

The Conclusion

We have tried in our discussion of the caliphate to answer the question which we had to face because of the development which led to the end of the righteous caliphate within a time whose shortness is astonishing. For the caliphate did not last more than thirty years.

The governmental systems which are based on political doctrines in this century and before have lived much more than the Righteous Caliphate of Islam lived. Some of these governmental systems have lived hundreds of years and the most recent of them the Communistic system has already lived more than half a century.

Yet none of these governmental systems was transformed into a military dictatorial power and we see evidence pointing to a long life of these modern systems without turning against themselves.

The good Islamic governmental system though much higher in spirit and doctrine than all of the modern systems did not live but shortly. It was only natural that such a sudden death of the Righteous Caliphate makes us ask the following questions:

Was this sudden death a natural result of the adherence of the Muslims to a silent directive which the Holy Messenger wanted the Muslims to follow because he (according to many Muslim scholars) had left it to the nation to choose for itself the leader which it wants? Or was the sudden death of the Righteous Caliphate a natural result of the Muslims' negligence of the pronounced directive which the Messenger issued and wanted his nation to follow? For he chose a leader for the nation and the nation or its aristocracy did not want his leadership.

In order to find the facts in this important of the Islamic history I have tried in discussing the caliphate to answer the two following questions:

1. Should the caliphate have been by inheritance or by election or should it have been through appointment by the Holy Prophet?
2. If it should have been through appointment by the Holy Prophet did the Holy Prophet actually choose anyone to lead the nation after him? Our discussion has led us to conclude that the caliphate was

supposed to be by appointment from the Prophet and that the Prophet had chosen a man to lead the nation after him and that leader was 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

We have also concluded that the fracture of the unity Of the nation and the crises which took place in the first century of the Islamic era was a natural result of the refusal of the Muslims to follow the directive of the Messenger concerning the caliphate.

Had 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib come to power after the death of the Holy Prophet the war of Basra the war of Siffin and the war of Al-Nahrawan could not have taken place. The war of Al-Nahrawan was a product of the war of Siffin and the wars of Siffin and Basra were the products of the violent death of Uthman. Had 'Ali been the First Caliph Uthman would not have become a caliph and would not have been killed. Had these three wars not taken place the Righteous Caliphate would not have ended so fast.

Should 'Ali have been the First Caliph the Umayyads could not have mustered enough power to enable them to bring the Righteous Caliphate to an end and replace it with a despotic rule which was rotated among them for about ninety years.

Nor could the Umayyads have been able to annihilate the members of the House of the Holy Prophet in the massacre of Karbala. Furthermore the Righteous Caliphate could have continued for a long time until the principles of Islam became deeply rooted in the Muslims society.

Had 'Ali been the First Caliph after the Holy Prophet the Muslims would not have been divided into Sunnite and Shi'ites because Sunnism and Shi'ism are the products of the controversy of whether the Holy Prophet chose 'Ali for the leadership or left the matter to the Muslims to choose for themselves.

With 'Ali in power after the death of the Holy Prophet the Muslims would not have been divided over the caliphate because there is no Muslim School which claims that the Messenger appointed Abu Bakr or any companion other than 'Ali lead the nation.

However these conclusions which our research had led us to do not mean that we say that the Three Caliphs and the rest of the companions had deliberately violated the commandment of the Messenger of God after he declared 'Ali's leadership. Nay we ought to think that these people were too pious to deliberately oppose the commandment of God and His Messenger in matters which concern their religion.

These righteous people thought that the leadership of the nation is of their worldly affairs. They thought that they had the right to choose for themselves a leader other than the one whom the Holy Prophet chose for conducting their worldly affairs. The Messenger used to consult his companions in matters about which there was no Revelation. It seems that they thought that the caliphate is not a subject of revelation. The companions had the right to form their own opinions and whoever is qualified to form his own opinion would deserve the reward of God whether he is right or wrong.

The companions were humans. They could not foresee the future and the consequences of their choice. Therefore they were not responsible for the faith-testing crises which took place after the death of Uthman. They were not responsible for the early death of the Righteous Caliphate.

They thought that the best for Quraish and for themselves is to choose other than what the Prophet had chosen and they were not able to see the advantage of what the Prophet had chosen.

The companions formed wrong opinions and made erroneous decisions and did not understand the dimensions of what the Messenger aimed at when he declared the leadership of the Imam 'Ali. However it is our duty to think well of the companions and to give our best interpretations to their actions and attitudes.

We are commanded to ask the Almighty God to forgive our brothers who preceded us in adopting the Faith of Islam let alone the companions who were the first Muslim community on earth.

Unity Does Not Require Conformity

Our research and discussion concerning the caliphate have led us to conclude that the caliphate should have been through a selection by the Holy Prophet and that the Messenger selected 'Ali to lead the nation. Yet we do not expect nor do we think it necessary that all Muslims agree with us. There is no doubt that the two ideas of election and selection will find their supporters as long as the Muslim World remains.

We believe that this does not necessitate the Muslims to exchange animosity and suspicion. Difference in opinions should not prevent the Muslims from reciprocating respect love and feeling of brotherhood if they agree that they have the right to have more than one opinion concerning the caliphate.

The cause of the mutual suspicion between the supporters of the two ideas is not the difference in opinion. It is rather the belief of every School that the other School has no right to disagree with its opinion. Thus each Islamic School of thought believes that its opinion is the Islam and that the opinion of others is a deviation and falsehood and a disagreement with God and His Messenger.

Should the two parties go back to what the logic calls for they would find that the Almighty had completed His religion before Abu Bakr became caliph. The caliphate of Abu Bakr is not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the hadiths of the Holy Prophet and it is not of the self-evident Islamic teaching. It is rather one of the events of the history of Islam which every Muslim has the right to form his (her) opinion positively or negatively.

