

Imam Reza (A.S.) and Regency to Caliphate

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We are in front of an important historical event which busied the public opinion and stunned all political circles. The event is that al-Ma'mun appointed Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, as a heir apparent after him; it indicates that the succession would be taken from the 'Abbasids and handed over to their opponents, the 'Alawides; it astonished the people and they asked each other:

"How has the 'Abbasid policy changed into this line opposing the political line which the 'Abbasids have followed since the beginning of their reign?"

They asked one another such a question because the 'Abbasids were famous for persecuting and uprooting the 'Alawides; in other words, the 'Abbasids destroyed the 'Alawides, buried them while they were alive, threw their children into the Tigris, and used against them all kinds of genocide. The people and history have known that al-Ma'mu`n belonged to this ('Abba`s) family, who wronged the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them; therefore, it was not possible for him to follow behavior other than that of his fore-fathers or to deviate from their anti-'Alawides trend.

Al-Ma'mu`n was fed on showing detest and enmity toward the 'Alawides, for his grandfather al-Mansu`r and his father al-Rashīd followed all ways to put an end to them; they employed all their economic and political organs to degrade their importance and dignity and to remove them from the political arena in the world of Arabs and Islam.

The 'Abba`sids were the opponents of the 'Alawides, but why did al-Ma'mu`n create such a sudden change (in his policy) and turn away from the plan and method of his fathers? Why did he appoint Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a successor after him? Similarly, why did Ima`m al-Rida` agree to undertake regency while he was fully aware of the deviation of al-Ma'mu`n and of his harboring malice against the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them? We will answer these questions as follows

Al-Ma'mun's Motives

It is necessary for us to pause in order to consider the reasons and motives which urged al-Ma'mu`n to appoint Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a successor after him:

1. Al-Ma'mu`n had no strong position in Islamic state, for the 'Abba`s) family disdained him because of his mother Mara`jil, who was among the slave-wives in the palace, because of his

strong relationship with al-Fadl b. Sahl and his entrusting all his affairs to him, while he was originally from Persia. Moreover, his brother al-Amin hated him, intended to do evil deeds toward him, and schemed against him, for he competed with him for the authority. Accordingly, al-Ma'mun wanted to reinforce his position, to strengthen his influence, and to overcome those who harbored malice against him. As a result, he vested the office in Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Rida, peace be on him, the greatest personality in Islamic world and son of Ima'm al-Sadiq, who was the first to supply Islamic world with thoughts and knowledge. Moreover large part of the Muslims believed in his Ima'mate and showed friendship to him. For this reason al-Ma'mu'n took the initiative and designated him as his successor over this important office in Islamic world.

2. Al-Ma'mu'n undertook the leadership of Islamic state while he was fully aware of that Islamic society harbored hate and detest against the 'Abba'sid family, who oppressed the Muslims, appropriated their affairs, wreaked all kinds of oppression and tyranny upon the 'Alawides, the summoners to social justice. So the Muslims wished for the return of the Umayyad reign though it was famous for cruelty and torture. In this connection, the poet says: Would that the tyranny of the Marwa'nis returned to us, and would that the just of the 'Abba'sids was in the fire.

Another poet says: I do not think that tyranny will come to an end while over the community is an 'Abba'sid governor.

Al-Ma'mun intended to open a new page for the citizens and to conceal the policy of his forefathers, so he appointed Ima'm al-Rida the hope of Islamic community, peace be on him as a successor after him. 4. Most al-Ma'mu'n's Army, officers and soldiers, were from among the Shi'ites who adopted the Ima'mate of Ima'm al-Rida, peace be on him, so he wanted to win their affection and loyalty.

5. Surely the revolt against the 'Abba'sid government broke out and extended to most Islamic regions, and the motto of the revolutionaries was: "The summons to al-Rida from among the family of Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family."

