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Letter 4: To one of the officers of his army

ومن كتاب كتبه (عليه السلام)

إلى بعض أُمراء جيشه

If they 1 return to the umbrella of obedience then this is all that we want. But if the condition of these people points out towards disruption and disobedience then, taking with you those who obey you, rush upon those who disobey you, and while you have those with you who follow you do not worry about those who hold back from you, because the absence of a halfhearted man is better than his presence, and his sitting down is better than his rising up.

فَإِنْ عَادُوا إِلَى ظِلِّ الطَّاعَةِ فَذَاكَ الَّذِي نُحِبُّ، وَإِنْ تَوَافَتِ الاْمُورُ بِالْقَوْمِ إِلَى الشِّقَاقِ وَالْعِصْيَانِ فَانْهَدْ بِمَنْ أَطاعَكَ إِلَى مَنْ عَصَاكَ، وَاسْتَغْنِ بِمَنِ انْقَادَ مَعَكَ عَمَّنْ تَقَاعَسَ عَنْكَ، فَإِنَّ الْمُتَكَارِهَ مَغِيبُهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْ شُهُودِهِ، وَقُعُودُهُ أَغْنَى مِنْ نُهُوضِهِ.

1. When `Uthman ibn Hunayf, the Governor of Basrah informed Amir al-mu 'minin of the arrival of Talhah and az-Zubayr in Basrah and of their intentions, Amir al-mu 'minin wrote this letter to him, wherein he has instructed him that in case the enemy was bent on fighting, when facing him he should not enlist on his side those who on the one hand showed consideration for the personalities of `A'ishah, Talhah and az-Zubayr and who on the other hand had agreed to fight against them merely by persuasion, because such people could not be expected to fight steadfastly nor could they be depended

upon. Rather, such people would try to dishearten others too. Therefore, it was only good to leave aside such people.

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