Neither a positive nor a negative opinion concerning the First Caliph could put a Muslim in the company of the enemies of God and His Messenger; nor would it put him in the company of transgressors.

The numerous statements and declarations of the Prophet which testify to his selection of the Imam 'Ali

for the leadership may produce a high degree of certainty.

Nevertheless they did not make his appointment self-evident in the Islamic teaching. Therefore a Muslim has the right to argue about it.

The difference between the two prominent Islamic Schools of thought (the Sunnite and the Shi'ite) concerning the caliphate or some Islamic rules is not more than a disagreement in understanding a part of the history of Islam or a disagreement about an Islamic Law.

The Muslims allowed themselves to disagree concerning some of the details of the Islamic rules which did not reach the degree of being self-evident in the religion of Islam. For this they were expected to allow themselves to disagree concerning the caliphate without exchanging animosity and accusations of each other of being devious in their faith because of their opinions about the caliphate. The Imams of the four Schools disagreed with each other about hundreds of Islamic Laws and issued different verdicts in various subjects. The plurality of the Sunnite Schools is a result of this disagreement. Had the four Imams agreed with each other in their verdicts they would have only one School of thought rather than four.

In spite of this plurality the followers of the four Schools exchange respect and love. They do not accuse each other in their religion. They rather believe that they are good Muslims and good believers. This is what the logic and the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet dictate.

These disagreements are about questions whose answers are not clear in the Holy Qur'an and in the hadiths of the Holy Prophet. Therefore it would be the right of every qualified Islamic scholar to form his own opinion about such questions without contradicting the Qur'an or the known "Sunnah" of the Prophet.

This generous and logical attitude which agrees with the teachings of the Holy Quran and the instructions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad is missing in the area of the caliphate. The scholars of the four Schools believe that the caliphate is not an article of the faith of Islam as they believe that the Messenger did not name Abu Bakr nor 'Umar nor Uthman as his successors.

In spite of this these scholars do not permit any Muslim to discuss the soundness of their caliphate. To say that the Prophet had chosen 'Ali for the leadership would be considered by these scholars a heresy and an unforgivable major sin as if it were a denial of the Prophethood of Muhammad or ascribing to the Almighty a partner.

Why is all this? The reason is obvious: The attitude of the Muslims towards the caliphate and the Caliphs is emotional. When man is ruled by his emotions he cannot see things as they are. Emotion magnifies the minute and belittles the important.

Let Us Find Our Way

To examine this opinion and see its soundness or error we ought to measure it by the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. It is easy to find the answer in the Book of God and in the authentic hadiths of the Messenger. As to the Book of God we find many verses that give us the definition of "Iman" the sound belief and what constitutes it. In the second chapter from the Holy Qur'an we find the following:

"The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord as do the men of faith. Each one of them believes in God His Angels His Books and His Apostles. (They say:) We make no distinction between one or another of His Apostles. And they say: we listen and we obey. Our Lord we seek Thy forgiveness and to Thee is the end of all journeys." The Holy Quran Chapter 2 verse 285.

We also find in the same chapter the following:

"It is not the righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or the West; but the righteous is he who believes in God the Last Day the Angels the Book and the Prophets and gives his wealth out of love for Him to the kin folks the orphans the needy the wayfarers the seekers of help and to set slaves free and offer their prescribed prayer and pay regular charity and fulfill their covenants and those who are patient in period of deprivation adversity and in the defense (of sacred freedom). These are the people of the truth and these are the righteous." The Holy Quran, 2:177

The first verse informs us that the believers are the believers in God His Angels His Books His Messengers and it does not make the belief in a particular Islamic School of thought or opinions about caliphs a requirement in the "Iman" (Faith)

The second verse also does not make the affiliation to any Islamic School of thought a requirement in the Faith.

It rather declares that the truthful and the righteous ones are the believers in God the Day of Judgment the Angels the Book and the Prophets and the givers of their wealth for the love of God to those who are in need and the offerers of the prescribed prayer regular charity who fulfill their covenants and stand firmly in suffering adversity and at the time of defense.

All righteous Muslims whether Sunnites or Shi'ites meet these requirements.

This verse like the first verse does not condition the "Iman" or truthfulness or righteousness with having a specific opinion positive or negative about the caliphate or about the four Islamic Schools of thought.

The following seven authentic hadiths are in full agreement with these verses:

1. Al-Bukhari in his Sahih part 1 page 19 and Muslim in his Sahih part 1 page 166 recorded that Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah reported that a beduin asked the Messenger about Islam. The Messenger replied: Five daily prayers. The Beduin said: Do I have to add to them any prayer? The Messenger said: No unless you volunteer.

Then the Messenger said: And the fast in the month of Ramadan. The Beduin said: Do I have to add to it any other fast? The Messenger said: No unless you volunteer.

Then he mentioned to him the prescribed charity and the Beduin asked: Do I have to add to it? The Messenger said: No unless you volunteer. The Beduin turned his back saying: By God I shall not add to this; nor shall I subtract from it. The Messenger said: The Beduin has succeeded if he is true."

2. Muslim recorded in his Sahih that Abu Hurairah reported that a Beduin said to the Prophet: Advise me of a deed which if I do I will be admitted to Paradise. The Messenger said: Worship God ascribing no partner to Him offer the prescribed prayer the prescribed charity and fast the month of Ramadan. The Beduin said: By God in whose hand is my soul I shall not add to this nor shall I subtract from it. When he turned his back the Messenger said: Whoever desires to look at a man from the people of Paradise should look at this man¹.

