Ibn Badeel and Hashim Al-Mirqal had already died at the battle of Siffin or outside that battle.

These righteous men were highly enlightened. They were concerned with the future of Islam and ready

to sacrifice for the sake of the truth their wealth and their lives. They were the links which used to tie the masses of the people with the Imam and inform them of his right and urge them to obey him and show them by their own action the living examples of obedience and sincerity towards his principles.

They were always the first to respond to his call seeing in him the true representative of the Holy Prophet in word and deed. These righteous people had already met their Lord. They were replaced by people such as Ashaath whose hearts were not occupied by faith or by men such as Hijr Ibn Uday and Uday Ibn Hatam who did not lack faith or sincerity but lacked the wide influence and the power of attracting the masses.

The masses of people who fought with the Imam in three wars had already paid with the blood of their sons and brothers. They became tired of fighting and inclined to an easier and peaceful life without having foresight which makes them concerned with the future and worried about Islam.

The crisis of the Seceders brought about division in the camp of the Imam and destroyed the unity of his followers. The Seceders were annihilated at the Battle of Nahrawan but their death was not expected to raise the morale of the army which annihilated them.

They were the sons the brothers and the friends who recently had been the comrades of the soldiers of the Imam and his supporters against his enemy. For a Kufite or a Bassrite to kill another Kufite or Bassrite was not expected to generate in his mind a feeling of victory. It would rather generate only sadness and a feeling of loss.

The Battle of Nahrawan did not bring an end to the propaganda activity of the Seceders; nor did it bring their bloody action to a complete stop. They spread their propaganda among people turning them against the Imam.

Whenever a group of them felt strong enough to challenge the Imam's authority they came out carrying their swords on their shoulders spreading panic horror and death among innocent people.

Ashras Ibn Ouf Al-Shaibani along with a group parted with the Imam. Then he was followed by Hilal Ibn Alqamah then Ash-hab Ibn Bishr then Sa-eed Ibn Nufail Al-Taimi.³ After these Khirreet Ibn Rashid from Bani Najeyah and others followed the same method.⁴ Whenever a group of these people defied the Imam he was forced to send a regiment or regiments to fight them.

All that destroyed the morale of the Imam's camp and its unity as it destroyed its determination to fight. By this the military and political initiative moved from the hand of the Imam to the hand of Muawiya.

As Muawiya knew of the destruction of the unity in the camp of the Imam he decided to invade Egypt and occupy it knowing that people of Iraq will not respond to the Imam's call if he calls upon them to send an army for its defense.

Muawiya accomplished what he wanted and the people of Iraq received the news of the invasion of

Egypt the death of its governor Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and the burning of his body as if the matter did not concern them at all.[5](#)

Success brings success and failure brings failure. Success made Muawiya more ambitious. He tried to usurp Basra from the Imam because he knew that the majority of its people were still holding grudges against him for what they lost in the Battle of Basra. Muawiya sent Abdullah Al-Hadrami to Basra to try to turn its people against the Imam. He did not succeed in his mission and was killed but only after he generated division among the people of Basra.[6](#)

Muawiya sent Naaman Ibn Bashir (a companion of the Prophet) with a thousand soldiers then Sufyan Ibn Ouf with six thousand then Al-Dhahak Ibn Quais with three thousand to various areas of Iraq for invasions by which they spread destruction and death. Most of the time these invaders went back without meeting from the people of Iraq more than token resistance. Muawiya sent regiments to Yemen and Hijaz. They did to the Muslims there what non-Muslims would hesitate to do. The invading regiments went back successfully without being hurt.[7](#)

The Imam used to gather people time after time urging them to defend themselves. Sometimes he spoke to them harshly but the Iraqis had been weakened and lost their will to fight. One time he spoke to them in the following manner: "Which country after your country shall you defend and with which Imam after me shall you fight?"

The deceived one is the one you have deceived. And whoever had you in his party certainly had the losing party. I lost my hope in your help and I would not believe your words.

May God separate between me and you..." "You shall meet after me a general humiliation and an annihilating sword along with a discrimination against you which the unjust ruler will make a rule. He will divide your community... and bring poverty to your homes and you will wish soon that you had seen me and helped me.

You shall know the truth of what I say. May God put the unrighteous out of His Mercy." It would not do any good to blame Muawiya for corrupting and dividing people and committing incalculable crimes by killing people and destroying their properties or purchasing their conscience. The Imam knew that Muawiya and his relatives were and continued to be the enemies of truth and its message. Muawiya was a seeker of worldly affairs and a man of falsehood. The Imam did not expect him to do but what he was doing.

Only the followers of the Imam were to be blamed. They were expected to be the means for straightening the crookedness of the nation and re-directing it towards a future in which the light of Islam goes high and spreads throughout the world and leads all nations.

Instead of being the Imam's solution to the problems of the nation the Kufites became an additional problem to him and to the nation. In one of his addresses the Imam told them the following words: "My

aim was to medicate the problem of the nation through you but you have become my main problem.

God the fighters of this disease have gotten tired..." [8](#) The falsehood certainly acquired victory through the failure of the Kufites their disobedience and divisions.

The Kufites did not only lose their spiritual values but the value of their worldly life and honorable future on the face of this earth as well. Their enemy whom they fought violently at the beginning and wanted to strangulate and worked for his annihilation was not expected to be merciful with them after they cowardly turned their back to him in their retreat.

The Imam told them: "You shall experience after me a comprehensive humiliation a destructive sword and a constant discrimination against you. Your enemy shall be your ruler. He shall divide you bereave you and impoverish you." These words which may arouse a coward and awaken a comatose did not move the Kufites nor did it succeed in awakening them.

He told them again: "How amazing your attitude is. It paralyzes the heart puzzles the mind and defies the human understanding to see the determination of Muawiya's party supporting their falsehood and your failure to support your right. Thus you have become a target constantly being hit and never hitting and invaded but never invading. God is disobeyed and you are satisfied. If I tell you to invade them in the winter you say: The weather is too cold! If I tell you to invade them in the summer you say: This is the heat of the summer; give us respite until the heat ends. If you are afraid of hot and cold weather you will be more afraid of the sword.

"O you who look like men but never truly are... by God you have ruined my strategies through your disobedience. You have filled my heart with anger." Thus the Qureshites said: "Ibn Abu Talib is a brave man but he does not have the know-how to run a war... Who knows about war more than I? Who had experienced war more than I did? By God I entered war before I was twenty years old. And now I have passed sixty. But a disobeyed man cannot substantiate the wisdom of his opinion."[9](#)

With all the setbacks and problems accumulated in his path the Imam did not lose his determination. His camp caused him to lose the military initiative and imposed upon him an unsuccessful defensive position.

Yet he continued to believe in the possibility of regaining the military initiative and destroying all his enemy's gains by dealing with him decisively. Should the Imam's camp regain its unity Muawiya will not benefit from the occupation of Egypt or winning several skirmishes prior to that decisive battle.

Finally the Imam decided to force those evasive followers of his to take a firm attitude after he despaired of their voluntary co-operation. He tried to put them on the spot and put all of what they had of honor and religion at stake. They either defend all that or they will have a shame which will never be washed.

The Imam wanted to open their eyes to the fact that he has already made a very dangerous decision

which he has the power to fulfill because it belongs to his own person. They knew certainly that when he says something he will do it. He is the hero who was never afraid of any sacrifice regardless of its magnitude. He gathered them and told them the following:

"O people you have called upon me by your election to serve and I did not turn you down. You pledged your allegiance to me and I did not ask you to do that. Some challengers confronted me and God took care of them.

They fell on the battlefield in humiliation. There is still a community which is disobedient to God following their selfish interest deviating from truth. They claim what they are not qualified for. If they are told to advance they advance and when they advance they do not know the truth as they know the falsehood. Nor do they fight the wrong as they fight the right."

"I have become tired of talking to you and blaming you. I would like you to make your intention clear to me.

If you are determined to go to our enemy this is what I ask and love. If you are reluctant to do that be frank with me. Let me know your intention so I will form my opinion.

"By God if you do not go with me to your enemy in order to fight them until God judges between us and them (and He is the Best of the Judges) I shall pray God to punish you then I will go to our enemy even if I am not accompanied with more than ten men. Do the riffraff of Damascus and its ignorants have more patience and stronger co-operation for helping the falsehood and assisting the wrong than you have for your truth and right? What happened to you? What is your medicine? Your enemies are like you. If they are killed they will not be resurrected before the Day of Judgment." [10](#)

By this important declaration the Imam put them face to face with their responsibilities. They believed that he was going to fulfill his decision and he will go to his enemy even if he does not have more than ten persons and they know that he will find more than ten.

They know that if he does that he will meet his death and they will have a shame which they were not ready to accept. Probably some of them feared if the Imam prays to God to punish them God will answer his prayer.

The listeners stood up and spoke well and left him after they showed him that they have decided to help him.

They went to their tribes urging them to fight their enemies. They gained some unity and seemed to be ready to leave ready to confront their enemy after they prepared manpower and supplies to face the forces of heresy anarchy and evil in a decisive battle. [11](#)

Was that task force really as healthy as it appeared? Did the hearts of the leaders of the army rally behind the truth? Were Ashaath and others like him cured of the disease of hypocrisy? Would some of

the leaders of the newly mobilized army conspire with the enemy to deliberately defeat themselves at the battle for bribes necessitating the Imam to enter into a desperate battle in which he will meet his death? Did the Imam believe in their sincerity? History does not give us any clear answer for these questions because the army did not go through that trial.

The Imam met his Lord before the newly mobilized army moved from its camp. History however accuses Ashaath who was among the leaders of that army with being an accomplice in the Imam's assassination.

I am inclined to believe that the events which took place before the mobilization of this army had made the Imam lose his confidence in his followers. He told them on one occasion: "By God I visualize that when the future battle takes place and the fight progresses you will leave Ibn Abu Talib alone and run away"...[12](#) The Imam was not a man who threw his words vainly.

His words always conveyed realities which he used to foresee through the light of God. The Imam would not be deceived by the new mobilization. He knew that the gathering included men who subscribe to the Seceders' opinion and others believed for their short-sightedness that victory against Muawiya had become impossible and that the regime of the Imam was coming to its end. People of this kind were always ready to co-operate with the enemies of the Imam.

Of course there were men who were truly sincere but these people were few and their presence would not make the Imam reach his goal and prevent the defeatists from bringing his army to a catastrophe.

the trial of the Imam and his tragedy in this nation were great. He was looking at the truth and seeing it clearly in front of him. He knew that the election which he received reluctantly had put on his shoulders the huge responsibility of trying to bring the Muslim World back to the road of righteousness validating what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidating what the Holy Qur'an invalidates.

He believed and he was right in what he believed that he was the most entitled to be obeyed after the Holy Prophet. He was to him as Aaron to Moses.

On the other hand he knew the tragic fact: The nation had ignored his right and was divided while it walked in unity and obedience under the banner of men below him in endeavoring for the religion of God and in knowledge and relation to the Holy Prophet.

Then he looked around and found that a portion of those who went along with him have turned against him fighting him and offering all of what they had of power to thwart his efforts. The other portion who stayed with him did not give him obedience except untrue promises and cheap excuses.

The enemy who was about to be defeated and whose falsehood was nearing its end until he resorted to hoisting the Qur'an in order to avoid the danger of annihilation became the man of the hour. He became capable of attacking without being attacked and usurping provinces which were under the Imam's authority.

The enemy does all that not because his followers are more numerous or powerful but because the numerous followers of the Imam had lost their determination and their unity had been destroyed.

The Imam was right when he considered his followers worse to him than his enemies because they were the ones who enabled his enemy by their defeatist attitude to have the upper hand and to become the victorious party.

Thus it was not surprising to see the Imam wishing to part with his followers by death or assassination. On more than one occasion he asked God to separate him from them and make him join people better than them knowing that God will not make him join better than them while he was living on this earth. He knew that this wish would never be realized unless he departed from this world to join his beloved the Messenger of God and his party.

It is amazing that he asked God to do that for him when he saw the Messenger of God in his dream shortly before he was assassinated and after the newly mobilized army was formed for the decisive battle. This was evidence that the Imam believed that his new army will not be able to fulfill its mission because a portion of that army does not have good intentions and that they were with his enemy and not with him.

Ibn Saad in his [Tabaqat](#)¹³ Ibn Abdul Barr in his [Istee-ab](#)¹⁴ Ibn Al-Athir in [Osd Al-Ghab](#)¹⁵ recorded that Al- Hassan and Al-Hussein reported that Ameer Al-Mumineen (the Imam) told them that he complained to the Messenger of God in his dream saying to him: "O Messenger of God the crookedness and hostility which I have experienced from your nation are amazingly terrible.

The Messenger said to him: Pray to God to punish them." The Imam prayed saying: "My Lord make me join better than these people and give them a leader worse than I." And the prayer of the Imam was answered.

[The Fulfilled Promise](#)

Had the Imam expected any good out of the newly mobilized army confident of its reliability and the intention of its leaders he would not have asked the Almighty to make him join better people by expediting his departure from this world.

There was nothing more desirable to the Imam than to reform what was corrupt of the affairs of the Muslims and to avoid the Muslim World what was threatening it at the hands of the future tyrant rulers in order to illuminate the road to the future generations.

Had the Imam been confident of what had been available of force he would have found in it his wish and he would have prayed to the Almighty to prolong his life in order to realize his goal.

Evidently he believed that those who were around him had lost their determination and will for sacrifice.

It seems that he felt that a number of the leaders of his army were ready to let him down at the decisive hour and leave him on the battlefield facing thousands of Muawiya's soldiers alone to be killed while his army deserted him.

They had done what is uglier than that at the war of Siffin when they were in a better situation and a bigger determination.

Had this happened the life of the Imam would have ended in a battle in which he would be defeated and deserted. But the Almighty wanted for His beloved servant 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib not to taste the bitterness of defeat and humility.

He is the sword of God who never was defeated in any battle before. God wanted to move His servant from this world while he is in a dignified state apparently with a powerful state. Thus a huge army was gathered at his command before he met his martyrdom so that he would depart from this world while in power and dignity.

It became clear to the Imam after he went through the most cruel experience that those who wanted evil for the nation were serious in their work and dedicated for reaching their ends while those who used to seek good justice prevalence of truth and the heavenly law were weakened and deteriorated.

The Imam lost all hope in achieving his goals. Seeing all evidence indicating that falsehood is on the rise and that the truth will meet its death the Imam wished that he himself will meet his death before witnessing the death of the truth.

The Imam longed for a long time to meet his martyrdom. It was his greatest wish in life. He was saddened when he did not receive his martyrdom at the Battle of Uhud. He informed the Prophet of his sadness because he was deprived of martyrdom.

The Holy Prophet said to him: "Be cheerful; martyrdom is coming to you." When the following verse was revealed:

"Do people think that they will be left to say that we have believed and they will not be tested? We have tested those who were before them and God surely knows those who were true and those who were liars " The Holy Quran, 29:2-3

The Imam reminded the Prophet of his prophecy concerning his martyrdom. The Prophet re-affirmed his prophecy saying: "It shall be so. How shall your patience be?" The Imam replied: "Messenger of God that is not a place of patience! It is rather a place for cheerfulness and thanks."[16](#)

The Holy Prophet told him once: "The nation will betray you after me. You shall live according to my precept. Whoever loves you loves me and whoever hates you hates me and this (pointing to the beard of the Imam) shall be reddened from this (pointing to the head of the Imam)."[17](#)

He told him also along with Ammar Ibn Yasir: "Shall I inform you of the most wicked among mankind?" 'Ali and Ammar said: "Yes Messenger of God." The Prophet said: "The Red of Thamoud who hamstringed the female camel (of the Prophet Saleh) and the one who hits you on this (pointing to the head of 'Ali) and makes this (pointing to the beard of 'Ali) moistened by its blood."[18](#)

The prophecy was realized on a morning of a day from the month of Ramadan forty years after the Hijrah. The wickedness which does not recognize any boundary motivated a Seceder (called Abdul-Rahman Ibn Muljam an obscure person from a lowly family) to assassinate the Imam 'Ali the brother minister and successor of the Prophet Muhammad while praying to his Lord in a house of God. Yet the assassin testified by his tongue that there is no God but the Almighty and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

A man with a spark of faith in his heart cannot pass this point from the history without shedding a tear on a martyr who obtained from every virtue its highest degree.

