

Prologue

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

When it is said to them: ‘Follow what Allah hath revealed,’ they say: ‘Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers.’ What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance? (Holy Qur’an, 2: 170)

In our present era, it is most disturbing for many Muslims and non-Muslims alike to witness the escalating rise in sectarian violence between the Shi’a and Sunni followers of Islam, particularly in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Some people, including Muslims, ask why the Shi’a and Sunni are violently murdering each other; is there something in the history of the Muslims that continues to spark such hatred and violence today; why does one sect accuse the other of heresy; and why is one sect of the Muslims considered as “mainstream,” while the other wing is branded unconventional and literally pacified?

Unquestionably, seeded in the history of Islam is the answer – in particular, the political course that was taken following the death of the Holy Prophet and the way in which the early history of Islam was written. They say that history is bound to repeat itself and this is much more apparent today because the remnants and unconsciousness of Muslims in regards to their own history is affecting Muslims today.

The account of the Muslims is *not* the classical historical case of not knowing their past, but rather, it is of not knowing the *truth* of its past. Thus, a closer examination into the past political and historical accounts of Islam is needed.

As a Muslim scholar, I get numerous questions from Muslims, both of the Shi’a and Sunni following (but mainly from Sunni parishioners), as to the differences between the Shi’a and Sunni communities. The answer does not lie in a simple stated sentence or two, but rather, it requires an honest, detailed account

and interpretive explanation of the past.

Hence, a truthful and comprehensive contemporary account must be told in order for sincere seekers to understand what happened to the Muslims, and why, in particular, some refer to themselves as being Shi'a.

Over fourteen hundred years have passed since Prophet Muhammad bonded rival tribes, united neighbors, and partnered others to form one community – the Muslim ummah. However, from the moment that Prophet Muhammad publicly declared his prophethood and message until now, the internal relationship of the Muslim ummah has yet to synthesize fully because of the Shi'a–Sunni division.

This is not to say that there is an internal rift within Islam, far from that! Muslims are united in the same God, they recite the same Holy Qur'an, face the same *qiblah* (direction of prayer), fast the same month (of Ramadhan), and perform the pilgrimage to the same House (Ka'abah).

Nonetheless, there is a domestic struggle and this strain is embedded in the historical and political account of Islam; in particular, the caliphates [1](#) of Abu Bakr, [2](#) 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, [3](#) and 'Uthman Ibn al-Affan. [4](#)

For many Muslims, the first three caliphs are highly revered and the unquestioning belief in the righteousness of them as the “rightly guided” caliphs lies at the heart of many Muslims' faith. Nonetheless, the stark realization that these caliphs made severe misjudgments may surprise some, perhaps even bewilder or shatter their belief. Uncovering the truthful facts of the first three caliphs may seem disrespectful for some; however, this is actually a respectful attempt to restore Islam to its pristine, original form brought by Prophet Muhammad.

As difficult as it may be, we (Muslims) must be able to objectively examine the history of these three caliphs, re-examine and filter out our hadith sources, and then make sound judgment based on facts.

Since the “split” of the Muslims (Shi'a and Sunni) can be summoned to have intensified during the administration of the first three caliphs, and much of today's estrangement of the Muslims can be traced back to their government, consequently, this book will outline the character, actions, qualifications, and consequences of these three individuals.

The reports are based solely on the historical accounts of Sunni sources, such as the respected texts: *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, and other renowned Sunni scholars. Thus, no claim can be argued that the author is vindictively judging the three caliphs from outside sources. Furthermore, the readings will also cover the view of the Shi'a and shed some light as to why the Shi'a have been marginalized throughout the Muslim history.

As a scholar of Islam and a member of the Muslim ummah, this writing is not intended to be derogatory, or as an attempt to maliciously blame some, or as a means to jostle the past of the Muslims; nor is it an

opportunity by the author to insult or expose the weaknesses of some companions.

Rather this work is an attempt to shed light and present an unbiased account of their actions and the subsequent results on the ummah, such as their plans to dominate the Muslim leadership, the need to develop the science of Hadith (Prophetic traditions), discordant ideological interpretations, and the emergence of the schools of thought.

Furthermore, this work is not meant to stir sectarian conflict or to cause a deeper fissure amongst the schools either. I am well aware and sensitive to the fact that this is a delicate issue and I take to practice every means possible to express my sentiments and academic knowledge respectfully and rationally.

Throughout the years of humbly serving my faith, I have maintained an open venue to foster intrafaith engagements and reconciliation. The time has come for Muslim scholars to set aside their differences and rise to the occasion and challenges by addressing their internal division in an honest, academic, and composed fashion.

All provocations and polemics must desist on both fronts and a deep knowledge of being acquainted first-hand about each other's history, ideology, and stance are critical ingredients for any plausible discussions or solutions to arise.