3. Muslim also recorded that Abadah Ibn Al-Samit while he was on his deathbed said to people around him: I have reported to you all of what I heard from the Messenger of hadiths which are beneficial to you except one hadith. I shall report it to you while my soul is being taken by God. I heard the Messenger of God saying: "Whoever testifies that there is no God but the Almighty and that Muhammad is Messenger of God God shall protect him from Hell."²

4. Muslim also recorded that Abadah Ibn Al-Samit reported that the Messenger of God said: "Whoever says: I bear witness that there is no God but the Almighty alone without partner; that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger; that Jesus is His servant and Messenger and the son of His maid; that he is His word given to Mary and a spirit from Him and that Paradise is a reality and Hell is a reality God shall admit him into Paradise through any of its eight gates He chooses."³

5. Muslim also recorded that Ma-ad Ibn Jabal reported that the Messenger said: What is due to God from His servants is that they worship Him ascribing to Him no partner; and what is due to God's servants from Him is that He will not punish anyone that does not ascribe to Him a partner..."⁴

6. Al-Bukhari in his Sahih recorded that Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger said to a questioner: The Iman (the Faith) is to believe in God His Angels His meeting His Messengers and to believe in the resurrection. He said also to the questioner: Islam is to worship God ascribing to Him no partner; to offer the prescribed prayer; to pay the prescribed charity and to fast the month of Ramadan."⁵

7. Muslim recorded in his Sahih that 'Umar reported that the Messenger said to a questioner: "Islam is to testify that there is no God but the Almighty and that Muhammad is Messenger of God; to offer the

prescribed prayer; pay the regular charity; fast the month of Ramadan and visit the Kaaba if you are able to.

The same questioner asked the Prophet to inform him about the Iman and the Prophet said to him: To believe in God His Angels His Book His Messengers the Day of Judgment and to believe in "Qadar " pleasant and unpleasant.[6](#)

These authentic hadiths and others of their kind (which I did not mention) agree with the Holy Qur'an. They together inform us that whoever believes in God His Angels His Book His Messenger His meeting and the Resurrection; worships God alone by offering the daily prayers fasting the month of Ramadan and paying the poor's duty and offering the pilgrimage to Kaaba when physically and financially capable of doing that he would be a genuine Muslim and believer. God will admit him to Paradise from any of its eight gates He chooses.

This would be true and applicable to any Muslim whether he believes that the first legitimate caliph after the death of the Messenger is Abu Bakr or 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

The belief in the legitimacy of the succession of these caliphs was not mentioned in any of the above hadiths as a requirement in Islam or Iman or success; or for being away from Hell and entering Paradise.

This is what the logic dictates. The Messenger did not name any of the first Three Caliphs as his successor. Why should the belief in the soundness of their succession be a part of the Islamic religion and its denial be damaging to the Faith?

The religion of Islam was completed during the time of the Holy Prophet and before the time of the caliphate and the caliphate of these righteous companions was not mentioned in the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

If the Messenger had appointed 'Ali as his successor his appointment would be from the teaching of the Holy Prophet (Sunnah); but such an appointment is not self-evident. It is not clear enough to prevent argument or doubt about its existence or about the indications of its hadiths.

If a Muslim tries his best in conducting a research about this appointment and its evidence did not convince him he would be excused and he would not be opposed to the Book of God nor to the instructions of the Holy Prophet intentionally.

The Book of God speaks clearly that whoever believes in God His Messengers His Angels and the Day of Judgment and offers the devotional duties he would be a sound Muslim and so the hadiths of the Messenger speak.

Thus it would not be logical nor would it be in accordance with Islam to say that no one would be deserving the admission into Paradise except a Muslim who believes that the Prophet did not choose 'Ali

as his successor.

It would not be in accordance with Islam to say that whoever does not follow one of the four Sunnite Schools would not be from the people of Paradise even if he (she) follows the Book of God and the teaching of the Holy Prophet.

Abu Bakr and the rest of the companions were neither Hanafi nor Maliki nor Shafi-i or Hanbali

God is too great to fail in His promise and too fair to respond to the desires of the fanatics. He the Almighty is too just to punish His servants and deprive them from His reward because they did not believe in a doctrine He did not mention to them in His Book nor did His Messenger speak of.

It would not be logical that the Muslims would be excused when they say that Abu Bakr was the first legitimate successor of the Messenger though the Messenger did not say one word about appointing him; and that they (the Muslims) would not be excused when they say that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is the First legitimate Caliph though the Prophet declared that 'Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses.

Agreeable Points

I have mentioned that my aim of the discussion of the succession was not to convert the Sunnites into Shi'ites or to convert the Shi'ites into Sunnites. This is what I did not expect nor did I project. My aim was to clear certain points which I think can be a ground for a mutual understanding among the Muslims.

The fruit of such understanding would hopefully be the elimination of mutual suspicions among them and replacing it with a genuine brotherhood and trust. Thus the Muslims will be able to agree that all believers in Islam deserve the reward of God if they offer their devotional duties after they have believed in God His Messenger His Book His Angels and the Resurrection regardless of their views concerning the caliphate.

It seems to me that the discussion of the caliphate which was presented has cleared many points which can be a ground for a mutual Islamic understanding. Of these points are the following: A. The theory which says that 'Ali was the choice of the Holy Prophet for the leadership of the nation is not an innovation in religion; nor is it a deviation from the Faith; nor is it a claim that has no support of evidence.

It is rather a genuine Islamic theory that represents the middle and straight Islamic road. It is consonant with the nature of the Islamic teachings. Appointing a successor was not an innovation in Islam. Abu Bakr appointed 'Umar for the interest of Islam and the Muslims and Abu Bakr was not more concerned with the future of Islam and the nation than the Holy Prophet.