The revolutionists responded to this allegiance al-Ma'mu'n pledged to the Ima'm. In the meantime, he gave the Ima'm the nickname of al-Rida (i.e. the consent), that, through that, he might attract the feelings of the revolutionaries, and they pledged allegiance to him, and he got rid of the danger which encircled his state and was about to wrap up its banner and fold up its principal features.

This was the plan of al-Ma'mu'n, who was among the first-class diplomatic corps, so he was able to overcome the events surrounding him and to save his government from the deadliest

danger encircling it. 5. Through his nominating Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, for succession, al-Ma'mu`n was able to give a religious quality to his government in order to indicate that it was not oppressive like that of his fathers, that mutiny against him was illegal, and that it was obligatory on the Muslims to war against those who revolted against him.

6. Among the aims which al-Ma'mu`n achieved through this pledge of allegiance (to the Ima`m) is that he was able to know the Shi'ite elements and to recognize their identities. It is worth mentioning that the places of the Shi'ites were very secret, that the Shi'ites worked in secret and in hiding-places. However, after this pledge of allegiance (to the Ima`m), their affair appeared, and the authorities were able to discover them. 7. Al-Ma'mu`n pledged allegiance (to Ima`m al-Rida`) in order to indicate that the Ima`m, peace be on him, was not among those who renounced the world; rather he was among those who loved it through his accepting this pledge of allegiance. However, the Ima`m was fully aware of al-Ma'mu`n's objectives which he disproved when he stipulated that he would not appoint nor remove nor take part in government.

These are some motives which urged al-Ma'mu`n to appoint Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a successor after him.¹ Now, we will return to talk about regency, the attitude of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, toward it, and some matters concerning it; that is as follows

Al-Fadl's Letter to the Imam

Al-Fadl b. Sahl sent a letter to Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, in which he asked him to come to Khurasa`n in order to receive the caliphate from al-Ma'mu`n; this is the text of the letter:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, To 'Ali b. Musa al-Rida`, son of Allah's Apostle, the chosen one, who has become rightly guided by his guidance, followed his practice, kept the religion of Allah, and stored the revelation of Allah. From his friend, al-Fadl b. Sahl, who sacrificed himself for returning his right to him, and connecting his night to his day concerning it. Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you, O rightly guided one. Verily I praise on your behalf Allah, other than Whom there is no god, and ask Him to bless Mohammed, His servant.

Now then, surely I hope that Allah has helped you and permitted you to return your right from him who has deemed you as weak, that He may magnify His favors toward you, make you the inheriting Ima`m, make your enemies and those who have turned away from you see from you what they feared. Verily, this letter of mine is out of a determination from the Commander of the faithful, the servant of Allah, Imam al-Ma'mu`n and from me for returning your right to you, confirming your right before you, handing it over to you, for which I ask Allah who has become

aware of it, that you will inform me of that through which I will be the happiest of all people, among the successful with Allah, among those who accomplish the right of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and his deeds, among those who help you with it, that I may reach both good through showing friendship to you and your state.

When my letter reaches you, may I be your ransom, and it is possible for you not to place it off your hand, so that you may come to the Commander of the faithful (i.e. al-Ma'mu'n), who regards you as a partner in his authority, a mediator in his ancestry, and the most appropriate of the people for that which is under his hand. I have done that while I am surrounded by Allah's choice, protected by His angels, safeguarded by Him, and Allah is a guarantor for you through all that which gathers good benefit for you, and set right the community through you. Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector. Peace, Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you.

This letter, sent by the highest ranking official in the 'Abba'sid government, contains the following:

1. Giving noble nicknames and exalted qualities to the Ima'm, peace be on him, as follows: (the one who) kept the religion of Allah, and (the one who) stored the revelation of Allah. Of course, it is the Shi'ites who have given these nicknames to their Ima'ms. 2. Informing the Ima'm, peace be on him, of that the caliphate would be returned to him, that Allah, the Exalted, decreed to return this usurped right to its people and leaders, the Household of the Prophet, whose master was Ima'm al-Rida', peace be on him.
3. This letter was not written by al-Fadl only; rather it was written by him and al-Ma'mu'n, who had decided to abdicate the caliphate and to hand it over to the Ima'm.
4. This letter shows that al-Fadl asked the Ima'm to leave Medina (Yathrib) for Khurasa'n at once in order to undertake the leadership of the rule