That is the martyr who offered for the sake of his religion and his nation what no other man after the Holy Prophet ever offered of sacrifice. Then the nation for which he offered so much formed an attitude towards him which it may feel ashamed to take towards its worst enemy.

It is difficult for any Muslim that is concerned with the future of the faith of Islam to pass this point of our history without shedding a tear. It is impossible to measure the losses which beset the Muslims and the faith of Islam through the death of this unique leader before he was able to fulfill his goal and his message to a world which was and is still in a great need of that message.

The loss which the Muslims suffered when they missed the Brother and Successor of their Prophet was great and unique in its magnitude. The Muslims never experienced similar to it after the death of the Holy Prophet.

Unequaled Loss

The Muslims who were living at the time of the death of the Imam were unable to measure its magnitude and dimensions and its great consequences. It is worthy to mention two important consequences that took place immediately after the death of the Imam:

Firstly, by the death of the Imam the Muslims lost the clear and pure source of religious information from which they used to obtain the true interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the authentically reported instructions of the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Prophet was the city of knowledge and 'Ali was the gate of that city. When the Prophet departed from this world 'Ali remained the gate of his knowledge and the treasure of his secrets and the heir of his wisdom. Through him the Muslims were able to hear the voice of the Messenger informing them of the genuine Islamic rules in the areas of their disputes.

It is true that a number of the Imam's children and grandchildren had acquired his knowledge and they were capable of providing the Muslims with the interpretation of the Book of God and conveying to them the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet. However the Muslims who refused to follow the Imam himself with all his acknowledged superiority in knowledge were not expected to follow the Imam's offspring.

The Muslims did not try to acquire from the Imam's knowledge what could spare them the problems of difference and divisions; nor did they give him the time or the true opportunity to provide them with what they needed of knowledge.

Therefore the Muslim World was not expected to enable the Imams from his descendants to realize what the Imam himself could not realize. On the contrary these Imams from 'Ali's children and grandchildren were killed and exiled.

Thus the Muslim World with the lack of clear source of knowledge was forced to adopt various schools in the details of the Islamic Law. Had the Imam been given sufficient time to write and publicize what the Muslim generations needed of knowledge in the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet the Muslims would not have adopted various schools of jurisprudence.

The End of the Righteous Caliphate

The other immediate consequence which inflicted the Muslims by the death of the Imam was the end of the period of the Righteous Caliphate forever.

Abu Bakr died and 'Umar was assassinated; then Uthman was assassinated and the righteous caliphate did not end by the death of any of these three Caliphs. But the death of the Imam 'Ali immediately transferred the Muslim World from a rule led by the Book of God and the precepts of the Holy Prophet to a despotic rule which did not respect the sacred rights and founded itself on shedding the sacred blood spreading falsehood and silencing the voice of truth.

The presence of the Imam was the only barrier between the Umayyads and the establishment of their despotic rule over the provinces of the Muslim World. When he was assassinated their rule became inevitable.

Had the Muslim World given the Imam the opportunity to erect the pillars of his regime for a sufficient time the Righteous Caliphate could have lasted generation after generation. The Muslim generations could have lived under the protection of its enlightened just and generous rule which the human generations so far could not reach.

The Imam among the followers of the Messenger was their most knowledgeable in the Book of God and the teachings of the Holy Prophet. He was the wisest among them their closest to the Holy Prophet the most similar to him and most adherent to the Law of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. He was also the highest magistrate in the nation the greatest endeavorer in the Way of God and the most

determined in enforcing the Divine Law.

Yet the nation in spite of all of the Imam's magnanimity did not obey him. Thus he could not establish the pillars of his regime nor could he fulfill his goals. People were and are still looking at the outcome regardless of the circumstances which may have led to those results. The absence of these achievements was a source of a continuous controversy around his policy.

Most of the students of history believed that the Imam adopted an idealistic policy which could not succeed in a non-ideal society. Had he been less idealistic and more realistic he could have achieved his goal.

Some scholars blame the Imam for his policy in administering the public funds. He insisted on taking the Muslims back to the days of the Holy Prophet when the public funds were distributed among the Muslims equally.

But people at the time he came to power had already been accustomed to the policy of unequal distribution which 'Umar and Uthman had adopted.

Some scholars blame the Imam for his insistence on dismissing Muawiya. They believe that he could have gained the support of Muawiya if he did not try to dismiss him. Had he done that the war of Siffin would not have taken place and Muawiya would not have challenged his authority.

Others blame him for being too lenient with his opponents. He did not punish them when they declared their opposition to him. Some of these critics accuse the Imam of attempting to rule the nation as a preacher rather than a ruler.

Therefore it would be appropriate to discuss these aspects then list the true factors which led to the absence of what the Imam endeavored for. Therefore it would be appropriate to discuss these aspects then list the true factors which led to the absence of what the Imam endeavored for.

- [1.](#) Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah (collection of the Imam 'Ali's Sermons and Words) part 1 p. 107.
- [2.](#) Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 108.
- [3.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 107.
- [4.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 187-188 Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 183.
- [5.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 180-181.
- [6.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 130-131.
- [7.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 188-189.
- [8.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 234.
- [9.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 pp. 69-70.
- [10.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 142-143 (quoting Al-Baladhuri in his book: Ansab Al-Ashraf)
- [11.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 143.
- [12.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 83.
- [13.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqaat part 3 p. 36.
- [14.](#) Ibn Abd Al-Barr Al-Istee-ab part 3 p. 1127.
- [15.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Usd al-Ghabah part 4 p. 36 (quoted by Al-Fairouzabadi Fadha-il Al-Khamsah part 3 p. 56)

[16.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 2 p.50.

[17.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 142.

[18.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 141.

28. The Imam's Policy Concerning Public Funds

Some of the students of history believed that one of the main factors in the absence of peace during the Imam's reign was his policy concerning the public funds. He tried to treat the leaders and the followers equally in distributing the public funds.

With Talhah and Al-Zubayr

Had he preferred some distinguished men such as Talhah and Al-Zubayr the two companions would have remained loyal to him and the war of Basra would have been avoided. The cause of war was the disagreement of Al-Zubayr and Talhah with the Imam concerning the distribution of the public funds. The two companions and a number of other companions were accustomed to the policy of unequal distribution which was started by 'Umar.

They thought that the policy of the Imam meant to deprive them of their acquired privileges. Talhah and Al-Zubayr and other preferred companions and children of these companions believed that the Imam would return most of their properties and funds to the Islamic treasury for a good portion of their wealth was acquired through gifts they received from Uthman. [1](#)

With Chiefs of the Arab Tribes

Had the Imam given preference to the chiefs of the tribes and presented them with gifts as Muawiyah did the Imam would have earned the loyalty of those chiefs and he would have established the unity of his followers and prevailed against his enemies.

Does Islam Allow Preference?

These critics believed that the Imam could have done all that without breaking the Islamic Law. Such preference actually could have been in agreement with the Holy Qur'an and the precepts of the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Qur'an declares clearly that the recipients of the Zakat are eight categories including the ones who are to be attracted to Islam by generous gifts. The Holy Prophet gave Abu Sufyan Aqra-a Ibn Habis and Oyainah Ibn Hissn Al-Fuzari from the spoils of Hawazin much more than he gave righteous

Muslims.[2](#)

The Three Leaders

The reliable information which we find in history concerning Ayeshah Talhah and Al-Zubayr does not support such criticism. It rather contradicts the opinion of these critics. Ayeshah declared her opposition to the Imam as soon as she knew of his election while she was on her way to Medina coming back from her pilgrimage.

She said to the man who informed her of the Imam's election: "I wish that the Heaven falls on the earth if your man ('Ali) succeeds in this affair." Then she returned to Mecca starting her campaign to avenge the blood of Uthman before she reached Mecca. She did all that before she knew anything about the Imam's policy concerning the distribution of the public funds.[3](#)

It is a well known fact in history that Uthman preferred Ayeshah Talhah and Al-Zubayr in his distribution of money. He granted Al-Zubayr six hundred thousand Dirhams.[4](#) He granted Talhah two hundred thousand Dirhams.[5](#)

But his preference of these two companions did not prevent them from being the leaders of his antagonizers who called for his assassination. Why would they be expected to be in peace with the Imam if he had preferred them in distribution when we know that Ayeshah and Talhah were more resentful to the Imam than they were to Uthman?

Al-Zubayr was not less than Ayeshah and Talhah in resenting the Imam in his last years after he became obedient to his son Abdullah the one who carried a great deal of hatred towards the Imam.

Each of the two companions was thinking that the election of the Imam deprived him of reaching the caliphate which he thought to be within his reach.

Ayeshah's Grudge

In addition to her old unfriendly attitude towards the Imam Ayeshah thought that the leadership of the Imam would be a strong barrier to the return of the caliphate to her clan of Tyme which was headed by her father the First Caliph.

On more than one occasion during the days of Uthman Ayeshah expressed her hope that the caliphate would come back to Tyme through her cousin Talhah.[6](#)

She used to see in Al-Zubayr a good substitute for Talhah because Al-Zubayr was her brother-in-law and she used to consider his son Abdullah a son of hers.

The Two Companions' Motives

It is reported that Talhah and Al-Zubayr criticized the Imam's policy in distributing the public funds and they complained that he equalized them in allotment with those who are below them. But their criticism of the Imam was nothing but propaganda aimed at arousing the preferred class from among the companions against the Imam.

They criticized his distribution of the funds equally while they knew that he did that because he wanted to follow the method of the Prophet. They accused him of the blood of Uthman while they knew his innocence and that they were the ones who were responsible for Uthman's blood. The motive for their criticism was the same as their accusation.

They were hopeful to reach the caliphate. Their ambition was inflamed when 'Umar made them members of the Electoral Convention. Because of this they instigated people against Uthman and sought his assassination and for the same reason they criticized the Imam and accused him of the murder of Uthman. And for the same motive they breached their covenant by which they pledged their loyalty to him.

With Chiefs of the Tribes

It is said that the Imam could have secured the loyalty of the chiefs of the Muslim tribes by showering them with gifts and preferring them in distribution. I do not believe that the Imam was religiously able to treat those chiefs as the Prophet treated similar chiefs when trying to attract them to Islam by financial preference.

The chiefs whom the Imam had to deal with had adopted Islam a long time before he came to power. They lived under the Islamic law for twenty-five years after the death of the Holy Prophet. 'Umar discontinued paying the appeased men their share from the Zakat less than ten years after the death of the Holy Prophet.

It should be mentioned though it does not have much bearing on the subject of discussion that it is doubted that the Messenger gave Abu Sufyan Aqra-a Ibn Habis and Oyaihah Ibn Hissn Al-Fuzari three hundred camels from the Zakat at the Battle of Hunain as the critics mentioned.

The share of the appeased men is to come from the Zakat. But the Messenger gave the three chiefs from the spoils of the battle and no Zakat is to be paid out of the spoils. The fifth is to be paid out of the spoils.

It seems that the Holy Prophet gave the three men from the fifth of the spoils which he had the right to administer its half (which belongs to God and to the Messenger and to the relatives of the Messenger) as he found it in the public interest.

We believe that the Imam 'Ali had what the Messenger had of the right to administer half of the fifth. But the three Caliphs before him had ignored such a right for the duration of their regimes. I do not think that the Imam could have exercised that right without bringing a problem to himself.

Granted that he had the right and the capability of giving the influential individuals from the shares of the appeased ones and that he was able to give them out of the half of the fifth without difficulty. Yet it was difficult to secure the loyalty of the chiefs through the shares of the appeased or through half of the fifth. The time of the Imam was not like the time of the Messenger.

Those whom the Prophet tried to attract to Islam through his gifts were few. The recipients of his gifts whose names are recorded in books of history as far as I could determine do not amount to a hundred. It was possible to satisfy those people with what was less than the eighth of the Zakat or half of the fifty.

The greed of the people did not grow at the time of the Holy Prophet as it grew during the time of the Caliphs. The Holy Prophet gave Abu Sufyan one hundred camels. This was a very huge gift by the measure of the time of the Holy Prophet.

The Islamic State at the time of the Imam became vast and the number of the Muslims went up to millions. The number of chiefs of tribes went up to hundreds and thousands. For the Imam to open upon himself the door of purchasing people's loyalty with money it meant that he had to pay hundreds or thousands of chiefs. To give one chief would inflame the appetite of many other chiefs.

The price of loyalty went up very high. A gift of one chief sometimes reached one hundred thousand dirhams and sometimes hundreds of thousands of dirhams (a dirham is equivalent to \$2.00)

We have mentioned in the twenty-first chapter that Khalid Ibn Oseid (from the Umayyads) came to visit Uthman while heading a delegation. The Caliph gave him three hundred thousand dirhams. He also gave every member of the delegation one hundred thousand.⁷ This took place while the Third Caliph was ruling the whole Muslim World without any competitors where he did not need to purchase people's loyalty.

Should the number of the chiefs (who were to be paid for their loyalty) reach one thousand it would have required about one hundred million dirhams. Had the Imam opened on himself the door of gifts the eighth of the Zakat and the half of the fifth would not have been sufficient to satisfy the appetites of the chiefs. Nor would the whole fifth be enough.

We should not forget that the spoils of the war during the time of the Imam were not very abundant because the Islamic revenues were decreased during the years of his reign due to the civil wars.

Furthermore had the Imam wanted to open the door of gifts on himself he would have had to compete with Muawiya for purchasing the loyalty of the chiefs. This meant that he would have had to give most of the public funds for pleasing the chiefs and deprive the masses of the people of their shares in the public

funds. This is what the faith of Islam does not allow nor would Ibn Abu Talib do.

Was it politically sound?

It may be said that the Imam should have done that even if it were not permissible in the faith of Islam under normal circumstances. The Imam had to do that in compliance with the rule of necessity. In other words the Imam had two alternatives.

He had either to observe justice in distributing the public funds then he would lose the caliphate and the Muslims would lose the Righteous Caliphate forever or he would preserve his caliphate and sacrifice justice in distribution of the funds for a few years until he prevails against his opponents and reaches a peaceful time. By this he could preserve for Islam its future and for the Muslims the Righteous Caliphate for a long time.

These two duties were competing with each other. But securing a good future for Islam is more important than observing justice in distribution. It would be forbidden in Islam to give priority to the important above the more important. Why did the Imam give priority to the important above the more important?

It would be easy for a person who does not analyze the events of history and its factors to criticize the policy of the Imam without taking into consideration what the circumstances and the principles of the Imam were dictating at that time.

An objective criticism requires more than this superficial thinking. To try to understand the events which filled the period of the caliphate of the Imam we have to take into consideration the following factors:

The Islamic principles which the Imam was trying to live up to were expected to limit a great deal of his freedom of action.

The hard circumstances which preceded his election had accompanied his reign and continued to escalate the revolution during his era.