The Muslim scholars do not argue about the authenticity of the hadith of Ghadir Khum and other

authentic hadiths from which the Shi'ites understand positively that the Holy Prophet had chosen 'Ali to succeed him. The Sunnites take a negative attitude towards its indication of 'Ali's successorship. They have the right to take such a negative attitude but they have no right to criticize the Shi'ites for having a positive attitude concerning this indication.

Neither the positive nor the negative attitude towards the indication of these hadiths impair the faith of either party or makes it deviate from the right road.

The Shi'ite Companions Of The Prophet

B. Being a Shi'ite (follower) of 'Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Prophet is not something that took place only after the death of the Holy Prophet. It is not a new opinion in Islam adopted by some people who did not accompany the Prophet and did not hear from him. Nay it is a principle that was adopted by outstanding companions of the Holy Prophet whom the Prophet himself commended and testified for their truth and their being on the right road.

This group of outstanding companions included the following companions: Abu Dharr Al-Ghafari about whom the Holy Messenger said "Neither the Heaven shaded nor the earth carried a truer person than Abu Dharr. Certainly he does walk on earth with the immaterialism of Jesus Son of Mary."⁷ Ammar Ibn Yasir who along with his parents were told by the Messenger: "Family of Yasir be patient for your destination is Paradise." And the Holy Prophet said to him: "Ammar be cheerful the aggressor party shall kill you."⁸

Al-Miqdad Ibn Al-Aswad who is one of the four men whom the Prophet was commanded to love. "God commanded me " he said "to love four and informed me that He loves them." People asked him: Messenger of God who are they? He said: 'Ali is from them (repeating that three times). And Abu Dharr and Selman and Al- Miqdad."⁹

Selman Al-Farisi was one of the men about whom the Messenger said: "Paradise longs for three men: 'Ali Ammar and Selman."¹⁰

And Ibn Abbas about whom the Messenger said: "God I ask Thee to teach him the interpretation and make him knowledgeable in religion and make him from the People of belief."¹¹

All these and many others from the companions were followers of 'Ali even during the days of the first Three Caliphs. They used to believe that succession is an exclusive right of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. Had they had supporters they would have fought to bring 'Ali to power. When the Third Caliph was brought to power Ammar and Al-Miqdad called upon the Imam 'Ali to fight. But the Imam refused to do that.¹²

I do not believe that there are among the present Shi'ites people who could be more Shi'ites than Abu Dharr who reported that the Messenger of God said: "Whoever obeys me obeys God and whoever

disobeys me disobeys God. And whoever obeys 'Ali obeys me and whoever disobeys 'Ali disobeys me." [13](#) He reported also that the Messenger said to 'Ali: "Ali whoever parts with me parts with God and whoever parts with you parts with me." [14](#)

And Abu Dharr is the one who said while he was holding the door of the Kaaba: "Whoever knows me I am the one whom he knows and whoever does not know me I am Abu Dharr. I heard the Prophet saying: "The position of the members of my House among you is the position of Noah's ark among his people. Whoever embarked on it was saved and whoever did not embark on it was drowned." [15](#)

Legitimacy and Negative Aspects Of Elective Caliphate

C. Had the Messenger not chosen a successor to lead the nation after him or had he appointed a successor without making the appointment clear to the companions they could have elected a caliph. The Muslims have the right to authorize whomever they choose to administer their affairs. The election would be a contract between the electors and the elected. Such a contract is to be fulfilled and respected as long as the elected caliph fulfills the condition upon which the election was based.

If the election is made on the basis of adherence to the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet the electors have to obey the caliph as long as he follows the Book and the instructions of the Prophet.

In spite of the legitimacy of such an elective succession such a succession has two negative aspects:

1. No Muslim would be sinning if he refuses to elect such a caliph even if the overwhelming majority elects him. A minority can refuse to elect him and to disagree with the majority and to believe that he is not qualified for leadership. His leadership is not by a revelation from God nor by a directive from the Prophet.

Since God and His Messenger did not command the Muslims to elect him a negative attitude towards his election by a person or a minority would not be a violation of a commandment of God or the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

However it would be the duty of the minority or the individual who refuses to elect such a caliph to refrain from hindering the administration of the government which is headed by the caliph. In addition to this it would be the duty of the minority or the individual who does not elect him to obey him if his obedience is an obedience to God.

For the Almighty says: "O you who believe obey God and obey the Messenger and Olil-Amr (men of command) from among you." This would be the rule if the word "Olil-Amr" meant what includes the rulers whom the Holy Prophet did not appoint.

Since the minority has the right not to elect the one who was elected by the majority the elected has no

right to force an opposing minority to change its attitude. And if he does he would be unjust and an usurper of the right of political freedom.

It is well known in historical events that the two highly considered companions Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and Abdullah Ibn 'Umar refused to elect the Imam 'Ali and he did not force them to do that. These companions did not see a sin in their refusal to elect him though each one of them was well aware of the qualifications of the Imam and his outstanding record in Islam.

The Imam himself refused to elect Abu Bakr and continued his refusal for six months. Had the wars of Faith- deserters not started during the time of the First Caliph the Imam would have continued his negative attitude and he did not see any sin in taking such an attitude.

This is what the free nations in this century follow.

When a president of a nation is elected by a majority and his rival is elected by a minority the majority does not try to force the minority to change its negative attitude into a positive one. The minority continues its opposition without trying to obstruct the administration of the winner.