The Attitude of the Imam

Our sources have not shown the Ima'm's answer to this letter, but it is certain that the Ima'm vigorously refused to respond to it, for he was aware of al-Ma'mu'n's intentions and al-Fadl's unreal letter to him. It is worth mentioning that the political motives schemed behind the scenes urged al-Fadl and al-Ma'mu'n to write it

Al-Ma'mun sends Messengers to the Imam

Al-Ma'mun sent an official delegation in order to ask the Ima'm to leave Medina (Yathrib) for Khurasan. As for the person who headed the delegation, he was al-Raja' b. Abu al-Dahhak; it is said that he was 'Isa b. Yazid, better known as al-Julu'di. Al-Sayyid al-Amin has regarded that

as unlikely, and he said: "Surely al-Julu`di was among the (military) commanders of al-Rashīd and was an opponent of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, so it was not wise for al-Ma'mu`n to send him to the Ima`m in order to ask him to leave (Medina for Khurasa`n)."

Al-Ma'mun ordered the head of the delegation to bring the Imam, peace be on him, through the road leading to Basrah, al-Ahwa`z, and Fars, and not to bring him through the road leading to Ku`fa and Qum.¹ Also al-Ma'mu`n wrote to Ima`m al-Rida` and asked him not to come through the road leading to the mountain and Qum, and to come through the road leading to Basrah, al-Ahwa`z, and Fars.

The reason for al-Ma'mu`n's insistence and concern is very clear; it is that he did not want the Ima`m to come through Ku`fa and Qum, for both cities were among the Shi`ite centers, and their inhabitants were from among those who showed friendship to the Ima`m and believed in his Ima`mate. So if the Ima`m had passed through them, he would have been magnified and honored; this would have reinforced his position and subjected the 'Abba`sīd state to danger. As for the Ima`m's passing through Basrah, it did not benefit him, for its inhabitants inclined to 'Uthma`n and showed friendship to the 'Abba`sids. This step indicates the false plan of al-Ma'mu`n, who claimed that he would abdicate the caliphate and hand it over to the 'Alawides

The Imam says Farewell to the Grave of the Prophet

Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, did not find any escape from responding to al-Ma'mu`n, so he went to the grave of his grandfather, the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and said the final farewell to it, for he came to know that he would not visit it again. Muhawwil al-Sijista`ni has narrated, saying: "When the post regarding sending Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, on a journey to Khurasa`n came, I was in Medina.

He entered the mosque in order to say farewell to the grave of his grandfather, Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. He said farewell to it several times. He wept and wailed loudly, so I walked towards him, greeted him, and he returned the greetings. Then I congratulated him on that which he would reach, but he, peace be on him, said: 'Leave me, for I am going to leave neighboring my grandfather, may Allah bless him and his family, so I will die strange and buried beside Ha`ru`n (al-Rashīd).'" Muhawwil al-Sijista`ni said: "So I went out following the road of the Ima`m until he died at Tu`s and buried beside Harun

The Imam orders his family to weep over him

Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, came to know that he would not return to his family and homeland. So he gathered the members of his family, divided twelve thousand dinars among them, made them know that he would never return to them, ordered them to weep and wait for

.him while he could hear that, and then he said the final farewell to them

The Imam appoints his Son al-Jawad

Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, appointed his son al-Jawa`d as a successor after him, while he was seven years old or more than that. He made him enter the mosque of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and place his hand on the edge of the holy grave; he made him cling to it, ask his grandfather, the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, to protect him; then he said to him: "I have ordered all my agents and my servants to listen to you and .obey you." Then the Ima`m told his companions that his son would be the successor after him

To the Sacred House of Allah

The Imam had gone to the Sacred House of Allah to say the final farewell to it before he headed for Khurasa`n. Most his family accompanied him, among them was his son Ima`m al-Jawa`d, peace be on him. When he arrived the Sacred House, he greeted it, circumambulated it, performed prayers in the Standing-place of Ibra`him, ran, and circumambulated it along with his son al-Jawad.