In addition to this we ought to consider the unlimited freedom of action which his opponents enjoyed due to their lack of principles.

The Imam was elected after an insane revolution which brought the life of the Third Caliph to an end. The source of the revolution was the policy of the Third Caliph in handling the public funds and preferring his relatives and friends allowing them vast lands and granting them hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of dirhams from the Islamic treasury.

The rebellious groups were seeking through revolution to reform the situation and to bring the nation back to its right road and to prevent the minority from enriching itself at the expense of the millions of

Muslims. These rebels and those who shared their opinion from among the Muslims were the ones who prepared the election of the Imam.

These rebellious ones were in agreement with the Imam concerning justice in the distribution of the public funds.

They elected the Imam and pledged their loyalty to him on the condition that they would follow the Book of God and the precepts of the Messenger of God. The Imam would not have accepted their election on any other basis. These were the supporters of the truth and the representatives of the reformatory camp of the Muslim World.

Had the Imam reversed his attitude by following a policy of appeasement and purchasing the loyalty of people with public funds he would not have benefited politically. He would rather have lost the unity of his camp at the beginning of his reign and his supporters would have stood away from him as they did from Uthman.

History records that when the Imam appointed Abdullah Ibn Al-Abbas governor of Basra and his brother Obeidullah a governor of Yemen Malik Al-Ashtar with all his loyalty to the Imam said to him "Why did we kill the old man yesterday?"

He meant that the revolution which brought the life of Uthman to an end was caused by his policy of preference.⁸ What would be the attitude of Al-Ashtar and others like him if the Imam had tried to purchase the loyalty of the chiefs of the tribes through public funds.

The majority of those who opposed him later from among his followers after the war of Siffin were not from the people of selfish interests. The Seceders who opposed him after the war of Siffin were the most remote people from materialism. They were radical immaterialists and excessive in keeping away from all selfish interests.

They were enemies of the policy of appeasement and of purchasing loyalty. Their excessiveness is what made them antagonize the Imam and fight him.

Of course there were among the followers of the Imam some hypocrites such as Ashaath. Yet it is not substantiated that the resentment of these people towards the Imam and their conspiracy with his enemy against him was the result of their materialism.

It is not substantiated that the Imam was able to purchase the loyalty of these people by gifts or bribery. In fact many were working with the Imam's opponents for no materialistic gain or a position they were seeking or wanted. They were doing that only because their sympathy was with his opponents. Take for example Abu Musa Al-Ashari whom the Imam appointed governor of Kufa the most important province in the Islamic State. He was able to preserve his position for the duration of the Imam's caliphate by co-operating with him.

He chose to stand against the Imam and tried to prevent people from supporting him though he knew that this would put his own position in jeopardy. This shows that he did not oppose him for a material gain nor for a position. He did that only because he disliked the Imam and liked his opponents.

I think that the attitude and motives of Ashaath and others like him towards the Imam were like the attitude and motives of Abu Musa towards the Imam. However the Imam was not able to purchase the loyalty of Ashaath and others even if their loyalty was for sale. It was not possible for the Imam as a man of principle or a flexible statesman to purchase their loyalty.

Many companions and sincere followers of Islam would have opposed him and he would have expedited the hostility of the extremists such as the leaders who became Seceders later for reasons much less than the mismanagement or embezzlement of public funds.

Ashaath by himself would not have been able to bring the war of Siffin to its end if he did not have the support of extremist readers who later became Seceders. Only through their support he was able to do damage to the Imam and the Muslim world though Ashaath and the Seceders had different motives behind the attitude which they shared. The religious fanaticism of these leaders made them consider the rejection of the invitation to the Holy Qur'an a great sin and this attitude gave Ashaath the effectiveness which brought the Battle of Siffin to its saddening end.

Thus an objective look at the circumstances which preceded the election of the Imam and the foundation on which his election was based and the elements of which his supporters were composed would prove that the policy which he followed in distributing the public funds was not only righteous but also the wisest course he could take.

Thus the principles for which he lived and endeavored and the circumstances which surrounded him dictated the same policy which he chose.

Had the Imam followed what these critics suggested he would have lost politically and militarily and the Islamic history would have lost the only example of the idealism which was embodied in the person of the Imam.

[1.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 77.

[2.](#) Ibn Hisham Al-Seerah Al-Nabaweyah (Biography of the Prophet) part 2 pp.493-494..

[3.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 102.

[4.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p.77.

[5.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p.77.

[6.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf part 1 of volume 4 p.75.

[7.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 193.

[8.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 53.

29. Was the War of Siffin Inevitable?

"And I am to the Messenger of God like a tree to another tree coming from one trunk and I am to him like a lower arm to the upper arm. By God if all the Arabs combine their efforts in combating me I would not turn my back to them... And I shall endeavor to purify the earth from this inverted person until the soil is separated from the grain."[1](#)

"By God if I confront them while they are filling the land I would not be concerned; nor would I feel lonely. I am with assurance from myself and certainty from my Lord through which I see the falsehoods to which my opponents adhere and the guidance which I follow. I am expecting to meet my Lord and hoping for His reward. I am saddened to expect the affairs of this nation to be administered by its wicked foes. They shall distribute the revenue of God among themselves and enslave His servants. They shall oppress the righteous and befriend the transgressors."[2](#)

Had 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib been a politician whose main concern was to come to power and enjoy authority unconcerned with what will happen to the future generations he could have easily gained Muawiya's support by keeping him as governor of Syria and promising him to be his successor. This would have relieved the Imam from combating him and would have secured his loyalty and assistance.

Men who are in love with authority are always ready to pay the price regardless of its magnitude because authority to them is more valuable than any price they pay. Our Imam was not from these Authority by itself did not have in his view any value.

Therefore he was not ready to pay for the authority a price which he considered more valuable than the authority. History witnessed the Imam 'Ali losing the caliphate when it was offered to him at the conclusion of the Electoral Convention because he refused to pay its price.

The price which he refused to pay was not more than one word by which he promises Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf to follow the first two Caliphs in matters where he finds no instruction from the Holy Qur'an or the precepts of the Holy Prophet.[3](#)

He refused to pay for the caliphate that small price because he believed that he was more knowledgeable in the Islamic Law than the two outstanding companions.

He believed also that their precepts were marred by errors which he did not legalize for himself to follow.

As he refused to offer for the leadership a promise to follow the ways of two brilliant companions he would not be expected to grant Muawiya the man of a terrible past what he seeks in order to enjoy a peaceful leadership.

The Imam was not a conventional politician whose main concern is to come to power. He was rather a

unique statesman. Had not 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib existed the Islamic ideals after the Messenger would have remained subjective without being embodied completely in a human being.

Security for all Muslim generations against religious deviation was the goal which the Imam was trying to accomplish through leadership. That goal could be summarized as follows: 1. To make justice prevalent in society regardless of the religious elements from which it may be composed and retrieving for the nation and individuals what was acquired by the elites through exploitations.

To enforce Islamic law so that the adherence to the Islamic principles becomes second nature to the Muslims individually and collectively.

To facilitate understanding of the Holy Qur'an and instructions of the Prophet for the followers of the Faith of Islam.

To try to spread Islam throughout the world by making the true Islamic teaching known to all nations.

In other words the Imam wanted to realize what the Holy Prophet wanted when he tried to dictate a document for his nation that his nation will never stray after it. The political circumstances of the nation had led the nation to deviate from the safe road in the past.

Finally the Imam who represented in the eyes of the Messenger the security for the nation against deviation has come to power. His duty is to realize that security for the nation and this was within his reach if the nation obeys him. He is the most knowledgeable in the Book of God and the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

He was the most concerned person with spreading the teaching of the Faith of Islam and the spirit of adherence to that teaching. He by the testimony of the Messenger and the outstanding companions is the most qualified to direct the nation to the right and clear road after the Messenger. He was after the Prophet the bravest and firmest person who ever walked on earth.

The Imam believed that retaining Muawiya within his regime contradicts what he was trying to accomplish.

Muawiya by his nature was opportunist exploiter materialistic and unprincipled. With his wiliness and power Muawiya was the most dangerous among the opportunists. The Imam was right when he thought that retaining Muawiya in the rule of Syria will enable him to rule the Muslim world. And this was not all the danger.

The bigger danger was the expected continuity of the leadership in the house of Umayyad and rotation of the caliphate in their dynasty. The bigger danger was the expected continuity of the leadership in the house of Umayyad and rotation of the caliphate in their dynasty.

The Umayyad period proved later that the Imam was right in his thinking. The rule of Muawiya and the

rest of the Umayyads was the antithesis of the Imam's goal. It represented the usurpation of the people's right their exploitation shedding the blood of the innocent and the defiance of the Islamic Laws. This resulted with the weakening of the Islamic Spirit in the successive generations.

The war of Siffin the assassination of Hijr Ibn Uday and his righteous companions for their refusal to repudiate the religion of 'Ali the massacre of Karbala and the defamation of the Imam on the pulpits of the Muslim World for eighty-three years were some of the traits of the Umayyad anti-Islam rule.

Mughirah And Ibn Abbas

History recorded that Mughirah Ibn Shu-abah Al-Thaqafi came to the Imam after he was elected and advised him to keep Muawiya in his office at least temporarily. The Imam refused his advice. On the following day Mughirah came to the Imam admitting that he was mistaken and advised the Imam to dismiss Muawiya.

Ibn Abbas witnessed Mughirah coming out of the house of the Imam while he himself was about to enter the house of the Imam. When Ibn Abbas met the Imam he asked him about Mughirah's visit. The Imam informed him of Mughirah's two contradictory opinions. Ibn Abbas commented that Mughirah was genuine in his first advice deceptive in his second advice. He affirmed that the wise policy is to keep Muawiya in his post at least temporarily and it would be easy for the Imam to dismiss him after he joins his electors. The Imam refused to retain Muawiya in his post because he did not want to deviate from his principles which do not permit him to keep Muawiya in his post for two days.⁴

It appeared to many past and present historians that what Ibn Abbas and Mughirah counseled the Imam to do was right. Had the Imam accepted their advice he would not have had to wage the war of Siffin and he could have dismissed Muawiya later and the reign of the Imam could have been peaceful instead of being filled with civil wars.

Naive Opinion

I believe that those who hold this opinion were not able to estimate the fore-sightedness of the Imam and his awareness of Muawiya's intention. At the same time they underestimated the wiliness of Muawiya and his alertness. Ibn Abbas and Mughirah both were mistaken.

The Imam had seen through the light of God and his super mental capability years before he was elected that the Umayyads will come to power and that they will rotate the leadership among them. He spoke of that during the days of the Electoral Convention before Uthman was elected. At that time he said to his uncle Abbas. "I know that they will elect Uthman and if he is assassinated or dies the children of Umayyad will rotate the caliphate among them; and if I am alive they will find me where they dislike."⁵

The Progress of the events indicated to the people of wisdom and understanding that the Umayyads

were going to come to power. 'Umar appointed Muawiya as governor of Damascus then he widened his authority by adding Jordan to Damascus. He kept him in that post for the duration of his reign.

This made Muawiya so strong that the Caliph after he was stabbed warned the members of the Electoral Convention not to dispute with each other; otherwise Muawiya may prevail against them and take the leadership away from them. Should such a word reach Muawiya it would inflame his ambition towards the caliphate and make him expect the day when he becomes able to snatch the leadership from the hands of the outstanding companions.

Al-Tabari also reported this in his History part 4 p.230.

[Muawiya's Long Preparation](#)

Muawiya realized that he could not come to power through a natural course. The caliphate in the eyes of the Muslims was only for the outstanding companions who adopted the faith of Islam at the early stage and offered many sacrifices during the days of the Prophethood when the faith of Islam was at its primary stage of spreading.

Muawiya was not one of those people. As a matter of fact Muawiya and Abu Sufyan the father of Muawiya and the majority of the Umayyads except Uthman Abu Huthifa and Khalid Ibn Al-Aws were the front line of the enemies of the Messenger. They were waging against him and his religion war after war trying to eliminate Islam and its Messenger. They refused to adopt Islam until the Messenger conquered Meccab and Islam became their only means for saving their lives.[6](#)

For the Muslims to move the caliphate from the early companions of the Holy Prophet to the enemy of the prophet they had to reverse themselves insanely or the enemies of the Messenger would reach the caliphate by force. Muawiya was not nearer to the caliphate than his father Abu Sufyan.

However time was not ungenerous to the son of Abu Sufyan with opportunities. Uthman came to power and his caliphate revived the hopes of the Umayyads and made them nearer to their dreams. Uthman as we mentioned (in chapter 21) through the two sides of his personality represented a potential bridge through which the caliphate may cross from the early righteous companions of the Holy Prophet to the Umayyads the people of the dark past.

Uthman was from the early companions. At the same time he was an Umayyad and he loved his cousins a great deal. His love for them would cause him to move the caliphate to one of his opportunist cousins and they would use him for reaching their goals.

The wily Abu Sufyan realized that as soon as Uthman was elected. He said to the members of the Umayyad clan while they were meeting at the house of the new Caliph:

"Make the caliphate alternate among you. By the one in whose name Abu Sufyan swears there is no

Paradise and no Hell..."[7](#)

It is possible that the new Caliph was not present when Abu Sufyan uttered that profane statement or that the Caliph admonished and chided him but these words actually expressed the thinking of the Umayyads and what they were trying to reach.

The caliphate of Uthman added to the power of Muawiya a much greater power than he had during the time of the Second Caliph. The area of his rule and influence was greatly widened to include Palestine Hums and Qinnisreen.[8](#)

Thus he became the governor of what may be called "The Greater Syria." It is true that the authority of Muawiya was growing during the days of 'Umar but it was under strong supervision of the Second Caliph. When Uthman took over the authority of Muawiya was freed of all supervision and by widening the area of his influence Muawiya emerged as the most powerful ruler in the Muslim World. He became stronger than the Caliph.

The Caliph began to resort to him in punishing his opponents in Hijaz and Iraq by sending them to Syria and putting them under the supervision of the strong man of the Muslim State.[9](#)

Muawiya was not the man who neglects opportunities. He was the kind of person who seizes every opportunity and gets out of it the utmost benefits. He started to establish his rule and lay the foundation of his future since the days of 'Umar. He went on attracting the chiefs of the tribes through his generous gifts and mobilizing whomever he was able to mobilize until he possessed the strongest striking force in the Muslim World. One hundred thousand supported by an equal number from their sons and servants were paid annually from the Islamic treasury in Syria.[10](#)

Muawiya found in Uthman his means to the caliphate. He was his cousin and his beloved. It was very likely that Uthman would appoint him as his successor if peace continued during the reign of Uthman.

When the situation changed and the political atmosphere became grim showing that the signs of violence evil and tragedy were creeping near the Caliph Muawiya wanted to make out of the difficulties of the Caliph a means which would bring him quickly to his goal.

Muawiya Refused to Protect Uthman

Muawiya invited Uthman when the danger surrounded him to move to Damascus ostensibly for the purpose of shielding the Caliph against danger.[11](#) His actual motive was to put the Caliph under his protection. Thus Uthman would keep the name of the caliphate and Muawiya would be the actual caliph and at the end Uthman will appoint Muawiya his successor.

The Caliph did not respond to the invitation. Muawiya however was capable of preventing the tragedy from reaching the Caliph by sending an army to Medina in order to defend the Caliph. He did not do that

though the Caliph asked for his military assistance. [12](#) Muawiya chose to hand his cousin to the knife of the revolution. He refused to assist him militarily. [13](#)

He thought rightly that Uthman's death would give him a pretext to seek avenge for the blood of the victim Caliph. By this he would excite the masses of the people and take them out of their sound thinking and transfer the Muslim World to an insane situation which brings Muawiya to what he wanted.