If a contemporary of the First Caliph had the right to refuse to elect him the following generations would have the right to believe or to disbelieve in his qualifications and the soundness of his succession. Thus the mutual incrimination of the Muslims for their negative or positive attitude towards particular caliphs who died centuries ago would not be of reJigion. It would be rather an addition to the religion and has no justification.

2. An elected caliph with a limited knowledge would not be more than a righteous "mujtahid" (scholar that has the right to form an independent opinion about some unclear details in the Islamic rules). It would be permissible for a person who is not a scholar to follow a scholar other than the caliph.

The opinion of the caliph would not be an Islamic Law because he is not immune from error. Election by the majority does not change his personality. He would not become immune from error if he were not so before his election: nor would it make him extremely knowledgeable if his knowledge were limited.

A caliph that was appointed by the Prophet would not have these two negative aspects. The nation has to accept his leadership and no one would be permitted to oppose him or to refrain from his election because refusal to elect him would be a violation of the command of the Messenger. His religious directives commands and prohibitions would be Islamic Laws because he is the Prophet's representative and his holiness emanates from the holiness of the Prophet. His selection of him indicates that he views him to be the most knowledgeable among the Muslims in the Book of God and the instructions of the Messenger.

The House of The Prophet Is To Be Followed

D. The Hadith of "Al-Thaqalain" (The Two Valuables) clearly informs us that the Messenger commanded the Muslims to follow the instructions of the members of his House in the Islamic Law. This is because the Prophet declared that the Qur'an and the members of his House will never part with each other until the Day of Judgment.

Muslims may for political reasons argue about the indication of the hadith concerning the succession of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet to the Prophet. But the hadith clearly informs us of the Prophet's endorsement of their teaching.

It is needless to emphasize the authenticity of the Hadith "Al-Thaqalain" which was reported by about twenty companions. The refusal of Muslim scholars to follow the reported teaching of the House of the Prophet is indefensible and an obvious disagreement with the Prophet. It is less defensible to make the adherence to the teaching of the four Imams mandatory to the Muslims yet the Prophet never recommended any of them.

The least of what these scholars should have done is to put the teachings of the House of the Holy Prophet on an equal level with that of the four Imams.

As a matter of fact the followers of the Four "Mathhabs" (Schools) took towards the instructions of the House of the Holy Prophet the attitude of suspicion and denial without knowing those instructions. They thought that those instructions do not deserve their concern or respect. As the followers of the Four Schools took such an attitude they disagreed with their own Imams and were more kingly than the king. Abu Hanifah was a student of the Imam Jafaar Al-Sadiq¹⁶ and he used to believe that he was the most knowledgeable among the people of his time.

Al-Mansoor (the second Abbaside caliph) ordered Abu Hanifah to prepare for the Imam Al-Sadiq a large number of difficult questions. Abu Hanifah asked the Imam in the presence of Al-Mansoor forty questions and the Imam Al-Sadiq answered each of those questions.

In addition to this he informed Abu Hanifah about the views of the Iraqi scholars and the views of the Hijazi scholars concerning each one of those questions. Abu Hanifah commented thereafter saying: "Certainly the most knowledgeable among people is the most knowledgeable of their various opinions."¹⁷

Abu Hanifah spoke of the Imam Al-Sadiq's magnanimity saying: "I came to Al-Mansoor while Jaafar Ibn Muhammad was sitting at his right. When I looked at Jaafar Ibn Muhammad I felt that his magnanimity commanded more respect than the power of Al-Mansoor."¹⁸

Yet Al-Mansoor was the ruler of the whole Muslim World and Jaafar was a private citizen and powerless.

Imam Malik also was from the students of Imam Jaafar and benefited from his knowledge. [19](#) It is reported that Malik said: "I used to go to Jaafar Ibn Muhammad and he was often smiling but when the Holy Prophet was mentioned the seriousness and marks of respect appeared on his face. Whenever I visited him I found him in one of three situations: Either praying or fasting or reading the Holy Qur'an. Whenever he spoke about the Messenger of God he did that while he was on ablution and he always spoke the right words. He was from God-fearing people who are not materialistic but true worshippers..." [20](#)

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hunbul reported Hadith "Al-Thaqalain" through many channels: He recorded in his Musnad through two channels to Zayd Ibn Thabit that the Messenger said: "I am leaving in you two caliphs: The Book of God a rope extended between heaven and earth and the members of my House. And they will never part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment)." [21](#)

He recorded that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger said: "I am about to be summoned (by God to depart from this world) and I shall respond. I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: The Book of God and the members of my House. The Book of God is a rope extended between heaven and earth and the members of my House. The Almighty informed me that they shall never part with each other until they join me at the Basin. Beware how you shall treat them after me." [22](#) This hadith was also reported by Imam Ahmad through his channel to Zayd Ibn Arqam.

Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zuhrah a contemporary distinguished Islamic scholar said: "The Muslims never agreed in spite of their affiliations with various schools as they agreed on the virtuousness of the Imam Al-Sadiq and his knowledge. His contemporary of the Sunnite Imams received from his knowledge and used it. Malik was one of his students and so were those who were from Malik's ranks such as Sufyan Ibn Oyainah Safyan Al-Thouri and many others. Abu Hanifah also was one of his students though he and Al-Sadiq were almost from one age and Abu Hanifah considered him the most knowledgeable among people." [23](#)

Imam Al-Shafi-i was an outstanding Shi'ite of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. And this was recorded by reliable scholars. Ibn Hajar in his book Al-Sawa-iq Al-Muhriqah said that Al-Shafi-i in one of his poems said: "Members of the House of the Messenger of God your love is an imperative duty that was revealed in the Holy Qur'an. It is a sufficient distinction for you that whoever does not pray on you has no prayer." [24](#)

The four Imams were scholars and "mujtahids" (scholars who are qualified to form independent Opinions in the Islamic rules which is not clear enough to be a place of agreement among Muslim scholars).