For many years, it has been rumored that the Shi'a do not favor the companions of the Prophet; however, the reality is that the Shi'a have always revered, respected, and acknowledged many of the companions. Over 100,000 companions lived during the time of the Prophet – most were sincere, but not all of them and even the Holy Qur'an attest to this (al-Qur'an, c. 63⁵ & c. 9:101⁶).

We recognize and pay tribute to those who sincerely serviced, sacrificed, and gave their lives for the sake of Islam and the Prophet.⁷ The Shi'a are highly recognized for paying their respect to many companions of the Prophet who were martyred to advance Islam. We make yearly pilgrimages to their places of burial – their mausoleums and even to the battlegrounds where they lost their lives. Despite the love we have for the faithful martyrs of Islam, still we are continuously branded as those who dislike the companions.

The Shi'a have primarily been the most misunderstood of the Muslim schools of thought. It has been the case throughout Muslim history and until now that the Shi'a ideology and its followers are persecuted and ridiculed. In recent times, it is been more accelerated politically after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Muslim world then witnessed an increasing attack against Shi'a Islam and its followers. A tsunami effect of ignorance and prejudice batters the Shi'a.

Unsubstantially described as “interpreting their own form of Islam,” the Shi'a have been hammered with radical accusations as being “renegades” and “rebellious” by those who believe that the Shi'a doctrine is some form of a “cult” or that it is at “odds” with mainstream Muslims.

Some known and well-respected Sunni scholars, from the past until the present, have from time to time labeled the Shi'a followers as "innovators," some even going as far as calling them "heretics." Such labeled biases spread doubt and fear amongst the ummah, and even worse, mistrust.

What is more is that intellectual and moderate Muslim leaders have largely ignored the incredulous accusations and labeling. The silence by those religious leaders has engendered more ignorance and division amongst the Shi'a-Sunni schools and their followers.

The fallacy about Shi'a Islam needs to end and this is where my duty and obligation lies, for Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"To make it known and clear to mankind and not to hide it." (3: 187)

I stand to defend any dehumanizing portrayal of the Shi'a by adversaries, and it is my duty to expunge the rumors that have beleaguered us (Shi'a) for many centuries.

An honest and unabashed work is far overdue on this subject. I have no secret agenda, nor the need to practice the license of *taqiyyah*,⁸ and I stand free of any association to proselytize the Shi'a school of thought.

These are far from my objective; rather, my aim is to put forward the historical truth objectively about what some of the companions did systematically during the life of the Prophet and following his death, and to allow the reader to make his or her own sound conclusion.

Every Muslim, in fact, every human being bears the moral responsibility of seeking out the truth. For those who are sincerely searching for the truth, they must put aside any personal opinion and approach this work without pretense or prejudice views.

Although the history of Islam has hitherto led a tenuous path, the damage is not irreparable, for Allah says in the Noble Qur'an:

"Allah does not change the condition of the people until they change what is within them." (c. 13: 11)

The Muslims have freedom of choice and the Muslims still have the opportunity to liberate themselves and go forward as an ummah, united in submission to Allah.

I welcome any contributing comments provided they are based and structured academically and rationally, mutually accepted amongst the various Muslim scholars, and free of personal rhetoric.

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- [1.](#) Caliph (caliphs) is the person intended to be the successor (leader) to Prophet Muhammad.
- [2.](#) (Abu Bakr) Abdullah Ibn Abi Quhafah, his mother is Salma bint Shakher. He is the father of Aishah the wife of the Prophet. He was born fifty-one years before the Hijrah; died on the 22nd Jumadi al-Awwal, 13 ah and assumed the caliphate after the Prophet's death for a period of two years and four months.
- [3.](#) 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab was born forty years before the Hijrah. He accepted Islam six years after the advent of Islam and was appointed by Abu Bakr to be the second successor to the Prophet and reined for ten years. He was assassinated in 23 ah in Madinah. He appointed Mu'awiyah Ibn Abu Sufyan as the governor of Damascus.
- [4.](#) 'Uthman Ibn al-Affan was chosen by 'Umar to be in the group of six candidates for succession. His tribe, Bani Umayyah, swept and dominated important political and military leadership. He assumed the caliphate in 23 ah and during his reign, the "fitna kubra" (great mischief) occurred. He was killed in his home by revolutionist in 35 ah in Madinah.
- [5.](#) Holy Qur'an, 63: 1, "When the hypocrites come to you they say, 'We bear witness that you are indeed the apostle of God.' God knows that you are indeed His Apostle, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars."
- [6.](#) Holy Qur'an, 9: 101, "Round about you [Muhammad and his community] and among you in Madinah are hypocrites and they are obstinate in hypocrisy. You do not know them, We know them, twice shall We punish them and in addition shall be sent to a grievous penalty."
- [7.](#) Holy Qur'an, 9: 100, "And as to the foremost from among the Muhajireen (Immigrants) and Ansar (Helpers) and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him..."
- [8.](#) Taqiyyah is a form of concealment of one's belief in order to protect one's life, property, family, etc.

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