Forecast Rule

In addition to the helpful opportunities and the continuous preparations which made Muawiya close to his goal he heard many prophecies supporting his thinking and made his wish to reach the caliphate strong and full of life.

Ibn Al-Athir recorded that while Uthman was coming back from pilgrimage accompanying Muawiya who was riding a blond mule a man uttered some poetry indicating that the successor of Uthman would be 'Ali then Al-Zubayr.

But Kaab Al-Ahbar (a Rabbi who adopted Islam) said to the poet: You have lied. The one who will succeed the Caliph is the rider of the blond mule. [14](#) Muawiya became ambitious since that time. The fact is that his ambition did not start at that time.

Muawiya heard similar to this from the person who was much truer than Kaab Al-Ahbar. I do not believe that Kaab Al-Ahbar found the caliphate of Muawiya in the Jewish books as he tried to pretend. He actually found that through statements of some companions who heard from the Holy Prophet (one of them was Abu Dharr) who was known for his truth and to this the Holy Prophet had testified. [15](#)

Abu Uthman Al-Jahith in his book Al-Safyaneyah recorded that Jallam Ibn Jandal Al-Ghifari attended a dialogue between Muawiya and Abu Dharr after Uthman exiled Abu Dharr to Damascus.

Muawiya said to Abu Dharr: "Enemy of God and enemy of His Messenger you come every day and do what you are doing. If I were to kill a man from the companions of Muhammad without the permission of the Caliph Uthman I would have killed you."

Abu Dharr retorted saying to Muawayah: "I am not the enemy of God and His Messenger. You and your father are the enemies of God and His Messenger. You showed Islam and concealed disbelief. The Holy Messenger cursed you and prayed to God that you will never be cured of hunger. I heard the Messenger of God saying:

"When the big eyed with the broad throat the one who eats and never gets full becomes the ruler of this nation the nation should be alarmed." Muawiya said: "I am not that man." Abu Dharr said: "Yes you are that man."

The Messenger of God informed me of that and I heard him saying while you were passing: God curse him and make him not feel full except by soil..."[16](#)

Abu Dharr reported in the presence of Uthman that the Messenger of God said: "When the children of Abu Al- Aws (the clan of Marwan from the Umayyads) become thirty men they will distribute the revenue of God among themselves and enslave the servants of God and interpolate the religion of God."[17](#)

'Umar said to Mughirah Ibn Shu-abah (and this man was one eyed): "By God the Umayyads will make Islam one eyed as you are one eyed and they will blind it until Islam is unable to know where to go and where to come."[18](#)

'Umar also reported that he heard from the Messenger of God the following: "The children of Umayyad will ascend to my pulpit. I was shown them in my dream jumping on it like monkeys. About them the revelation came 'And We did not make the vision which you have seen but a trial to people and the cursed tree in the Holy Qur'an..."[19](#)

Fakhr Al-Deen Al-Razi in his commentary on this verse recorded that Sa-eed Ibn Al-Musayab said: "The Messenger of God saw in his dream the children of Umayyad jumping on his pulpit like monkeys and that saddened him."

Al-Razi said: "This is the opinion of Ibn Abbas according to the hadith of Ata."[20](#) He reported also that Ibn Abbas said that the cursed tree is Banu Umayyad meaning Al-Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Aws. Ibn Abbas said: "The Messenger of God saw in his dream that the children of Marwan were alternating on his pulpit and he informed Abu Bakr and 'Umar of his dream while they were with him at his house. When they left the Messenger of God heard Al-Hakam speaking of the dream of the Messenger.

The Holy Prophet became angry and suspected that 'Umar betrayed his secret. Then it appeared later that Al-Hakam was spying on them. The Prophet exiled him..."[21](#)

Al-Hakim reported that Imam Al-Hassan Ibn 'Ali said to a man from his companions: "Blame me not (for abdicating the caliphate); may God have His Mercy upon you. The Messenger of God saw in his dream the children of Umayyad speaking on his pulpit one after the other. This saddened him and it was revealed to him in the chapter of Glory:

"We have revealed it (The Qur'an) during the Night of Glory and what did make you know the Night of Glory. The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months (in which the children of Umayyads rule the nation."[22](#)

From all this we may understand the meaning of the word of the Imam to his uncle during the days of the Electoral Convention: "I know that they will elect Uthman...if he is killed or he dies the children of Umayyad will alternate it among them..."[23](#)

No doubt the Imam heard from the Messenger concerning Uthman and the Umayyads in general and

Muawiya in particular more than 'Umar Abu Dharr and others heard from the Prophet about them.

The Imam said after the Battle of Basra when Marwan was brought to him to renew his pledge of allegiance to the Imam: "What shall I do with his pledge? Did he not pledge in Medina? If he pledges his loyalty to me by his hand he will betray it by his back."

When Marwan left the Imam said: "He will have a rule as short as a dog's licking its nose. He is the father of the four Rams. The nation will have through him and his children a bloody day."[24](#)

Thus Muawiya had prepared himself eighteen years for his goal. He seized every opportunity and acquired out of it its utmost benefits and heard what was conveyed to him of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet concerning the Umayyads and concerning him. It was only naive on the part of Ibn Abbas or others to think that keeping Muawiya in his post temporarily would give the Imam the opportunity to dismiss him easily without a bloody war.

'Ali would not have attempted to deceive Muawiya and if he wanted to do that he would not have succeeded.

Muawiya was too wily to be dissuaded of his goal. Had the Imam 'Ali followed the advice of Ibn Abbas and Mughirah the Imam would have deceived only himself.

I believe that the two advisors with all their intelligence and wiliness had underestimated the knowledge of the Imam about Muawiya and the Imam's wisdom and his farsightedness as they underestimated the wiliness of Muawiya and his determination. Historians who shared Ibn Abbas and Mughirah's opinion committed the same mistake.

The Imam could have earned peace with Muawiya by keeping him in his position for the duration of his life and appointing him his successor. But if the Imam had done that he would have acquired a personal gain at the expense of everything he had stood for.

He was fully aware that Muawiya could not be trusted with the religion of God and the Islamic nation. The Imam said one time. "I have thought about alternatives concerning Muawiya. I found only two of them: either to fight him or to reject what was revealed to Muhammad."[25](#)

Was Umayyad's rule inevitable?

It may be said that if the Holy Prophet had informed his nation that the Umayyads will come to power why did the Imam fight Muawiya while he knew that Muawiya would prevail? What is the benefit of shedding blood if the consequence which the Imam wanted to avoid was the same consequence which God had predetermined for him?

The fact is that the Prophet did not inform 'Ali or the rest of the companions that the rule of the

Umayyads was inevitable and predestined from Heaven and that the will of man has no value in that affair. Actually the opposite is true. The Holy Messenger wanted to inform his nation that its failure to protect Islam against the Umayyads' conspiracy shall bring the Umayyads to power and make them rule the nation. This was a warning from the Messenger to his nation aimed at advising the nation to take the necessary measures to prevent this from happening.

The Holy Prophet prescribed to the nation the measures which shield the nation against this danger and all dangers of deviations.

The prescribed measures were the adherence to the Holy Qur'an and the leadership of the members of the House of the Prophet. He said to the nation that this represents the security against deviation. Had the nation followed the prescription of the Prophet the Umayyads could not have come to power and the nation would have been secured against any faith-testing crises.

It was unfortunate that the nation did not heed the Messenger's warnings and did not take the steps which he prescribed. The nation actually disregarded the second part of the advice completely. It took the opposite road which led the nation into what the Messenger warned against.

The Imam was the only leader who wanted to shield the nation against the danger of the Umayyads. Had 'Umar done the least in this field he could have prevented that danger. The Imam 'Ali was required to wage a bloody war against Muawiya in order to protect the nation against his danger.

The Second Caliph could have shielded the nation against Muawiya's danger by avoiding his appointment or dismissing him after he appointed him or selecting 'Ali instead of Uthman who came to power through the arrangement of the Electoral Convention. This is what brought the Umayyads to power.

I would like to add that all these events did not constitute a determining factor in preventing the Imam from subduing Muawiya and reaching a peaceful reign. Even after all these events took place it was possible for the Imam to rid the nation of Muawiya and to subdue him or dismiss him. Had "Om Al-Mu'mineen" (Ayeshah) and the two outstanding companions Talhah and Al-Zubayr co-operated with the Imam and urged the Muslims to help him instead of revolting against him Muawiya would have surrendered to the Imam with humility.

Had the three leaders done that instead of starting the fire of rebellion the rule of the Imam would have been stabilized and the Muslims would have been spared all the civil wars which were inflamed during the first century after the death of the Prophet. Unfortunately the three leaders took the opposite road and led the nation into what the Messenger warned against.

The Battle of Basra made peace with Muawiya unavailable to the Imam as it made the war with Muawiya inevitable unless the Imam denies all his principles. The Battle of Basra made it clear to Muawiya that he was not the only one who was opposed to the Imam and that people outside Syria shared with him his

opinion and legalized war against 'Ali and that they did not see it wrong to shed blood for the sake of his opposition.

The Battle itself created the Imam's enemies who were silenced temporarily by his victory but they were ready to rejoin his enemies as soon as the opportunity permitted. This opportunity came after that and they rushed into it.

The Battle of Siffin was truly inevitable. Yet it was not Heavenly predestined because man's will had played a very important role. Had the Iraqi people listened to the Imam and followed him to the end of the road it would not have been necessary for the nation to surrender to the authority of the Umayyads and they would have spared the future generations many terrible evils.

Thus the authority of the Umayyads in spite of being predicted by the Holy Prophet was not a Heavenly predestined event. It was only a result of the refusal of the nation to take the right medicine which was prescribed by the Holy Prophet. Certainly the nation continued to refuse it until the end.

I would like to add that the Imam was duty-bound to take the road which he chose even if the Umayyad authority were predestined. The position of the Imam was like the position of many prophets who endeavored in the way of God and died in their endeavor without reaching their aim of making the word of God triumphant.

I do not believe that the Prophet Muhammad would have discontinued his endeavor if he had known that he would not win his struggle against his pagan enemies. Had he known that he would have entered and continued the battle of truth to its end. This is what he declared to his uncle Abu Talib:

"Uncle by God if they put the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left hand to abandon this mission I will not abandon it until God makes it triumphant or I perish in it."

The war which the Imam waged was a preventive measure against the Umayyad danger. It was an imperative duty rested upon his shoulders after he found supporters for his message and mission ready to sacrifice. Had he not done that he would have been negligent in discharging the trust and he would have been an accomplice in the injustice deviation and sins of the Umayyads. For his message and mission ready to sacrifice. Had he not done that he would have been negligent in discharging the trust and he would have been an accomplice in the injustice deviation and sins of the Umayyads.

- [1.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 3 p.73.
- [2.](#) The Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 3 p. 120.
- [3.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.37.
- [4.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil, part 3, p. 101.
- [5.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.36.
- [6.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 14.
- [7.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol 2 p. 411.
- [8.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 57.
- [9.](#) Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 pp. 118-119.

- [10.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Abu Talib part 2 p. 120.
- [11.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 57.
- [12.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 59.
- [13.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 59.
- [14.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.73.
- [15.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p.334.
- [16.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.2 p.376.
- [17.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.2 p.377.
- [18.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.2 p.115.
- [19.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.2 p.115.
- [20.](#) Imam Fakhr Al-Razi his Detailed Commentary on The Holy Qur'an part 5 pp.413-414.
- [21.](#) Imam Fakhr Al-Razi his Detailed Commentary on The Holy Qur'an part 5 pp.413-414.
- [22.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 171.
- [23.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.230.
- [24.](#) Al-Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p. 124.
- [25.](#) Al-Imam 'Ali Nahjul-Balaghah part 1 p.94.

30. Did the Imam Exercise His Rule as a Preacher?

Some of the students of history think that one of the main reasons for the difficulties which the Imam encountered in his caliphate is that he did not exercise his rule as a ruler. He rather exercised his rule as a preacher. He was not firm with his opponents. He allowed them to oppose him and he was so lenient with them that they felt safe to confront him and disobey him.

Abdullah Ibn 'Umar and Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and others from the companions in Medina refused to elect him and he did not force them to change their vote as the Caliphs before him did. None of the three Caliphs allowed any companions to refrain from giving their allegiance to the Caliph. Al-Zubayr was forced to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr and Abu Bakr and his minister 'Umar applied a tremendous pressure on 'Ali himself to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr.

When Al-Zubayr and Talhah left Medina to Mecca pretending that they were going for Omrah (a mini pilgrimage) to visit the House of God the Imam knew that they were going to join the rebellious group in Mecca. ¹ In spite of knowing that he did not prevent the two companions from leaving Medina. It would have been wise on his part to jail the two companions until the situation became clear. Had he done that he would have spared himself and the Muslims many difficulties and sacrifices.

When he came back to Kufa after the battle of Siffin he should have punished Ashaath after he witnessed a great deal of evidence indicating the insincerity of Ashaath and his co-operation with his enemies. He did not do that and surrendered to Ashaath's pressure time after time. He postponed the

return to the Battle of Siffin and entered into the Battle of Nahrawan under Ashaath's pressure.

It would have been wise to keep Ashaath outside the battlefield from the beginning. When the Imam was elected Ashaath was still in his post in Persia as one of Uthman's appointees. When the Imam was about to leave to Siffin he dismissed Ashaath from his post. He according to some reports required Ashaath to pay some of the funds which he took from the public treasury then he accompanied him after he reformed him. Had Ashaath been left in his post the fanatic readers (of the Holy Qur'an) who called for acceptance of the arbitration would not have been able to impose arbitration.

A Winner of Three Wars Is Not Unfirm

It is absurd to say that the Imam did not exercise his rule as a ruler or that he exercised his rule as a preacher and that he did not seriously attempt to keep his authority after he obtained it. It is absurd to say that when we know that the Imam waged three wars against his opponents and defeated them completely at Basra annihilated his opponents at Nahrawan and confronted and almost crushed Muawiya and his army at the biggest battle the history of Islam ever witnessed until that day. A ruler who treated his enemies with such firmness should not be accused of practicing his rule as a preacher.

Why Did He Not Force Some Companions to Elect Him?

It is true that the Imam did not force Ibn 'Umar Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas and a number of companions to pledge their allegiance to him and allowed them to take a neutral position. But this is what the Islamic justice demands. It is not permissible for any elective government to force individuals to elect it. Election means authorization by choice. Thus pledging loyalty by force is the opposite of election. Therefore Islam declares that allegiance taken by force is forbidden and unbinding. It is one of the natural rights which the faith of Islam sanctifies that every human being has the right to exercise his political freedom and this is what the most advanced governments in this century sanctify.

When Al-Zubayr was forced to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr 'Ali considered such a coercion contrary to the principle of justice. Individuals and minorities have the right to disagree with the majority and the majority does not have the right to pressure the minority unless the minority attempts to prevent the majority from exercising its administration.

Should a minority try to prevent the majority from administering the affairs of the nation the majority would be duty-bound to subdue the minority when the election is sound. Saad and Ibn 'Umar and others did not try to prevent the Imam from exercising his rule as a caliph.

Why Did the Imam Not Prevent Talhah and Al-Zubayr from

Leaving Medina?

The Imam did not prevent the two companions from leaving Medina though he knew that they were going to declare an armed rebellion against him and he was right in doing that. It was not in the interest of the Imam to be accused of preventing two outstanding companions from offering a devotional visit to the House of God or to jail them for attempting to do that.