The rules which are completely clear in the faith of Islam do not have room for "ijtihad" or opinion. It would not be said that the (opinion) of Abu Hanifah or any other one of the Four Imams is that the five daily prayers are devotional duties or that the morning prayer is composed of two Rakaas.

These matters have no place for opinions because they are self-evident in Islam. Due to the absence of

specific instructions in the Qur'an or the "Sunnah" of the Prophet in some details of the Islamic rules or because the instructions are unclear or because there are conflicting hadiths some of the rules are usually unknown to the Muslim scholars.

The four Imams formed their various opinions in matters such as whether a praying person should put one hand over the other while standing or should he free both hands. Should or should not a praying person start any Qur'anic chapter he (she) reads by reading:

"Bismillahi-RRahmani-RRaheem (In the name of The Almighty The Beneficent The Merciful). Should a Muslim wash or wipe his feet while making his ablution for prayer? Again would or would not ablution be spoiled by merely touching a woman? In such matters most of the "mujtahids" formed their opinions but without reaching the degree of certainty. Because most of the opinions of the "mujtahids" are not certain they were called "mathdhab."

Since most of the verdicts in this area are uncertain and their sources are not clear the Imams differed with each other about the rules. The opinions of these Imams conflicted with each other. Therefore we know that some of them did not agree with the Holy Prophet because his teachings do not contradict each other. It would not be logical that the Holy Prophet says for example that touching a woman's hand spoils and does not spoil ablution.

If we take one of the two opinions by itself it may be in agreement with the instructions of the Holy Prophet but we cannot be sure of that because we do not know with certainty what the Holy Prophet said concerning the law in question. That is the situation with the opinion of the mujtahid.

The teachings of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet do not disagree with each other because they do not try to form opinions about the Islamic Rules. They knew the rules with certainty. What one of them such as the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq said is what all the Imams from the House of the Holy Prophet said.

What they said is what the Messenger of God said. Whatever they said concerning the Shari-a is a report which came to each one of them through a channel composed of these Holy Imams starting with the Imam 'Ali and what Imam 'Ali reported is what the Holy Prophet said.

It is reported that Al-Imam Al-Sadiq said: "My statement is the statement of my father. The statement of my father is the statement of my grandfather. The statement of my grandfather is the statement of Al-Hussein. The statement of Al-Hussein is the statement of Al-Hassan.

The statement of Al-Hassan is the statement of Ameer Al-Mumineen 'Ali. The statement of Ameer Al-Mumineen is the statement of the Messenger of God and the statement of the Messenger of God is a Revelation of God." [25](#)

Athafer Al-Seirafi reported that he was with Al-Hakam Ibn Oyainah at the house of the Imam

Muhammad Al-Baqir (the father of Jaafar Al-Sadiq). Oyainah asked Al-Baqir about some Islamic rules. Abu Jaafar told his son to bring the book of 'Ali. He brought a huge book and Al-Baqir opened it and looked at it until he found the subject in question. Abu Jaafar said: This is the writing of 'Ali and the dictation of the Messenger of God.

Then he looked at Al-Hakam and said: "Abu Muhammad go you and Selemah and Al-Miqdad wherever you want right or left. By God you will not find more reliable knowledge at any place than that of a people Gabriel used to come to."[26](#)

These two reports and others like them which came through the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet agree with Hadith "Al-Thaqalain " the recorders of which from the Sunnites reported through their channels which included about twenty companions.

This hadith testifies as we mentioned before that the instructions of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet always agree with what God and His Messenger said. The Almighty God according to the hadith informed the Messenger that the Book of God and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet will never part with each other (until the Day of Judgment). The Prophet therefore declared in the hadith itself that adherence to the Book of God and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet represented a security for the Muslims against straying.

Therefore their instructions are the instructions of the Prophet himself. Their statements in religion are not opinions based upon conjectures like the opinions of the righteous four Imams. They are rather reports of the Prophet's own statements and these reports are of the highest degree of authenticity because they never parted with the Holy Qur'an.

I do not mean that the scholars from the Shi'ites and their hadith-recorders knew with certainty all of what the members of the House of the Holy Prophet stated of instructions. Nay the Shi'ite scholars and reporters do not know with certainty all instructions of these Imams. Those instructions came to the reporters and scholars through hadiths which were reported by one or a few reporters.

Therefore they did not become certain. Some of the hadiths which reported the instructions of these Imams were contradicting each other or their indications were not clear.

This should not harm. What was reported of these Imams is like what was reported of the statement of the Messenger himself. Most of the hadiths which reported the instructions of the Holy Prophet were not "Mutawatir" (reported independently by numerous reporters which makes it certain). And some of it does not have a clear indication.

Yet in spite of all that we cannot put the hadiths of the Holy Prophet on the same level with the opinions of "mujtahids." This is because when a hadith of the Prophet is mutawatir or near to it it produces certainty concerning the Divine law.

On the other hand if the verdict of a mujtahid were reported with certainty we would not be certain that the verdict agrees with the Divine law. This is because the mujtahid who issued the verdict was not recommended by the Prophet as a man who does not part with the Holy Qur'an.

It saddens us and we consider it less than fair that the Sunnite Schools refuse to put instructions of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet at least on equal level with the verdicts of the four Imams in spite of what the Messenger of God said about his House while he did not say anything about the four Imams.