When al-Jawa`d arrived at the Stone of Isma`il, he sat by it for a long time. So Muwaffaq al-Kha`dim asked him to stand up, but he refused and looked sad and sorrowful. So Muwaffaq hurried towards the Ima`m and told him about the state of his son. Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, hastened to his son and asked him to stand up, and he wept, sighed, and said: "O Father, how can I stand while you are saying the final farewell to the House with a farewell after which there will be no return?" Ima`m al-Jawa`d, peace be on him, saw sadness appear on the face of his father, so he concluded that his father was in the last part of his life. That happened, for Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, did not return to the Holy Houses and died .poisoned through the hand of al-Ma'mu`n, the 'Abba`sid

To Khurasan

Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, left the Sacred House of Allah for Khurasa`n, and he was extremely honored and magnified at every district or in every city through which he passed, for the Muslims hurried to receive him cordially, to get the blessing of kissing his hands, to ask him to stop at them, and to serve him. They asked him about the precepts of their religion, and he, .peace be on him, answered them about that

In Nishabur

The caravan of the Ima`m covered the desert, was earnest in waking, and did not pay attention to anything until it arrived in Nishabur.¹ The Ima`m was received there with a unique popular

reception, for Nishabur did not witness such a reception throughout its history. At the head of those who received him were the scholars, the virtuous, and the traditionalists who have narrated on his authority al-Hadith al-Dhahabi which we will mention. The Ima`m, peace be on him, stopped at the district of al-Gharbi or al-Farawi, in the house of a person whom the people of Nisa`bu`r called Bisanda, a Persian word means satisfactory, for the Ima`m was satisfied with him apart from the rest of the people and stopped at his house. Then the Ima`m planted an almond in that house, and it grew and became a tree and bore fruit in a year. When the people came to know of the tree, they began curing themselves with its fruit. So he who was inflected by a certain malady got the blessing through eating some of its fruit, and he recovered through the bless of the great Ima`m. A person cut some of its branches, and he became blind. Ibn Hamda`n cut down that tree, and he became blind. There was a public bath-house in Nisa`bu`r. The Ima`m entered it, washed himself, and performed a prayer on its top, so the inhabitants of Nisa`bu`r began getting the bless of that public bath-house. They washed themselves wherein, drank from it seeking bless, prayed on its top, and asked Allah, the Great and Almighty, to accomplish their needs, and they were .accomplished for them out of the bless of the great Imam

Al-Hadith al-Dhahabi

The scholars and the traditionalists surrounded the Ima`m, peace be on him, who was on the (back) of a gray mule wearing his turban. At the head of the scholars were Yahya` b. Yahya`, Isha`q b. Rahawayh, Mohammed b. Ra`fi', Ahmed b. Harb, and others. When the people saw him, and he was in that appearance which gave an account of the appearance of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, they said loudly, "There is no god but Allah," and exclaimed, "Allah is great!" They displayed sadness for the Ima`m and wept for him. That area became noisy out of weeping, so the scholars and the Huffa`z (memorizers of the Qur'a`n) called out: "O people, listen, understand, and do not harm Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, regarding his family!"

Then the Ima`m, peace be on him, delivered to the scholars this holy tradition, saying: "I heard my father Mu`sa` b. Ja'far say: I heard my father Ja'far b. Mohammed say: I heard my father Mohammed b. 'Ali say: I heard my father 'Ali b. al-Husayn say: I heard my father al-Husayn b. 'Ali say: I heard my father the Commander of the faithful 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib say: I heard the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, say (on behalf of Allah): 'There is no god but Allah is My stronghold, so he who enters My stronghold is safe from My chastisement.'"