Ayeshah was ready to tell that to the Muslim World and to use such an action on the part of the Imam as an additional excuse for revolting against him.

Furthermore keeping the two companions in Medina would not prevent the Mother of Believers from starting a revolt against the Imam. Ayeshah was ready to start that revolt with or without the two companions.

She started her rebellion as soon as she received the news of the Imam's election and without knowing the attitude of the two companions toward him.² She had a large amount of funds and a good number of men to do that. The Umayyads and their followers were at her disposal and anxious to cooperate with her.³

Why Did He Not Continue the War in Siffin?

It is not fair to criticize the Imam for the discontinuation of the battle after the copies of the Holy Qur'an were hoisted. Had the majority of his army remained healthy and obedient to him such a criticism would have been justifiable. He could have been blamed if he had been among those who were deceived by the hoisting of the copies of the Holy Qur'an. But the Imam was the first to tell his army: "Go on with all your determination to fight your enemy."

He declared to them that hoisting the Holy Qur'an is only a deception and conspiracy. Muawiya and his supporters wanted to avoid a crushing defeat. He told them that he knew the leaders of the opposite camp as men and as children and they were the worst children and the worst men. They were not people of religion or Qur'an.⁴

He told them all that but they were already deceived and they were unable to see the truth. They defied him and threatened to do to him what they did to Uthman or to take him as a captive and deliver him to Muawiya. When they did that no voice in the army with which he was surrounded was raised against them. Thus the Imam was forced to withdraw Al-Ashtar and his division.⁵

Had the Imam continued the war a battle among elements of his army would have started instead of a battle between them and the enemy. As a matter of fact that battle was about to start between Al-Ashtar and the people of anti-war movement. He cursed them and they cursed him and they hit with their rods the face of his horse and he hit with his rod the faces of their horses but the Imam stopped their

arguments.[6](#)

Had such a battle started among the elements of the Imam's army it would have ended with a hastened catastrophe in which thousands of them would have perished. The hostility among the survivors of the expected battle would have been inflamed leaving no room for reuniting them to fight the enemy again.

Had the Imam insisted on continuing the war and refused to withdraw Al-Ashtar and his division from the battle all evidence indicated that the fanatics who surrounded the Imam were ready to assassinate him or hand him to Muawiya. This could have happened without the knowledge of Al-Ashtar and his division.

Had the Imam been killed at that time or at a battle that would have started afterwards between the two elements of his companions the catastrophe would have been much greater than we could imagine.

Why Did He Not Punish Ashaath?

I do not see any logical justification for criticizing the Imam because he accompanied Ashaath to Siffin or because he did not punish him when his insincerity and collaboration with the enemy became evident.

The Imam is a human being. He cannot know the future nor would he be able to foresee that Ashaath would conspire against him if he were in the army. To keep Ashaath away from the battlefield would not prevent the crisis of the arbitration.

The Seceders who were the main factor in the crisis were not from the followers of Ashaath. Thousands and thousands of fighters shared with the readers of the Qur'an their opinion believing that turning down the invitation of the arbitration was a major sin. Ashaath was not the only hypocrite among the followers of the Imam.

The Imam did not punish Ashaath after his insincerity became evident for two reasons: 1. Ashaath was an intelligent hypocrite. He was able to cover up his hypocrisy showing no evidence that would prove his conspiracy. There was at the time of the Messenger many hypocrites who declared Islam prayed and fasted and heard from the Messenger. (There is in the chapters of Al-Ahzab and Bara-ah the clearest evidence on that).

The Messenger knew a number of them. He did not punish the ones whom he knew because he did not find evidence that convicts them or because he hoped that they will reform and become good Muslims. Had he punished them a dispute among his followers might have erupted.

Therefore he preferred to leave them alone for the sake of unity among his companions.

Ashaath was not the only hypocrite in the Imam's camp. Probably there were hundreds and thousands of hypocrites who were feigning loyalty to the Imam and at the same time concealing hostilities towards him.

Ziyad Ibn Abeeh Shibth Ibn Rib-i and the hundreds from those who fought with the Imam then participated after that in fighting his son Al-Hussein represent physical evidence of the existence of a great number of hypocrites in the camp of the Imam.

The authority of the Imam after the Battle of Siffin was shrunk to a great degree. The rebellion of the majority against him after Muawiyah's camp hoisted the copies of the Holy Qur'an represented a military coup which left him authority in name only.

Had the Imam tried to punish Ashaath for his opposition to the continuation of the battle a large portion of the inhabitants of Kufa (who for one reason or another had attitudes similar to that of Ashaath) would have opposed the Imam.

Had the Imam punished Ashaath he would have offended thousands from the tribe of Kindah who used to consider Ashaath their leader. As a matter of fact Ashaath's punishment was expected to alienate the majority of the Kufites because they were of the Yemenites and so was Ashaath. The Imam after Siffin was not in need of more enemies and difficulties.

Why did the imam bind himself with a document which was forced upon him?

There are two important questions which demand answers:

All evidence indicates that the Imam did not stop the war and sign the document of arbitration willingly. He was forced to do that and it is known in the religion of Islam that a forced action is nil. A divorce or marriage or election by force would not be sound. And the rule is the same concerning the Pact of Arbitration.

This means that the document of arbitration was not binding to the Imam and that he had the right to disregard it. Furthermore his duty was to cancel it when its cancellation was expected to benefit the camp of truth. Since the Seceders reversed their attitude and tried to return to the battlefield the Imam should have returned to the war without waiting for the decision of the two arbiters.

As to the validity or invalidity of a pact I would like to say that a pact signed by a coerced person is nil if the signer signed it as an individual. When the coerced signer is a head of state and he signs a pact on behalf of Muslims he represents the pact would not be unsound unless the people whom he represented were coerced to accept the pact.

When they are the seeker of the pact the pact would be binding as soon as it is signed. The pact has to be honored even if a portion of the representees reverse their attitude towards the pact.

It is well known that the majority of the Imam's camp including the Seceders were not coerced to discontinue the fight and accept the arbitration. On the contrary they were the advocates of both.

Repudiation of the pact by the Seceders after it was signed does not relieve the Imam of his responsibility.

Furthermore reversal of the Seceders' attitude towards the contents of the pact does not necessarily make its breaching in the interest of the Imam or his camp.

The majority of the advocates of the pact continued their attitude thinking that obeying it is a duty and that they had to wait for the outcome of the arbitration. Had the Imam breached the pact which he signed he would have faced from the supporters of the document an opposition more violent than that of the Seceders and his position would have become more difficult than it was before signing the document. For the Imam to go back on a document he signed would only add to the Muslims' confusion.

It would have given Muawiya an argument against the Imam which the Imam would not be able to defeat. The history which today judges categorically in favor of the Imam would have hesitated or strayed in its judgment if the Imam had done that.

Why Did the Imam Prolong the Period of Arbitration?

The other question which seriously demands an answer is the following: We believe that the Imam was forced to accept the invitation for discontinuing the war and accepting the arbitration and accepting Abu Musa Al-Ashari and Ibn Al-Aws as arbiters. We know all that but what made the Imam prolong the period of arbitration for several months?

It was possible for the two arbiters to meet and to issue their judgment within a week or one month. It was possible for the Imam to stay with his army in Siffin until the two arbiters issued their decision. Had the Imam done that he would have prevented the development of the dispute and the difference between him and the Seceders who repented for their discontinuation of the war.

Had he shortened the period of arbitration he would have been able to return to the battle while accompanying the Seceders as soon as the two arbiters issued their decision. We should add to this the fact that the Imam was certain that their verdict would not be in his interest because the two arbiters were hostile to him.

The Seceders asked the Imam: Why did you prolong the period of arbitration? He answered: "We wanted to give the ignorant time so that he may know the facts. We wanted to give the one who knows the facts time so that he may become firmer in his belief. And we hoped that God may rectify the affairs of this nation (then the nation would not need to go back to war)."

Nevertheless it was possible for the affairs of the nation to be rectified and the nation would not have needed to go back to war if the two arbiters were expected to validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and to invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates and if Muawiya were of those who surrender to the rule of the Holy Qur'an.

But Muawiya fought the Imam knowing that his fight was a fight against the Holy Qur'an and against the prophet to whom the Holy Qur'an was revealed. Yet one of the two arbiters was as hostile to the Imam as Muawiya was. The other one (Abu Musa) was very ignorant and unfriendly towards the Imam. Neither of them was expected to say the truth.

Prolonging the time of the armistice could have added to the firmness of the faithful and enlightened the ignorant. For it gave people a longer time to think without being under the pressure of the events and the influence of emotion. But prolonging the armistice would also prolong the arguments among people escalate differences of the disputing elements in the Imam's camp relieve the enemy for a longer time and enable him to make a new mobilization for a new battle.

The question seems to assume that the Imam at the time of signing the armistice was aware of the future repentance of the Seceders for the guilt of discontinuation of the war and that he knew that they will change their attitude and call for the return to the war against Muawiya. Had the matter been so the Imam would not have needed to accept the invitation for arbitration and the whole event of arbitration would not have taken place.

This was not the case. The Seceders were very serious in demanding the cessation of hostility and acceptance of arbitration and they continued this way until the document was executed. They and others from the bigot readers were the power which forced the Imam to stop the war. They did not change their attitude until the document was signed by the two parties and became a pact in full.

The Seceders were not expected to change their attitude with such speed and move within three days from the extreme left to the extreme right. In the first two days they believed that continuation of war and rejection of arbitration represented a disbelief in the religion of God. Then they reversed themselves on the third day and believed that discontinuation of war and acceptance of arbitration represented a disbelief in the religion of God.

The Imam responded to their first demand which seemed to be the position of the majority of his camp. He executed the document and he was right in giving them and the rest of the nation a respite that continued a few months with which the matter could become clear to them after they were deceived and confused.

It was logical to expect that the situation would become clear to the Seceders and to others during the months of the armistice and particularly after the two arbiters issued their unjust and contradictory verdict. The Seceders however were not logical neither at the beginning nor at the end. It was impossible for any human mind to predict their extreme and fast changes of thinking. The Imam was not to be blamed because he could not predict the unseen future.

Suppose the Imam had shortened the period of the armistice for one month and stayed with his army in Siffin until the two arbiters issued their verdict then he called upon his army to return to war. Would that have satisfied the Seceders and reunited the Imam's camp?

The subsequent events make us expect the Seceders to refuse to return to war and that their attitude if they had stayed in Siffin would be similar to the attitude which they took in Iraq. The Imam actually called upon them to rejoin him in resumption of war after the two arbiters issued their verdicts. They refused to rejoin him accusing him of wanting to return to the war in order to avenge for himself because the verdict of the two arbiters did not come in his favor.⁷

Had the Imam shortened the time of armistice and remained in Siffin then tried to go back to war after the end of the arbitration the Seceders could have returned to Iraq waging a campaign of terror cutting the supplies of his army and killing whoever disagreed with them.

This was what they did after coming back from Siffin.⁸ No doubt the danger to the inhabitants of Iraq during his absence would have been greater than it was in his presence.

Thus prolonging the time of armistice and the return to Iraq was less dangerous than shortening it and staying in Siffin and returning to war without security forces to protect the innocent civilians of Iraq and the roads of supplies against the Seceders' attacks.

It was only rational on the part of the Imam to expect those who demanded cessation of hostility and the acceptance of arbitration to continue with their opinion and wait until the two arbiters issued their verdicts. Had they done that the screen of deception would have been removed when the two arbiters strayed from the right road and invalidated what the Holy Qur'an validated.

This would have motivated them to renew the war with a stronger determination clearer sight and bigger preparation. Had they done that it would not have been difficult for them while they were under the bravest leadership to defeat Muawiya and liberate Syria from his rule. Had they done that they could have secured for themselves the nation and its future generations the brightest future in which justice would be prevalent and the truth would be triumphant.

¹. Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.491 and p.444.

². Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 459.

³. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 106.

⁴. Al-Tabari his History part 5 pp. 48-49.

⁵. Al-Tabari his History part 5 pp. 48-49.

⁶. Al-Tabari his History part 5 pp. 48-49.

⁷. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 171.

⁸. Al-Tabari his History part 5 pp.81-82.

31. Why did the reign of the Imam not last long?

Many historians and writers criticized the policy of the Imam and considered it extremely idealistic and

unrealistic. At the same time these critics appeared to be so impressed with the intelligence of Muawiya and his wiliness that they considered him a statesman of the highest rank.

Critics of this kind usually look at consequences instead of looking at the circumstances which brought about those consequences.

The best way to reach an objective judgement in comparing the two men is to suppose that they had exchanged their circumstances places and times as well as their posts and their qualities except wisdom intelligence and bravery. Let us suppose:

1. 'Ali was a non -Hashimite Qureshite and he was not responsible for the death of many Qureshites at the Islamic defensive battles during the prophethood era.
2. That he was the governor of Syria since the early portion of 'Umar's caliphate.
3. That he remained in his post for about eighteen years. Thus the roots of his authority and policy were spread and deepened in Syria.
4. That the people of Syria were the same people at that time in their obedience and unity.
5. That he was an opportunist unconcerned with ideal principles and that he was concerned only with his selfish materialistic benefits allowing himself to acquire those benefits through any means including purchasing people's conscience with public funds assassination betrayals lies and killing righteous and innocent people.
6. That the Qureshites who represented the influential aristocracy in the Muslim World loved and supported him.

On the other hand let us also suppose:

1. That Muawiya was a Hashimite responsible for many Qureshite deaths.
2. That he became caliph after the death of Uthman when the unity of the Muslims was broken.
3. That Quraish hated him because he was responsible for the death of many Qureshites.
4. That Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr accused him of the assassination of Uthman and turned a great number of Iraqi people against him and waged against him a costly war in which thousands died.
5. That he stayed in Kufa only a short period after that bloody war.
6. That the people of Iraq were the same people at that time in arguments disputes extremism and disobedience.
7. That Muawiya was a man of principle concerned with the Hereafter as much as with the present life or

more so he would not compromise his principles for his selfish interests. Nor would he allow himself to use any means which are not in accord with the Islamic Law.

Then let us suppose that the two men met at a battle such as the battle of Siffin and each one had what he had of intelligence wisdom and bravery; 'Ali with his unusual bravery and Muawiya with his weakness and cowardice.

What would be the outcome? The answer is not difficult. 'Ali is the triumphant and Muawiya is the loser politically and militarily.

Even if we delete the 7th condition for Muawiya and suppose that the two men were equally opportunistic unbound by any principles Muawiya would be the loser politically and militarily. This is because the roots of his authority would not have been spread and deepened in the land of Iraq due to the shortage of his time in Iraq and to the fact that the Iraqi people were not united and inclined by their nature towards arguments dispute and disobedience.

This would be clear when we remember that Muawiya was about to meet a crushing defeat at the Battle of Siffin while he Was leading the obedient people of Syria. What would have been the situation if he had had to lead the argumentative and disobedient people of Iraq against the obedient people of Syria?

In fact we find that Muawiya after the Imam was assassinated and after he became the ruler of Iraq was not able to control Iraq except through the Syrian army. Had he not possessed that populous base along with its obedient army he would not have been able to continue ruling Iraq in spite of his lack of principles and abundance of opportunities. What would be his fate if he were a man of principle scrupulous in his religion and deprived of a firm populous base and an obedient army?

The historical events during the Umayyad period have proven that the ruler of Iraq during that period regardless of his opportunism and lack of all principles would not be able to continue ruling Iraq except through a non-Iraqi task force to which he resorts when a crisis erupts. Al- Hajjaj Ibn Yousef Al-Thaqafi with all his harshness tyranny and extravagance in blood shedding was not able to retain his authority except through the Syrian army.