Unjustifiable Bias

Some of the Sunnite scholars justify their negative attitude towards the instructions of the House of the Prophet by saying that they do not follow these instructions because they do not have confidence in the reporters who conveyed these instructions. This means that they do not have confidence in the Shi'ite hadith-recorders.

Yet the logical way through which we can know the verdicts of an Imam is to take it from his followers rather than from his opponents. Would it be fair on the part of the Shi'ites if they want to know the verdicts of Abu Hanifah to say: We do not accept these verdicts because they were reported by his followers and we do not have confidence in them? When did God and His Messenger say that the reporters and the recorders of the hadith have to be Sunnites rather than Shi'ites? The Almighty prohibited us from following the report of transgressors when He said:

"O you who believe (In Islam) if a transgressor brought to you information try to verify it lest you damage a community in ignorance; then you will regret what you have done." The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 23

Being a follower of the House of the Prophet and adherent to their instructions is not a transgression nor being a non-Shi'ite is a righteousness.

To love the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and to follow their instructions is actually a confirmation of righteousness and a major good deed. The Almighty has mentioned in His Book that He will double such a good deed. He commanded His Prophet to inform the Muslims that their reward to him on the delivery of the Message is their loyalty to the members of his House and so the Almighty said to him:

"Say: I ask you no reward for it (delivery of message) but to be loyal to my kindred. And whoever does a good deed We shall increase his goodness. Certainly God is Wealthy and Thankful." The Holy Qur'an chapter 42 verse 23.

We have already mentioned that a good number of the outstanding companions of the Holy Prophet were followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. The Messenger himself asked his Lord

to love whoever loves 'Ali and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.[27](#)

It is the duty of the Muslim scholars to wage a campaign of correction to remove from the minds of the Muslims what has been left in it of prejudice inherited from the Umayyads who used to punish the Muslims for their loyalty to 'Ali.

The duty of all Muslim scholars is to inform the masses of the Muslims about the following simple fact: The four Schools of thought which are followed by the Sunnite Muslims are not the only means of knowing the Islamic Law.

They ought to inform them of the simple truth that the Holy Prophet did not command the Muslims to follow these four schools; that these schools were born more than one hundred years after the Prophet's death; and that the religion of Islam was completed before the death of the Holy Prophet. How could the adherence to these four Schools be a requirement for Islam or Iman while Islam was completed long before their birth?

The four Imams were scholars mujtahids and qualified to issue verdicts. How can we justify the belief that these four Imams were the only mujtahids or the only qualified to give verdicts? How can we believe that the Muslim women from all generations will never be able to give birth to men equal to the four Imams?

We believe that the Messenger of God was the Final of the Prophets only because God informed us in His great Book that Muhammad is the Final of the Prophets. How can we say that Imam Ahmad Ibn Hunbul (the last of the four Imams) is the Final of the mujtahids and that no qualified person for issuing verdicts will ever come after him? Did the Almighty or His Messenger inform us of this?

What is available and what will be available to the Muslim scholars who came after these four Imams from the books of hadith and its authentic sources were not available to the four Imams. To substantiate this it would be sufficient to remember that the first of the Sahih which are accepted by the Sunnite Muslims is "Sahih Al-Bukhari."

This Sahih was not available to a man like Abu Hanifah because he was born in the year eighty-two after the Hijrah and Al-Bukhari was born one hundred and ninety years after the Hijrah. Of course he did not write his book when he was born. The logical opinion is to say that the door of "ijtihad" remained open after the four Imams rather than to say that that door has been closed forever without any rational justification.

Granted that the door of "ijtihad" had been closed for all generations after the four Imams. How can we close that door in the face of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet while the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq was the teacher of the first two of the four Imams; Malik and Abu Hanifah?[28](#)

I know it is not easy to change an opinion that has been established in the minds of the Muslims for

several centuries but it would not be impossible if a good number of good scholars would wage a corrective and educational campaign throughout the Muslim World. The scholars can use the mass media which was not available in any previous century.

My Humble Effort

In 1959 I attempted to begin a campaign in this direction. I visited Egypt and met the late President Jamal Abdul-Nasser. I discussed with him and with the late Sheikh Al-Azhar Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltut (on the first day of July) separately the matter of reconciliation between the Sunnite and the Shi'ite Schools. I spoke to each of the two leaders about the necessity of solving this problem and about the way through which it can be solved.

I said to each of them that this is a problem started during the Umayyad era and continued through the Abbaside era and the Turkish period. We still suffer a great deal with this problem which continues to separate the Muslims and spread suspicions among them and make them reciprocate false accusations.

I said to both leaders that the Shi'ite Imami Ja'afaris (the followers of the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq) are not seeking a privilege or superiority. They want the Muslim World to know that the teachings of the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq and the rest of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet are not less valuable and sound than the teachings of the four Imams.

The teachings which the Shiite Imami Jaafari follow deserve and command the respect of all Muslims. Those who follow these teachings are sound Muslims and true believers like the followers of the four schools. I said that a declaration by the Sheikh Al-Azhar in this direction will be a sound step in the way of the Islamic unity.

Sheikh Al-Azhar asked me: "Would it not be sufficient for solving this problem to teach the Jaafari Mathhab (school of thought) at Al-Azhar?" I replied in the negative and mentioned to him two reasons:

1. Teaching of the Jaafari Math-hab does not indicate that Al-Azhar and its Sheikh believe in the soundness of such a Math-hab. Al-Azhar can decide to teach the Marxist theory. This would not indicate that you believe in the soundness of that theory.
2. Teaching of the Jaafari math-hab at Al-Azhar may make a few hundred students of Al-Azhar aware of this Math-hab. This is not our aim. Our aim is to inform the millions of Muslims of the soundness of the teachings of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

This would not be accomplished except by issuing a verdict of equality between the Jaafari Mathhab and the four Math-habs. Such a declaration should be published and announced through all Islamic media. This may inform the millions of Muslims at once about this truth which was ignored for hundreds of years.