When the Ima`m passed, he called out to the people of Nisabur, saying: "But according to its conditions, and I am among its conditions." Surely the statement, 'there is no god but Allah,' is

one of the strongholds of Allah, the Most High, but according to conditions among which is professing the Ima`mate of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, who is one of the testamentary trustees of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. More than twenty thousand scholars and memorizers of the Qur'an (huffaz) has written this holy tradition. As for the chain of authorities of this tradition, it is the greatest and most wonderful of all chains of authorities. Ahmed b. Hanbal says: "If this chain of authorities was recited before a mad person, he would recover from his madness." A Sa`ma`ni ruler ordered .this tradition to be written in gold and to be buried along with him

To Tus

The caravan of the Imam, peace be on him, left Nisabur and covered the desert until it arrived at Sanabad where there was a mountain from which cooking-pots were made. The Ima`m leaned on the mountain and said: "O Allah, benefit (the people) through it, bless that which is placed in it, and that which is made from it." Then he ordered some cooking-pots for him to be made from it. They were made for him, and he said: "My food will not be cooked (in anything) except in them."

The house of Hamid b. Quhtuba al-Ta'i was at Sanabad, where the grave of Harun al-Rashīd is. The Ima`m went to it and reached the grave of Harun. So he drew a line with his own hand and said to those around him: "This is my earth, and I will be buried in it. Allah will make my Shī'ites and those who love me visit me. If any of them visits me and greets me, Allah will forgive him (his sins) and have mercy on him through our intercession, the ahl al-Bayt." Then he turned to the qibbla, performed some rak'as, and supplicated with some supplications. Having finished his prayers, he performed a long prostration. I (i.e. Hamid al-Ta'i) counted that he said, "glory belongs to Allah," five hundred times. Then the Imam, peace be on him, gave some of his clothes to Hamid, who, in turn, gave them to a slave-wife of his. She took them, and then she quickly came back and said: "I have found a piece of cloth in the shirt of Abu` al-Hasan (al-Rida`)." Then she handed it to Hamid, and he at once gave it to the Ima`m, peace be on him, and asked him: "What is in it, O son of Allah's Messenger?"

"This is a supplication," the Ima`m, peace be on him, replied, "he who carries it in his own pocket, (all evil deeds) will be driven away from him, and it will be an amulet against the accursed Satan and the ruler." Hamid asked the Ima`m to dictate it to him, and he recited it to him. It reads as follows: "In the name of Allah, I seek protection in the Merciful (Allah) from you if you are pious or not pious. I have clung to Allah, the All-hearing, the All-seeing, against your ear and your eye. You have no power over me; nor over my ear and my eye; nor over my hair; nor over my skin and my flesh; nor over my blood; nor over my brain; nor over my nerves; nor

over my bones; nor over my family; nor over my wealth; nor over what my Lord has provided me.

I have been covered over between me and you with the cover of Prophethood through which the prophets of Allah covered themselves from the power of the Pharaohs. Gabriel is on my right hand; Michael is on my left hand; Seraphiel is behind me; Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, is before me; Allah is aware of what withholds you and Satan from me. "O Allah, let not his ignorance overcome your slowness if he incites and makes little of me! O Allah, I have sought refuge in You! O Allah, I have sought refuge in You! O Allah, I have sought refuge in You

Al-Ma'mun receives the Imam

Al-Ma'mun ordered the Ima'm to be received with an official reception, so the armed forces and the rest of the people went out to receive him. Al-Ma'mu'n was at the head of those who received him. There were along with him al-Fadl b. Sahl, the rest of his ministers and advisers. Al-Ma'mu'n shook hand with the Imam, welcomed him warmly, appointed for him a splendid house supplied with servants and all the necessary requirements, and took great care of him

Al-Ma'mun asks the Imam to undertake the Caliphate

Al-Ma'mu'n officially abdicated the caliphate and asked the Ima'm, peace be on him, to undertake it, saying: "O son of Allah's Messenger, I have realized your excellence, your knowledge, your asceticism, your piety, and your acts of worship; therefore, I see that you are more appropriate for the caliphate than me."