Had he not had the Syrian military recruits he would have fallen under the blows of the Seceder Shabeeb and his army.

From this we come to the following conclusion: For a ruler to be able to retain his authority he has to possess two important elements:

1. A firm and well-established populous base.
2. An obedient military force capable of supporting him; otherwise his authority would be unstable.

If we know this we would be able to put our hands on the factors which contributed to the turbulence

which persisted in the Imam's era and hastened its end. The two above mentioned elements: The firm populous base and the obedient military force were unavailable to the Imam.

The sequel of events which took place during the period between the death of the Messenger and the Imam's election made the two elements beyond his reach.

Ali did not have the two elements

‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib was logically expected to be the closest person after the Messenger to the hearts of the followers of the Messenger. He is his cousin his son-in-law and the one whom he "brothered." He was after the Prophet the most faithful and the most knowledgeable among the Prophet's companions and the most adherent to the Prophet's teaching.

Thus the Muslims who were the followers of the Messenger were and are expected to be genuinely loyal to ‘Ali responsive to his call and obedient to his order more than they were obedient to others. It would have been only natural for ‘Ali to have the two necessary elements for retaining and expanding his authority.

The events of history however did not take their logical sequel. They were rather directed through emotional motives partisan and tribal bigotry and went on through a road opposite of the logical expectation.

The Jealousy of Quraish

The Qureshites refused while Muhammad was in Mecca to respond to his invitation or to acknowledge his prophethood. They knew Muhammad very well. They knew his trustworthiness and truthfulness. The main factor which made Qureshites take such a negative attitude was their jealousy of Hashim the clan of the Messenger.

They thought that recognition of his prophethood meant recognition of the superiority of the Hashimites above the rest of the Qureshite clans the rest of the Arab tribes and the rest of the nations.

The Qureshites refused to acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad besieged him and his clan and used against him their means of pressure and threat then plotted to assassinate him. They forced him to leave his hometown to Medina. When their scheme of assassination failed they resorted to military confrontation.

The Messenger the members of his House and his companions stood up defending their freedom and sacred principles against the numerous pagan forces and Qureshite tribes were his main pagan enemy. Motivated by their jealousy they continued their attempts to annihilate the Messenger and his followers.

‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib was the right hand of the Prophet in all those battles. He was the leader of the

defenders and the most efficient in facing the enemy. His strong defense in the battles of destiny cost the Qureshites many lives.

Thus the Qureshite clans held him responsible for the blood of their sons' brothers and relatives. By this the Qureshites added a new rancor to their glowing jealousy against the Hashimites in general and inflamed grudges against 'Ali in particular.

Quraish Retains its Influence and Grudges

Mecca was conquered during the eighth year after the Hijra. Thus the Qureshites declared their Islam after they lost all hopes of obtaining victory against the Prophet. By this the bloody struggle of Quraish against the Messenger and his message came to an end; yet the grudge of the Qureshites against 'Ali did not come to an end, nor did the influence of Quraish in the Arab society diminish.

The Messenger attempted to secure for the nation a future in which the nation enjoys security against deviation. That security was a combination of two elements: The Holy Qur'an and a righteous wise and thoroughly knowledgeable leadership that walks through the Prophet's path. The Messenger saw that 'Ali and the rest of the members of his House were the ones who possessed the needed qualifications.

Therefore he declared to the Muslims that 'Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses¹ and that he is the Mawla (guardian) of every believer.² He informed them also that he is leaving in them that which if they uphold they will never go astray the Book of God and the members of his House. He told them that God informed him that the Holy Qur'an and the members of his House will not part with each other until the Day of Judgment.

Beware he said to the nation how you treat them after me.³ By this declaration the Prophet wanted to establish 'Ali's leadership and to purify the Qureshites' hearts from the pre-Islamic grudges and replace these grudges with the Islamic brotherhood.

Feeling that he was about to depart from this world and that grudges and jealousy may prevent 'Ali from reaching the leadership of the nation after him the Prophet wanted to take a precautionary measure against what he feared. He decided to send an army headed by Osamah Ibn Zayd Ibn Harithah to Palestine. There was no immediate danger that motivated the Holy Prophet to send that army.

Yet he urged outstanding companions such as Abu Bakr 'Umar Abu Obeidah and Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas to be in the expedition. He evidently intended to send the ambitious companions away from Medina so that 'Ali would take over without difficulty.

The outstanding migrant companions disliked leaving Medina when they knew that the Prophet had fallen ill and had a high fever. The Holy Prophet attempted several times to send them away saying time after time "implement the expedition of Osama." But the companions refused to leave and waited.⁴

Unwritten Will

The Prophet witnessed the reluctance of his companions to leave Medina. Therefore he wanted to decide in the matter and leave no excuse for them. Thus he wanted to dictate while he was in his ailment a document through which his nation will be secured against straying after him.

Those who were present in his room from his companions felt that he wanted to record in writing what he declared concerning 'Ali verbally. Therefore the influentials among them resisted the will of the Holy Prophet and cast a doubt on his consciousness. They refused to provide him with an inkwell and a sheet for writing saying: The Book is sufficient for us.⁵

The Alternation of the Caliphate

It seems to us that the migrant Meccan companions were influenced by the psychological attitudes of the Qureshites. They felt that the continuation of the rule in the House of the Prophet after his death will prevent the rest of the Qureshites from reaching the caliphate. These companions felt that 'Ali's succession to the Prophet would make the Arab society accustomed to the rule of the members of the House of the Prophet. Their relationship to the Prophet had already cast on those members a halo of holiness.

Furthermore their merit was affirmed by what they had of high quality. Thus it would become impossible for any companions to take the place of these distinguished relatives of the Prophet in the hearts of the Muslims.

'Ali in addition to his close relationship to the Prophet and his special position had the most brilliant record in the defense of Islam along with a profound knowledge and a righteousness of the highest degree. His two sons Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein were declared by the Messenger of God to be the two leaders of the youth of Paradise⁶ and they would not be so unless they resembled their grandfather and their father.

Should the leadership after the Messenger be transferred to 'Ali no one from the Qureshites or other people could compete with him for the hearts of the Muslims by offering a relationship to the Prophet equal to his or a record equal to his record. Nor would anybody be able to compete with his two sons by offering a grandfather a father or a mother equal to theirs.

Even without considering the prospects of his sons 'Ali's succession to the Messenger would be sufficient to prevent the ambitious companions from reaching the leadership because of his youth and their old age. Had 'Ali succeeded the Prophet and lived after the Messenger only thirty years none of the caliphs could have reached the caliphate. They would have died before the end of his rule.

The succession of a non-Hashimite Qureshite to the Prophet therefore was conceived by ambitious

companions to be the only means that makes the caliphate accessible to them. By this the non-Hashimite Qureshite clans would be able to alternate the caliphate because they are equal to each other. Thus the honor of the caliphate would compensate those clans for what they missed of the honor of prophethood.

During the days of his caliphate 'Umar said to Ibn Abbass: "Quraish disliked to see you having both honors of the prophethood and caliphate then you would be unfair to your people (The Qureshites). Qureshites have chosen for themselves and they were right and successful."⁷

If there had been nothing of all this the grudges of Quraish against 'Ali and the continuation of its influence in the Arab society would have been sufficient to keep 'Ali away from the caliphate after the Messenger.

The Holy Prophet saw through the light of God what will happen after him. This saddened him and so he on an occasion embraced 'Ali and wept. When 'Ali asked him: Messenger of God why do you weep? The Holy Prophet said: "Because of the grudges in the hearts of men which they will show you only after me."⁸

The Attitude of the Two Caliphs Towards 'Ali

When the Messenger departed from this world the Meccan Migrants and the Medinite companions competed for the caliphate but the Migrants had the edge. They won the race. Their argument against the Medinites was that the Messenger of God is from them and that the caliphate is in them. The majority of the companions elected Abu Bakr without mentioning 'Ali and without consulting him.

When 'Ali refused to join the electors they attempted to force him to do so but the daughter of the Messenger stood in their way. 'Ali did not join the electors of Abu Bakr until the daughter of the Holy Prophet (Fatima) met her Lord.

It was only natural for Abu Bakr to find in his heart towards 'Ali what every human finds towards his only competitor and to find in himself towards 'Umar what any human can feel towards his dear friend and strong supporter. It was only natural that Abu Bakr rewards 'Umar by returning the favor and appointing him his successor.

The Growth Of The Qureshite Influence And The Obscurity Of The Imam

The leadership of the first Two Caliphs was expected only to make the non-Hashimite Qureshite influence increase and grow stronger and stronger and this was expected to put 'Ali in more isolation.

The Obscurity of the Imam

The period of the Two Caliphs was full of important events and many conquests. This kept people occupied.

The position of the Two Caliphs went high enough to reach the degree of holiness. The names of the military leaders of the conquests and especially the Qureshites among them became well known. People forgot 'Ali his brilliant record in defending the faith of Islam and his great participation in establishing the foundation of the Muslim State along with what the Messenger of God said about him. People of many nationalities entered into the domain of the faith of Islam. These people knew the names of the Two Caliphs and the military leaders who subdued those nationalities and the rulers who administered their countries. They did not know anything about 'Ali and his past.

'Ali remained in Medina for the duration of the rule of the three caliphs and he was living in an actual state of isolation from the events and the authority. The Two Caliphs did not appoint him to any post; nor did they appoint any member of his house to any military leadership or civil administration in any part of the Muslim World.

Thus people did not know him. The opportunity was not given to any member of his house to be put in a position that would enable him to inform the Muslims about the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and their leader.

The Muslims during the days of the Two Caliphs knew Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas the conqueror of Iraq Amr Ibn Al-Aws conqueror of Egypt and its governor and Muawiya Ibn Abu Sufyan governor of Damascus. They knew Mughirah Ibn Shu-abah governor of Basra Abu Musa Al-Ashari its subsequent governor Ammar Ibn Yasir governor of Kufa for a short time and Abdullah Ibn Masud the treasurer of Kufa.

These individuals became better known to the conquered nationalities than 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. I do not believe that any of these leaders and rulers except Ammar Ibn Yasir and (maybe) Abdullah Ibn Masud was anxious to inform people about 'Ali and his position in Islam.

I do not say that the Two Caliphs were denying the position of 'Ali and that they did not recognize any of his distinctions. They were too righteous to do that. It is recorded that 'Umar said: "No one should give a verdict at the Mosque of the Prophet while 'Ali is present."⁹ He also said more than once: "Had 'Ali not been present 'Umar would have perished (spiritually)."¹⁰ And 'Umar said about 'Ali: "By God no pillar of Islam could have been erected without the sword of 'Ali."¹¹

Yes 'Umar used to say that and more than that but these words used to be said occasionally and never took the form of a general introduction; nor did they pass the walls of Medina. It was easy for the Second Caliph who had an unlimited influence in the Muslim World to introduce to the Muslims the Imam 'Ali.

He could have informed them about what he knew of 'Ali's distinctions and brilliant record in order to

prepare the Muslims in general and the Qureshites in particular to accept 'Ali's leadership of the nation after him. But 'Umar did not do that.

The Umayyads Infiltrated the Regime

This by itself was not to prevent the Imam from reaching a peaceful reign. The growth of the Qureshites in the Islamic society was not in favor of the Hashimites in general and 'Ali in particular. Yet it did not represent an insurmountable difficulty to 'Ali. Had the Umayyads remained outside the Islamic Regime 'Ali could have surmounted that difficulty.

Unfortunately the Umayyad clan which was the most hostile to the Prophet with the worst grudge against 'Ali had infiltrated 'Umar's regime and its influence developed rapidly and it became the strongest Qureshite clan among Muslims.

The Continuity of Muawiya and His Governorship

The Umayyad influence in the Islamic State was born when 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab appointed Yazid Ibn Abu Sufyan as the governor of Damascus shortly after it was conquered. Yazid did not live long. The Second Caliph called upon Muawiya to succeed him. Shortly afterwards he added Jordan to Muawiya's authority. [12](#) Muawiya continued in his post for the duration of 'Umar's caliphate.

'Umar did not dismiss him though he used to dismiss his official appointees and replace them. He dismissed Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas from the governorship of Kufa in spite of his brilliant past and endeavor. [13](#)

He dismissed Ammar Ibn Yasir though he wrote to the people of Kufa when he appointed him their governor informing them that Ammar is from the distinguished men among the companions of Muhammad. But 'Umar retained Muawiya in his post. [14](#) It seems that the Caliph was impressed by Muawiya's intelligence his administrative ability and he was confident of his obedience to him.

Muawiya remained in his post until the Second Caliph departed from this world. He retained him in that post though he witnessed his extravagance and his high standard of living. Muawiya by his continuation in the governorship of that important province was able to purchase the loyalty of many chiefs of Arab tribes in Syria.

He became powerful enough to make the Second Caliph shortly before he died warn the members of the Electoral Convention not to dispute with each other; otherwise Muawiya may prevail against them and snatch the caliphate from their hands.

Needless to say the continuity of the rule of Muawiya in Damascus and Jordan for that long period was expected to prevent 'Ali from having any populous base in that province. Muawiya was expected to close all channels through which some information may reach the masses of the people of his region about the

past of the Imam and his present.

The Electoral Convention Put The Caliphate In The Hands Of The Umayyads

However the infiltration of the regime by the Umayyads was not a difficulty insurmountable to 'Ali if 'Umar had appointed him his successor.

Had 'Umar appointed him his successor 'Ali would have been able to uproot the Umayyad plantation from the soil of Damascus without much difficulty because that plantation did not reach its ultimate strength during 'Umar's time.

The Second Caliph with good intentions pushed the caliphate in a direction whose immediate consequences were two developments that made the arrival of the Imam to a peaceful rule impossible.

The first of the two developments was the sudden escalation of the Umayyad's power.

When the Second Caliph was stabbed he refused to appoint 'Ali as his successor¹⁵ though he repeatedly declared that 'Ali was the only one qualified among the companions to make the Muslims walk on the clear and straight road.¹⁶

He refused to appoint him because he did not want to shoulder the responsibility of the caliphate after his death. Thus he invented the idea of the Electoral Convention. He put the caliphate in the hands of six Qureshite companions; 'Ali was one of them; the others were: Uthman Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf Al-Zubayr Ibn Awam Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah and Saad Ibn Abu Waqass. The selected caliph shall be from these alone and these alone shall select him.

Since the passing Caliph knew that 'Ali was the most qualified among the six members to lead the nation to the right road he was expected to tip the scale in his favor by commanding the Muslims to follow 'Ali's party if there were two parties among the members of the Electoral Convention. The passing Caliph did what was not expected. He commanded the Muslims to follow the party of Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf.

Yet this man was expected to choose Uthman who was his brother-in-law and this is what he did. Thus the passing Caliph with good intention brought the Umayyads to a reality that was beyond their dreams before 'Umar's era. He indirectly chose for the caliphate Uthman the righteous member of his Umayyad clan.

Yet his righteousness and excessive love of the members of his clan made him a potential bridge through which the caliphate would cross from the early migrant companions to the rest of the Umayyads the traditional enemy of the Messenger.