The grand Sheikh responded to this suggestion immediately. On the following day his son-in-law and secretary Mr. Ahmad Nassar visited me and brought the good tidings: The Grand Sheikh had responded to my invitation and issued a verdict about the subject. I went with him to the Grand Sheikh thanking him for his historical achievement. The Sheikh read to me the text of the verdict before publishing it.

On the seventh of July 1959 the Middle East radio station and the Egyptian and the Lebanese press published the text of the verdict of the Grand Sheikh.

Sheikh Al-Azhar issued his verdict in a form of an answer to a question that was directed to him as follows: "Some people view that in order to have religiously sound devotions and transactions it would be imperative to follow one of the four known Islamic schools: Hanafi Shafi-i Hunbali and Maliki.

This excludes the two Shi'ite schools: Imami (Jaafari) and Zaydi. Sheikh Shaltut in answering this question stated the following: "It is permissible to a non-"mujtahid" (the one who is not qualified to give his own opinion) to follow the opinion of "Ulama" (Muslim scholars) whose knowledge and piety are believed provided such an opinion reaches its followers in a correct and nearly certain way directly or indirectly.

"We should not be concerned with a view expressed in some books which claims that the four schools are the only ones to follow and that it is not permissible for a person to move from one school to another.

"The word Shi-a (Shi'ite) by which the followers of 'Ali (the son of Abu Talib) are known is derived from the word "mushaya-ah" which means to follow.... There are groups related to 'Ali and they are the well-guided ones. Of these good Shi-a is the group which is known by the name of Jaafari or Imami Ithna-Ashari. This well known school follows principles that are taken from the Book of God and the teachings of His Messenger which reached them through their Imams in both fundamental belief and Islamic Law.

"The difference between the Jaafari and Sunni Schools is not greater than the difference among the Sunni Schools themselves. They (the Ja'afaris) believe in the fundamental principles of Islam as they are stated in the Glorious Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet. They also believe in all the rules whose inclusion in the religion of Islam is self-evident and whose recognition is required for being a Muslim and the denial of which excludes the person from Islam.

The Math-hab of these Jaafari Shiites in the Islamic laws is completely recorded and well known. It has its own books conveyers (who reported the statements of the Prophet and the Imams) and the supporting evidence of what they convey. The authors of these books and those from whom these authors had received the (hadiths) are well known and their scholarly and jurisprudential ranks are respected among the Muslim scholars."

From this explanation it becomes evident that:

1. Islam does not command any of its followers to follow a particular Islamic School. On the contrary it

establishes for every Muslim the right to follow at the beginning any one of the correctly conveyed Math-habs whose verdicts are recorded in their respective books. It is permissible also to any one that follows one of these schools to change to another one—any other school—and he is not sinning by doing that.

2. The Jaafari school which is known as "The mathhab of the Ithna-Ashari" Imami Shi'a is a sound school. It is permissible to worship God according to its teaching like the rest of the Sunni schools.

3. The Muslims ought to know this and get rid of their undue bigotry for particular schools. The religion of God and His law do not follow nor are they bound to a particular school. All the founders of these schools are mujtahid (qualified to give verdict) reward-deserving from God and acceptable to Him. It is permissible to the non-mujtahid to follow them and to accord with their teaching whether in devotion or transactions."

This recognition should have taken place during the second century after the Hijrah when the four Islamic Schools were in the stage of formation. The School of the Imam Jaafar is the School of the House of the Prophet Muhammad who was declared by the Prophet to be inseparable from the Qu'ran and that the adherence to the Qur'anic teaching and their teaching represents security against straying. This is the School of the Imam 'Ali who was declared by the Prophet to be the gate of the city of knowledge.

The fact is that the Umayyads and the Abbasides policies viewed that recognizing the School of the House of the Prophet is dangerous to them.

However the Declaration of Sheikh Al-Azhar is a positive step and in the right direction. It is true that it came very late but it is an indication that some of the contemporary Islamic scholars have a new and sound way of thinking. Should this step be followed by other positive steps the Muslim World may regain its brotherhood and unity.

[1.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 1 p. 19.

[2.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 1 pp. 174.

[3.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 1 pp. 226–227.

[4.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 1 p. 232.

[5.](#) Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 1 p. 20 Muslim also reported it in his Sahih part 1 pp. 162–167.

[6.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 1 p. 157.

[7.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 334.

[8.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 383

[9.](#) Ibn Majah his authentic Sunan part 1 p. 53 hadith no. 149.

[10.](#) Al-Tirmidhi in his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 332 hadith no. 3884

[11.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 536.

[12.](#) The author The Brother of the Prophet vol. 1 chapter 20 pp. 244–245.

[13.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 131.

[14.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 144.

[15.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak p. 3 p. 151.

[16.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 25

- [17.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 27
- [18.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 27
- [19.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 66
- [20.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq pp. 76-77
- [21.](#) Imam Ahmad Al-Musnad part 5 p. 181
- [22.](#) Imam Ahmad Al-Musnad part 5 p. 17
- [23.](#) Imam Ahmad Al-Musnad part 3 p. 66
- [24.](#) Al-Fakhr Al-Razi in his Commentary on the Holy Qur'an chapter 42 verse 43.
- [25.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 425
- [26.](#) Abu Zuhrah Imam Al-Sadiq p. 425
- [27.](#) The author this book part 2 chapter 38.
- [28.](#) Abu Zuhrah Al-Imam Al-Sadiq p. 25

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