The Ima'm answered him: "Through renouncing the world I hope for the salvation from the evil of the world; through refraining from the unlawful I wish for winning good final results; through humbleness in the world I hope for exaltedness with Allah." "I have seen that I must remove myself from the caliphate and entrusted it to you," retorted al-Ma'mun.

However, the Imam was fully aware of the intentions of al-Ma'mun, who spared no effort to achieve his political objectives. How did al-Ma'mun abdicate the caliphate while for it he killed his brother al-Amin; destroyed Baghdad; spread bereavement, sadness, and mourning among the regions of Islamic world? How did he hand it over to the Imam in spite of all these evil deeds? The Imam gave a decisive answer which enraged al-Ma'mun, saying to him: "If this caliphate belongs to you, then it is not permissible for you to take off the garment in which Allah has clothed you and to give it to other than you. If the caliphate does not belong to you, then it is not permissible for you to give me that which does not belong to you."

The Ima`m silenced al-Ma'mu`n and closed before him all avenues of argument, so the latter threatened the former, saying: "There is no escape for you from accepting this matter." "I will never do that willingly," retorted the Ima`m. Dhu al-Riyasatayn 1 admired this attitude of them and began saying: "How fantastic, I have seen al-Ma'mu`n, the Commander of the faithful, entrusting the matter of the caliphate to al-Rida`, and I have seen al-Rida saying to him: 'I have no ability or power for that.' I have never seen the caliphate more abandoned than that."

The Ima`m, peace be on him, was aware of this false purpose, for al-Ma'mu`n belonged to the 'Abbasid family, who harbored malice against the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, killed them during the brightness of day and darkness of night, and spared no effort to eliminate them from the face of earth. As for al-Ma'mu`n, he was the wickedest of them, for he killed the master of the 'Alawides, Imam al-Rida, and killed other than him from among the pure 'Alawides. So how did the Ima`m trust him

Al-Ma'mun's claimed Justifications

As for al-Ma'mu`n's claimed justifications during his asking the Ima`m, peace be on him, to undertake the caliphate, they are as follows: 1. He summoned al-Fadl b. Sahl and his brother al-Hasan b. Sahl. When they were before him, he told them that he would entrust the caliphate to the Ima`m. So al-Hasan exaggerated that before him and explained to him its disadvantages. However, al-Ma'mu`n said: "I had promised Allah that if I overcame the deposed one (i.e. al-Amin), I would have handed over the caliphate to the most meritorious (afdal) of the family of Abu` Ta`lib. I do not know anyone more meritorious than this man on the face of the earth."

This means that al-Ma'mun had promised Allah that if he put an end to his brother and overcame him he would have handed over the caliphate to the most meritorious of the family of Abu Talib, and the most meritorious of them in his time was Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him. But this did not happen according to the events that followed.

2. Through his handing over the caliphate to the 'Alawides, he tried to reward Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, for his favors toward the 'Abbasids, for the latter appointed 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas as a minister and entrusted him with the Emirate of Basrah. Similarly, he entrusted 'Ubayd Allah b. al-'Abbas with the Province of Yemen, and other favors he did toward them. So al-Ma'mu`n wanted, through what he did, to reward the Ima`m regarding his children.

3. He did that in order to seek obedience to Allah, His good pleasure, good for the community, and the interests of the Muslims. These are some justifications which al-Ma'mu`n advanced as

.pretext for handing over the caliphate to Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him

His false Justifications

These justifications were unreal. If al-Ma'mun had been truthful to them, he would not have prevented the Imam from passing through Kufa when he came from Medina (Yathrib), for he feared that the people would receive him in this city, which was among the centers of the Shi'ites in Islamic world; likewise, he would not have prevented him from passing through Qum, for the same reason. Moreover 'Abd Allah b. Abu` Sahl al-Nobakhti, an astrologer, told him that it was not good for him to pledge allegiance to Ima`m al-Rida` when he appointed him as a successor after him; yet al-Ma'mun insisted on pledging allegiance to the Ima`m during that .time. This demonstrates that he was a liar regarding this matter