Uthman's reign insured for Muawiya the continuity of his rule with a broader authority and fame. The

new Caliph added to the area of Muawiya's authority Palestine and the rest of the Syrian sub-provinces. [17](#)

As Muawiya became the ruler of that vast and rich area his rule became free of higher supervisions. As a result he became the strongest man in the Muslim World. It became possible for him before the Third Caliph met his Lord to put at battlefield a respectable army of a hundred thousand fighters. These were salaried by the Islamic treasury in Syria. [18](#)

Muawiya was not the only Umayyad who ruled an important province and purchased the loyalty of Arab chiefs with what was under his authority of public funds. The Third Caliph appointed another Umayyad Walid Ibn Aqaba governor of Kufa who ruled that city for years. [19](#)

When he was dismissed he was succeeded by another Umayyad Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aws. [20](#) He appointed Abdullah Ibn Amir Governor of Basra [21](#) and he also was an Umayyad. He also appointed his foster brother Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh governor of Egypt. [22](#) Marwan cousin of the Caliph and a son of Hakam Ibn Abu Al- Aws who was exiled by the Holy Prophet became the strong minister of the Caliph. [23](#) In fact he became the actual caliph.

Marwan was able through his strong influence to hide from the eyes and ears of this righteous Caliph all evil doings of these appointed officials and convince him of their righteousness and the necessity of their continuation in their offices. Thus the Muslim World became an Umayyad kingdom ruled by individuals of little religion along with opportunism and hatred to the members of the House of the Messenger.

The Iron Curtain

These individuals became the orators of the Islamic pulpits and the teachers of the Muslims. One may imagine the iron curtain which these rulers erected to deprive the various nationalities which they ruled of all means of acquaintance with 'Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and their position in Islam.

Thus the communities of Syria were not acquainted in the least with the members of the House of the Holy Prophet.

This is what Muawiya stated during the days of the caliphate of Uthman when he said to Ammar: "There are a hundred thousand soldiers and a similar number of their sons and their servants who do not know 'Ali and his relationship." [24](#)

The inhabitants of Basra were next to the Syrians in lack of knowledge about the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. These people did not have any ruler during the days of 'Umar and Uthman that was sympathetic to the members of the House of the Prophet. People of Kufa seemed to know little about 'Ali and his House.

Evidently the presence of Ammar Ibn Yasir for a short time and Abdullah Ibn Masud for a longer time had contributed to the acquaintance of the Kufites with the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. But that knowledge remained very limited.

To know the effect of the iron curtain which the Umayyads erected to insulate the provinces which they ruled against any knowledge about 'Ali's history and that of the members of his house one needs only to remember the following:

The Muslims who were hostile to the Imam after he was elected were afraid of the presence of Ammar in the camp of the Imam. This was because they heard directly or indirectly that the Messenger said to Ammar "The aggressor party will kill you."[25](#)

But they were not afraid to fight the Imam though the Messenger said more about him than he said about Ammar and all the companions combined. They did not even remember what the Holy Prophet said about 'Ali in front of the thousands of Muslims on the day of Ghadir Khum when he declared that 'Ali is their Mawla then he said: "God love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."[26](#)

This statement meant that whoever was hostile to 'Ali was hostile to God let alone those who fought 'Ali.

When the Imam wanted to inform people of Kufa about what the Holy Prophet said about him on the day of Ghadir Khum he noticed the signs of doubt on the faces of his audience. Therefore he was forced to ask whoever was present of the companions of the Holy Prophet to testify to that. Twelve Badrians from among them stood up and attested to his statement.[27](#)

Most of the Bassrites during the days of Uthman were for Talhah and Al-Zubayr was popular among the Kufites. This means that the Imam did not have a majority even in Kufa.

People of Egypt seemed to have some knowledge about the Imam before the death of Uthman. Evidently this was a result of the presence of Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Muhammad Ibn Abu Hutheifah in Egypt about the end of the period of Uthman when they were trying to prepare the public opinion for a revolution against the Caliph. From this we can see clearly that the Umayyads during the period of Uthman had accomplished three of their goals.

1. They were able to block all the informational avenues about 'Ali in most of the Muslim provinces.
2. They acquired a populous base in Syria and a great influence in the rest of the Muslim provinces through what they bought of loyalty of tribes and influential individuals in every province they ruled.

This was the method which they followed wherever they found people ready to sell their religion for material gain and these were numerous in every province. The public funds were under the authority of these Umayyads and they were handling those funds according to their whims.

3. What was more important than all that was that the Umayyads were no longer in need of reaching the

authority and the caliphate. The caliphate and its authority were now in their hands. Anyone seeking the caliphate would have to use a tremendous military force in order to break their grip on the caliphate.

These Umayyads had possessed the manpower and the money which made them able to retain that authority. They were the opportunists of the Arabs who would not hesitate to use any means regardless of its ugliness if it served their purpose.

Tribalism

I should not fail to mention the chronical tribal system of the Arab society which rendered to the Umayyads great assistance in developing their power politically and militarily. At a time when mass media was missing it would have been difficult for any politician to win popularity of the masses of people.

Such popularity could be gained only when the masses of people are tied up with some leaders through blood relationship which makes them follow those leaders blindly. An individual without this kind of leadership becomes independent. He would do what he could to serve his own particular interest or he follows his logical thinking.

When there are tribal leaderships the loyalty of the thousands becomes easily acquirable by opportunists such as the Umayyads especially when the tribal leaders are materialistic-minded. The period during which the Third Caliph ruled increased the number of this kind of leadership because the worldly interests of most of the leaders during that period were put ahead of their religion.

New Competitors

The second development which was brought on by the Electoral Convention was the emergence of new rivals who suddenly became powerful enough to compete with 'Ali for the caliphate. Neither Abdul-Rahman Talhah or Al-Zubayr seriously hoped to become caliph.

By granting these companions membership to the Electoral Convention the Second Caliph promoted them and placed them above the rest of the companions. This inflamed their ambitions and made them feel that they are 'Ali's equals and that each of them is qualified to lead the nation.

This superiority complex was stronger in the minds of Talhah and Al-Zubayr than it was in the minds of the two other companions Abdul-Rahman and Saad. What Talhah and Al-Zubayr acquired of enormous fortunes²⁸ inflamed in them a spirit of competition for the Islamic leadership. Wealth was and is still a power which renders a tremendous assistance for reaching goals.

Their membership in the Electoral Convention opened the eyes of Mother of Believers Ayeshah to the possibility of making one of the two companions the next caliph. The caliphate for either of the two companions was highly desirable to Mother of the Believers because Talhah was a member of her clan

Tyme and Al-Zubayr was her brother-in-law.

He was the husband of her sister Asma.[29](#)

Thus the two companions and Ayesah had shared one line of thinking. This made them start a vicious smear campaign against Uthman which did not end until his death. When the Imam was elected after the death of Uthman the disappointment and the inflammation of ambition motivated the two companions and Ayesah to oppose the Imam in a violent way which had no precedent in the history of Islam.

The two companions would not have started such a violent campaign if the Second Caliph had not granted them the membership to the Electoral Convention which made each of them feel that he is equal to the Imam.

The Last Opportunity

The Imam after the death of the Holy Prophet had constantly showed his serious interest in acquiring the leadership while the Muslims were still merciful to each other and united against the enemies of Islam. The Imam made serious efforts during the days of the Electoral Convention to persuade its members to grant him the leadership.

He had foreseen through the light of God that the three days of the Electoral Convention were the last opportunity which could enable him to lead the nation to its great goals and destiny while retaining its unity and internal peace. He was fully aware that if the caliphate was diverted away from him the unity of the nation will come to an end. One may remember that the Imam said to the rest of the members of the Convention during that period the following:

"Listen to my words and understand my logic. You may see the leadership after this Convention contested so violently that swords will be drawn and covenants will be breached until you are no longer one community. Thus some of you will be leaders of the camp of deviation and followers of people of ignorance..."[30](#)

The members heard his words but they did not understand his logic. They were the elders of Quraish whose hearts were filled with grudges against 'Ali. They were doing their best to keep the caliphate away from him.

Uthman was elected and the interest of the Imam in the caliphate came to an end. The sequel of the events during the time of the Third Caliph and the revolution which concluded his period had ended the life of the Caliph as it ended the period of unity.

The Caliphate Was Imposed Upon Him

After the death of Uthman the Qureshites lost for a few days the political initiative and control of the political affairs of the nation. Thus they could not divert the caliphate from 'Ali this time. The rebels and the majority of the companions of Medina gathered around the Imam requesting him repeatedly to accept the leadership.

He refused it because he was able to foresee that the nation was going to face some insane crisis in which it would be difficult for the masses of the people to see the light and know the right road.

Therefore he said to them:

"Leave me out and seek other than me. We are facing a multicolor situation with numerous faces on which the hearts cannot stand and the minds cannot rest."³¹ But they asked him in the name of God to accept the leadership. They promised him help and obedience.

They put him on the spot as they put him face to face with his responsibility. Thus he could not resist them. He accepted their election knowing that they placed on his strong shoulders a burden which a mountain could not carry. He is 'Ali who never fled from duties regardless of their magnitude.

Qureshite Hostile or Deserter?

The Imam was elected and the Qureshite woke up with all their grudges and rancors and with the exception of a few all their leaders rose in arms against the Imam.

The non-ambitious from the righteous Qureshite leaders took a neutral attitude towards the Imam. They refused to help him and many of them refused to elect him though they knew his high distinctions and qualifications.

Saad Ibn Abu Waqass one of the members of the Electoral Convention refused to assist the Imam or to elect him though he reported that the Messenger of God said to 'Ali: "Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses but there shall be no Prophet after me?"³²

Thus assistance of 'Ali and his obedience according to this hadith would be assistance and obedience to the Messenger of God as the obedience of Aaron and his assistance were obedience and assistance to Moses.

Abdullah Ibn 'Umar well known and righteous refused to assist 'Ali or to elect him though he reported that the Messenger said: "... Whoever dies while he does not owe any allegiance to a caliph he would die a pre-Islamic death."³³ He afterwards pledged allegiance to Muawiya because Abdullah feared that he may die a pre-Islamic death if he did not owe Muawiya an allegiance. For the same reasons he pledged also his allegiance to Yazid Ibn Muawiya later. Yet he refused for five years to pledge his allegiance to the Imam and he was not afraid to die a pre-Islamic death.

The Qureshite Aggressors

Righteous and wicked leaders from Quraish competed with each other in combating the Imam. They offered sacrifices in combating him more than they offered of sacrifices in combating the pagans.

The Umayyads headed by Muawiya found in the death of Uthman a golden opportunity. The death of Uthman was not less beneficial to the Umayyads than his life. It is true that his caliphate gave Muawiya enough power to make him the strongest man in the Muslim State but his assassination gave Muawiya the means to use that power to achieve the goal for which he was preparing himself since his arrival in Damascus.

While Uthman was besieged he asked Muawiya to relieve him but he did not relieve him.³⁴ He did not respond to his call because he wanted him to be assassinated. He sent an army to Hijaz pretending that he was trying to defend him. But he commanded the leader of the army to camp outside Medina and warned him not to enter Medina regardless of the developments of the crisis until he received his order from Damascus.

To deprive the commander of that army from all freedom of action he told him: "Do not say to yourself that the present sees what the absent cannot see. You are the absent and I am the present." Muawiya had acquired all the benefits that he could acquire from the life of Uthman. The death of Uthman now had become more beneficial than his life.

Defending the Caliph may prolong his life until he dies a natural death. The righteousness of the Caliph may motivate him if he passes the crisis safely to appoint an outstanding companion as his successor. Thus Muawiya would be deprived of the opportunity as he would be deprived of any justification to impose his leadership on the nation.

But a violent death of the Caliph would give him the opportunity and the justification.

From this we know that the Third Caliph did not possess as much political and military power as Muawiya. He was unable to defend himself while Muawiya possessed the power to attack his enemies and to protect the life of the Caliph. This means that Uthman was the caliph in name only and Muawiya had the real authority.

When the Third Caliph was assassinated the Umayyads lost the caliphate in name only and for a short period.

Muawiya did not need to acquire the name but to use what he had of power in the way of avenging the death of the assassinated Caliph. He did that and waged against the Imam a war which the Muslims had never witnessed before.

The Righteous Ambitious Qureshites

As the violent death of the Caliph gave Muawiya a tribal justification to avenge his blood it added to his power a new power. Talhah Al-Zubayr and Mother of the Believers (Ayesha) who were the arch enemies of the assassinated Caliph joined Muawiya and became his allies in seeking revenge for the blood which they called on the Muslims to shed. Now they added all their strength to the strength of Muawiya and preceded him in combating the Imam.

The Battle of Basra proved that the three leaders had a tremendous capability. They were able to mobilize against the Imam at that battle an army exceeding thirty thousands while the Imam came from Medina with a few hundred soldiers.

He was forced while on his way to Basra to stay at Thee Qar for a period of time during which he made monumental efforts and gathered a task-force which did not exceed twelve thousand volunteers from Kufa. Finally but not until he entered Basra the Imam's army numbered twenty thousand.

The three leaders with all their righteousness and brilliant past allowed themselves to divide the Muslims and to draw swords against the Imam and put the followers of the Messenger for the first time in the Islamic history in two camps.

The three leaders along with their army were defeated but they opened by their actions a door on the nation which the Imam could not close in spite of his decisive victory against them. The Islamic division grew after their defeat. The distance between the Imam and the Qureshites increased and so did their grudge against him after seventy of their leaders were destroyed at the Battle of Basra.

The people of Basra were not to forget the thousands of their sons and brothers who fell in the battlefield. The people of Kufa were also expected to feel the magnitude of the loss of their sons and brothers in battle.

The death of many of his enlightened supporters in this battle deprived the Imam of a great deal of assistance which they had provided. No doubt the Battle of Basra with its decisive victory against the three leaders did not increase the Imam's power. It rather decreased it by decreasing the number of his supporters.

Those who were in sympathy with his enemies yet hesitant to combat him found in the attitude of the two companions and "Mother of the Believers" what encouraged them to join his enemy in combating him. If these three righteous leaders found it legal to fight 'Ali why should people with less righteousness hesitate to fight him? From this we know that the three leaders offered to Muawiya and his party great services which added a new power to his growing power.

The three leaders no doubt were able to realize the opposite of these results and preserve the unity of the nation if they had been consistent with themselves and their past. They were calling for reform and

criticizing the Third Caliph for his illegal conducts. They urged people to bring his reign to an end through any means because of the corruption of the relatives of the Third Caliph.

As the Imam 'Ali came to power trying to realize what they were calling for the three leaders were duty-bound to follow the Imam and assist him in realizing his goals. Muawiya and his party had malicious intentions towards the nation and they were trying to usurp the authority from the one who was the most qualified to lead the nation.

It was the duty of the three leaders to go to Iraq Egypt and the rest of the sources of the Islamic power and wage an educational campaign informing the nation of the malicious intention of Muawiya and his party towards the nation.

They could have urged the Muslims to assist the Imam in combating the evil elements. Had they done that Muawiya would have realized that what he was aiming for was beyond his reach and he would have surrendered humbly to the Imam. Had this happened the nation would have preserved its unity and remained as God wanted it led by the best leader after the Messenger.

The three leaders should have at least convicted themselves for causing the death of the Third Caliph rather than fighting the Imam pretending to avenge a blood which they had shed.

The insinuation which the membership of the Electoral Convention injected in the veins of the two companions and the chronic hatred of Mother of the Believers towards the Imam coupled with her hope to bring one of her two relatives to the leadership were bound to blind the three leaders. Thus they waged their vicious campaign which led to the assassination of the Third Caliph and tried to kill the Fourth Caliph in order to reach the caliphate unconcerned with the future of Islam.

Conclusions

As we summarize the circumstances and important events which preceded the election of the Imam or accompanied his reign we come to the following conclusions:

These events and circumstances which deprived the Imam 'Ali of an established populous base and a sufficient and obedient military force were not of his own making and he was unable to eliminate them or control them.