Al-Ma'mun asks the Imam to undertake Regency

Through all ways and means, al-Ma'mu`n tried to convince the Ima`m, peace be on him, to accept the caliphate or at least the regency after him, but he refused him vigorously. He went on convincing the Ima`m for more than two months, but all his attempts came to nothing, for .the Ima`m insisted on refusing him and refraining from undertaking any state office

Al-Ma'mun forces the Imam

All the diplomatic ways which al-Ma'mu`n followed to convince the Ima`m, peace be on him, to accept regency came to an end, so he thought that he had to follow another way which was threatening the Ima`m. He sent for the Ima`m. When he was in his presence, a conversation took place between them, so the Ima`m said to him: "By Allah, I have never told a lie since my Lord, the Great and Almighty, has created me. I have not renounced the world for the world, and I definitely know what you want."

"What do I want?" asked al-Ma'mu`n. The Ima`m asked him for security if he said the truth frankly, saying: "The Ima`m (i.e. the leader) must be truthful, mustn't he?" "I have given you security," replied al-Ma'mun. The Ima`m explained the motives which urged al-Ma'mun to vest regency in him, saying: "Through that you want the people to say: 'Surely 'Ali b. Musa (al-Rida`) has not renounced the world; rather it is the world which has renounced him. Do you not see that he has accepted regency and craved for the caliphate?'"

Al-Ma'mu`n became angry, so he shouted at the Ima`m, saying: "You always face me with what I hate! You have felt safe from my power! I swear by Allah, you should accept regency or I will force you to (accept) it! You should do that; otherwise, I will strike off your head! " The Imam, peace be on him, pleaded to Allah and supplicated Him, saying:

"O Allah, You have prohibited me from throwing my own soul into destruction; I have been forced; I am about to be killed by 'Abd Allah al-Ma'mun if I do not accept regency! I have been forced just as Yusuf and Danya`l, peace be on them, had been forced by the tyrant of their time to accept authority!

O Allah, there is no covenant except Your covenant; nor have I a friend except You! So give me success to establish Your religion and to enliven the Sunna of Your Prophet, Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family! Verily, You are the Master, and You are the Helper! You are the best Master, and You are the best Helper! " Any how, the Ima`m accepted regency while he was weeping and sad. Pain and worries dominated him

The Conditions of the Imam

The Imam mentioned before al-Ma'mu`n some conditions which showed that he was dissatisfied with regency and that he was forced to accept this office. These conditions are as follows:

1. He would not appoint anyone as a governor.
2. He would not dismiss anyone.
3. He would not abolish any rite.
4. He would be a distant adviser in the affairs of the state.

Yet al-Ma'mu`n accepted these conditions which clashed with his objectives and exposed his intentions

The Textual Document of Regency

The regency between the Ima`m, peace be on him, and al-Ma'mu`n was not confined to speech; rather it was written on an official document signed by the Ima`m and al-Ma'mu`n, witnessed by high-ranking statesmen, and transmitted by a group of historical sources. Ibn al-Jawzi came to know of the document and said:

"My uncle bought it (the document) for two hundred dinars and brought it to Sayf al-Dawla Sadaqa b. Mansu`r, and there were in it scripts of a group of writers such as 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abba`s and the Moroccan Minister (al-Wazir al-Maghribi)." Similarly, 'Ali b. Isa al-Arbali came to know of it and has mentioned its text in his book entitled Kashf al-Ghumma, and that was in the year 670 A. H. 2 I (i.e. the author) will narrate its text as follows:

"In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, "This letter has been written by the servant of Allah (i.e. al-Ma'mu`n) b. Ha`ru`n al-Rashid, the Commander of the faithful, to 'Ali b. Musa b. Ja'far. "Now then: So surely, Allah, the Great and Almighty, has chosen Islam as religion and chosen from among his servants messengers showing the way to Him and guiding

to Him, the first of them gives good news of the last of them and the last of them testifies the first of them, until the Prophethood of Allah reached Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, after a cessation of the (mission of the) apostles, extinction of knowledge, a cessation of revelation, and approach to the Hour.