It was not within the power of the Imam to purify the hearts of the Qureshites of jealousy towards the Hashimites because of the Prophethood. It was not in the hands of the Imam to avoid the grudges of the Qureshites against him because of what they lost of relatives through his defense of Islam unless he had avoided the defense of the Messenger and his religion.

It was not within his power to change the determination of the Qureshites to alternate the caliphate among them nor was he able to remove their fear of resting the caliphate in the House of the Prophet if

'Ali comes to power.

It was not within his power to make the first Two Caliphs look at him as a non-rival; nor was it possible for him to stop the growth of the Qureshite influence during the reign of the two Caliphs.

It was not within the power of the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from admitting the Umayyads into his regime; nor was it within the power of the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from keeping Muawiya in the post which made his power grow.

It was not within the power of 'Ali to make 'Umar appoint him as his successor; nor was it possible for the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from forming the Electoral Convention; nor was the Imam able to prevent 'Umar from planning the Electoral Convention the way he did and by which Uthman won the caliphate and 'Ali lost it.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from admitting Talhah and Al-Zubayr into the Electoral Convention; nor was it possible for the Imam to gain the love of Ayesha and her loyalty and to prevent her from working to put her two relatives and companions of the Prophet in the leadership.

It was not within the power of the Imam to separate Uthman from his opportunist relatives or to prevent him from making them governors of the important provinces of the Muslim State and giving Muawiya enough power to make him a state within the State.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent these Umayyad officials from blocking all channels of information about him and preventing the nationalities which they ruled from knowing about 'Ali's distinctions and high qualifications.

It was not within the power of the Imam to prevent the revolution which destroyed the caliphate of Uthman and ended his life. It was not possible for the Imam to prevent Talhah Al-Zubayr and Mother of the Believers from pretending to seek avenge for the blood of Uthman in order to usurp the authority from him. It was not possible for him to prevent them from inflaming the war of Basra.

It was not possible for the Imam to change the tribal ways of the Arab society or to prevent corruption of the conscience of many chiefs of the tribes and their readiness to sell their religion for their worldly materials.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent Muawiya from exploiting the death of the Third Caliph nor was it possible for him to prevent the Syrian people from obeying Muawiya.

The Imam was not to be blamed for any of these things; and he was not to be blamed because he did not make the people of Iraq as obedient as the people of Syria.

It was not possible for the Imam to change the structure of the Iraqi people who were composed of some

righteous individuals and a class of ignorant and extremist readers of the Holy Qur'an and ignorant fanatics along with tribes who were ready to obey their chiefs right or wrong.

Muawiya should not be given credit because of the lack of the Readers class in his society and the rarity of righteous people and the numerous ignorants among the people of Syria during that period. Muawiya should not be given credit because of the lack of the Readers class in his society and the rarity of righteous people and the numerous ignorants among the people of Syria during that period.

Remarkable Achievements

As we look at the circumstances of the Imam and the difficulties accumulated in his way before his election and afterwards we find that he realized the impossible. In order to appreciate that we need not do more than to remember that he came out of Medina with only a few hundred volunteers to face the three leaders who mobilized more than thirty thousand to combat him at Basra.

This took place at a time when Muawiya had an army that was three times larger than the army of the three leaders with which he was able to threaten any of the provinces which were under the Imam's authority.

In the meantime Abu Musa Al-Ashari governor of Kufa was urging the Kufites to let the Imam down leading them to what we call now a civil disobedience. The Imam after all his efforts was not able to mobilize from the Kufites and others except a limited number of volunteers through whom his army numbered twenty thousand.

With all the difficulties which beset him the Imam was able to hand the three leaders along with their huge army a resounding defeat. He turned to his bigger enemy and he was able to strangulate him and hand him a military defeat which Muawiya could not avoid except through the conspiracy of lifting the copies of the Holy Qur'an and the readiness of the volatile Iraqi people to be deceived.

Due to his unusual efficiency the reign of the Imam continued for 5 years in spite of all the difficulties and limitations imposed on him by his unwavering principles.

Muawiya's Inefficiency

Muawiya did not excel in using his military power. Had he been at the efficient level which his admirers think he was he would have used his military superiority at the beginning of the caliphate of the Imam. The three leaders occupied the city of Basra and mobilized their forces while the Imam did not have but a few hundred soldiers.

Had Muawiya been that intelligent and brave as a leader he would have exploited the opportunity of military weaknesses of the Imam by sending an army to occupy Kufa when his allies occupied Basra.

By this he could have deprived the Imam from the Kufan assistance and he would have brought the reign of the Imam during that period to an end. As a matter of fact Muawiya was able to send a division of his army to Medina and occupy it while the Imam was on his way to Basra.

Had the Imam had a situation like that of Muawiya and Muawiya was in the position of the Imam (as we tried to hypothesize at the beginning of this chapter) the Imam would have done that and brought the reign of Muawiya to its end within weeks.

Yet we find Muawiya with all his military potential lacking the courage and intelligence and staying in Damascus waiting until Talhah and Al-Zubayr and their army fell under the blows of the Imam. Thus the Imam afterwards was able to mobilize a striking force which he led in combating Muawiya in his own province where he pushed him nearly to the end.

In spite of all the difficulties which accumulated in front of him since the death of the Holy Prophet and multiplied after his election the Imam appeared as a mountain that was unshakable by all storms that were surrounding him. Had the people of Kufa alone gone with him to the end of the road he could have eliminated the evil forces from the Muslim World and led the nation to a future full of good and illuminated from every side.

Had the Imam been obeyed by the Kufites to eliminate the menace of Muawiya he could have purified the Muslim society and driven it to the right road. Thus the faith of Islam could have been spread enough to convert Europe and subsequently America whose people had mostly come from Europe.

Unfortunately people of Kufa experienced what other Muslim communities experienced. They lost their determination and their power was neutralized. They let the Imam down at the decisive hour and the whole nation lost its final opportunity. Unfortunately people of Kufa experienced what other Muslim communities experienced. They lost their determination and their power was neutralized. They let the Imam down at the decisive hour and the whole nation lost its final opportunity.

Responsibility of the Non-Iraqi Muslims

The Iraqis were not the only people who were to blame for what happened. The responsibility was that of the whole nation which refused to assist the truth and took towards the Imam and his right either a hostile or neutral attitude; and those who were hostile were more numerous than those who were neutral.

The students of history of that Islamic period ought to be amazed by what happened to the Muslims when they lost their mental capabilities and deviated from the right road. The Almighty was disobeyed while righteous people were idly looking on and some of them went on assisting the devious camp while they were separated from the Messenger by only twenty-five years.

The two groups went on competing in combating the Brother of the Messenger with a fervor which they

did not demonstrate even in their combating the pagan forces. The two allied groups pushed the masses of the people to batties in which the nation swam in blood.

The nation and its subsequent generations paid and are still paying the price of the insanity of that generation.

The price they paid was the best that Islam had given: justice freedom and dignity. The nation brought the reign of the Imam to an end and by that it ended the Righteous Caliphate forever.

Why Did the Caliphate Not Live Long?

What happened should make us ask: Was the purpose of the faith of Islam to make the Righteous Caliphate last only thirty years? Or was the purpose to provide the nation and its future generations with unity brotherhood and justice? Was the purpose to make the faith of Islam a way of life for the Muslims for only three decades? If the purpose was to continue life according to the Heavenly Message for a long time why did the Righteous Caliphate live so shortly? And why did it have such a fast and sudden death?

The end of life for the true caliphate within such a short time should make us ask the following questions: Was this sudden death a natural result of the adherence of the Muslims to a program that was planned by the Messenger (because according to a prominent School of Thought he left it to his companions to elect a successor after him)?

Was the sudden death of the caliphate a natural result of the Muslims' negligence of a program planned by the Messenger who according to another prominent Islamic School of Thought chose a successor to lead the nation after him but his companions did not accept the leadership of the Prophet's choice?

Since we have to discuss this it would be appropriate to raise the two following questions:

1. Should the first succession have been by inheritance election or by appointment from the Prophet?
2. If it were supposed to be by appointment from the Prophet did the Prophet appoint anyone? We shall attempt in the following pages to answer these two important questions.

Observation

As we conclude our brief presentation of the events of the days of Uthman and his sad end we ought to remember the following:

The caliphate of Uthman and its events have proven that leadership of the Muslim world after the Prophet should have been by selection from the Messenger rather than by election of the companions. He was the only one who was supported by revelation and Divine inspiration. He knew the best qualified

for leadership among the members of his house and companions.

The leadership should not have been left to the chances of elections by the Muslims in general or by the companions of the Messenger or by an aristocracy such as that of the Quraish community in particular. Nor should it have been left to the chance of selection by a directly or indirectly elected caliph. Nor should it have been left to the election by members of the Electoral Convention.

An election or selection such as this might bring the best or the second best or the worst to power. This is dangerous for the future of a nation which carries a message to itself and to the world especially when the nation is still at the beginning of its progress and growth.

Such an election is bound to bring some time to power a weak leadership which is unable to carry the message. It may bring at another time a strong leadership that deliberately or inadvertently detours the nation and the message from their right road which was prescribed by the man of the message.

The incidental success of the first election by companions and first selection by an elected Caliph which brought Abu Bakr and 'Umar to power made the Muslims the historians and the scholars overlook the destructive failure which was caused by the election of the Third Caliph.

The accomplishments of the first two Caliphs have dazzled the eyes of the Muslims. They could not see that the events of Uthman's caliphate had given clear evidence that the election is not a safe road for a nation of a reformatory message.

The Muslims have forgotten the obvious fact that the purpose of the Islamic message was not to establish a righteous government for only twelve or thirty years. The purpose of the Heavenly message was rather much higher and longer.

When the Prophet at Ghadir Khum declared the leadership of 'Ali and the rest of the purified members of his House he was following only a natural course. This is what is supposed to be done by any head of state when he is about to leave his office.

This would be obviously true when the head of the state is a carrier of an extremely important message upon which the state is founded and his government is supposed to carry that message to the nations of the world as well as to its own people.

Any deviation that happens to the message by ignorance weakness or impiety of the leadership may put the whole message in jeopardy. The Holy Prophet was looking at the future through the light of God when he proposed while on his deathbed to have for the nation a written directive after which the nation would not go astray.

He foresaw that the Muslims would face after him many faith-testing crises. Therefore it was highly imperative to select for the nation a truly qualified leader in order to keep that nation on the right road.

It was most unfortunate that 'Umar supported by other companions objected to the Prophet's proposal accusing him of hallucinations and saying the Book of God sufficed.

The events of the Electoral Convention which brought Uthman to power and the events which took place during his caliphate and their consequences have revealed the gravity of 'Umar's error. The Book of God did not prevent him from forming his prejudiced Electoral Convention which deprived 'Ali of leadership and brought Uthman to power.

The Book of God did not prevent Uthman from committing his classical mistakes nor did it prevent the Muslims from their violent reaction toward his mismanagement and waging several bloody civil wars after his violent death.

For the Book of God to function and prevent people from taking erroneous direction it has to be coupled with an efficient and firm leadership equipped with a profound knowledge of the interpretation of the Book as well as the teaching of the Holy Prophet. Such a leadership makes the Book of God operative and drives people to the Qur'anic path.

This leadership is what the Messenger of God wanted to secure for the nation through his proposed written directive.

This is what the Prophet meant in his declaration on the day of Ghadir Khum when he told the Muslims that he was leaving to them the two elements which would secure them against deviation from the right road the Book of God and the members of his House and that the two will never part with each other.

The objection to the Prophet's proposed written directive cost the nation its political and spiritual unity and inflicted on the nation irreparable damage.

When the companions ignored the Prophet's declaration at Ghadir Khum and rejected his proposed document they were motivated by their self-interest.

They were unwilling to give 'Ali the leadership after the death of the Prophet because they did not want to concede the caliphate to the Hashimites. To allow 'Ali to succeed the Prophet was to admit at least implicitly that his leadership was decreed by God and His Messenger who testified that the members of the House of the Prophet will never part with the Holy Qur'an. This would keep the leadership in this most honored group. The Meccan companions of various clans were unwilling to give up their ambitions.

They wanted to keep the caliphate competitive by giving it to a non-Hashimite Meccan. This should secure its competitiveness and allow companions from various clans to enter the race for leadership because they are not better than each other.

This theory worked for them for a while. Three companions (Abu Bakr 'Umar and Uthman) from three Meccan clans alternated on the leadership within thirteen years. The ambitious companions however lately woke up during the reign of Uthman discovering to their dismay that their hopes of reaching the

High Office was fading out.

They faced what they were trying to avoid. The Umayyads were about to render the caliphate non-competitive because they had already dominated the Muslim world during the first six years of Uthman's reign.

They were about to establish a royal dynasty based not on Holiness and brilliant Islamic record as that of the members of the House of the Prophet but rather based on power obtained by corruption usurpation and domination. Its first expected outcome was to bar any ambitious companions from reaching the High Office. The first casualties of this development would be the dreams of Talhah Al- Zubayr Abdul- Rahman and Ayeshah.

Motivated by the fear of Umayyads' domination these ambitious people started their campaign against the Third Caliph. They tried to thwart the dream of establishing a royal dynasty and re-open to the members of the Electoral Convention the Avenue of Leadership.

These ambitious companions were not afraid of 'Ali for they believed they could block his way to the caliphate if Uthman died. Quraish was against him and the Qureshites were the king-makers. No one knew this more than 'Ali who told the Hashimites at the time of the Electoral Convention: "As long as your people (the Qureshites) are obeyed (in what is to be done to you) you will never be given the leadership."

However the ambitious companions' expectation did not come true. They did not take in their calculation the fact that Quraish would lose the political control for a short time after the death of Uthman when people other than the Qureshites would be the king-makers. However the ambitious companions' expectation did not come true. They did not take in their calculation the fact that Quraish would lose the political control for a short time after the death of Uthman when people other than the Qureshites would be the king-makers.

1. Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 5 p.24. And Muslim in his Sahih part 15 p. 176.
2. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 109.
3. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 169.
4. Ibn Sa'd Al- Tabaqat part 2 p.249.
5. Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 1 p.39.
6. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.287 Al-Tabari his History part 5 p.425.
7. Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.223 and Ibn Al-Athir in his Kamil part 3 p.34.
8. Al-Muttaqui Al-Hindi Kanzul-Ummal Part 6; Kitab Al-Fadha-il (Book of the Virtues) p.408.
9. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 1 p.226.
10. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 1 p.226.
11. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol.3 p. 179.
12. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 1 p. 118.
13. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part3 p. 229.
14. Ibn Sa'd Al- Tabaqat part 3 pp.255-256.
15. Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.228.

- [16.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.228.
- [17.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.57.
- [18.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali part 2 p. 1120.
- [19.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 252.
- [20.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.279.
- [21.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.265.
- [22.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.45.
- [23.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp.82-83.
- [24.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part2 p. 120.
- [25.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.511.
- [26.](#) Imam Ahmad his Musnad part 4 p.281.
- [27.](#) Imam Ahmad his Musnad part 4 p.281.
- [28.](#) Ibn Sa'd mentioned in his Al- Tabaqat part 3 p. 110 that Al-Zubeir's fortune amounted to 40 million dirhams and on p.222 that Talhah's fortune amounted to 30 million dirhams.
- [29.](#) See the first vol. of this book pp.262-264.
- [30.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.37.
- [31.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.434 and Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p.99.
- [32.](#) Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 5 p. 24 and Muslim also recorded in his Sahih part 15 p.176 that Sa'd Ibn Abu Waqass reported in this Hadith.
- [33.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 12 p. 240.
- [34.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p.368.

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