So Allah has ended the prophets through him, made him a witness to them, and dominator over them, and He sent down to him His Holy Book falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it, a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One through which He has made lawful and unlawful, promised and threatened, cautioned and warned; through which He has ordered and prohibited, that the firm argument over His creatures may be His, that he who would be perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof, and most surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

"So he (the Prophet) delivered on behalf of Allah His message and summoned (men) to His path through what He had ordered him of wisdom, good exhortation, reasoning in the best way, then through jihad and hardness, until Allah took him to Himself and chose for him that which is with Him. So when the Prophethood came to an end, and Allah ended through Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, the revelation and the message, He has made the religion continue and regulated the authority of the Muslims through the caliphate, its completion and exaltedness, and undertaking it with respect to Allah through obedience through which the duties and punishments imposed by Allah, Islamic laws are carried out, and jihad is waged against His enemy.

"So it is obligatory on the vicegerents of Allah to obey Him concerning what He has entrusted to them and attracted their attention regarding His religion and His servants, and it is obligatory on the Muslims to obey their caliphs and to help them in establishing the right and justice of Allah, the security of the way, sparing blood, settling hostility, and reuniting; otherwise, the cord of the Muslims disorders; they become disordered; their beliefs become different; their religion is defeated; their enemy becomes powerful; they are different in opinion; and they lose this world and the next.

"So it is incumbent upon him whom Allah has appointed as a vicegerent on His earth and entrusted him with His creatures to do his best for Allah, to prefer that in which there is the good pleasure of Allah and obedience to him, to follow that for which Allah will make him stand and about which He will question him, to rule with the truth and do with justice in what Allah has placed him and vested him with, for Allah, the Great and Almighty, says to His prophet Dawud:

O Da`wud, surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice and

do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah; (as for) those who go astray from the path of Allah, they shall surely have a severe punishment because they forget the day of reckoning. And (for) Allah, the Great and Almighty, said: So by your Lord, We shall ask them all about what they were doing. And (for) we have heard that 'Umar b. al-Khatta`b said: "If a goat got lost on the bank of the Euphrates, I would fear that Allah would ask me about it." "By Allah, surely the one who will be asked about his own soul and informed of his work regarding what is between him and Allah will be brought before a great affair and tremendous danger; therefore, just imagine how much more is (the situation) of him who is responsible for taking care of a community? And reliance is on Allah; to Him is the flight, desire for success and protection, directing and guiding to that through which argument is established, good pleasure and mercy from Allah are won.

"And the best of the community in reflecting on his own soul and the loyalist of them to Allah regarding His religion and His servants from among His creatures on His earth is he who works according to obedience to Allah, His Book, and the Sunna (practices) of His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, during the period of his days and after it, strains his own opinion regarding him to whom he has entrusted his reign, whom he has chosen for the Ima`mate over the Muslims and taking care of them after him, and appoints for them him who is a great figure and a place of flight in order to bring them into harmony, to reunite them, to spare their blood, to give them security, with Allah's permission, from their division, their being corrupt by enmity, and their difference, and to raise the insinuation and trickery of Satan from them.

For Allah, the Great and Almighty, has regarded regency after the caliphate as part of completing and perfecting Islam, exalting and setting right its followers, and He has inspired succession in His vicegerents through His emphasizing on him whom they choose for Him after them, who through whom blessing is great and well-being is inclusive, and Allah, through that, has invalidated the deception of men of dissension, hostility, slander, difference, and any lying in wait for discord.

"He (al-Ma'mu`n) has been the Commander of the faithful since the caliphate reached him, so he has tried its ugly taste, its burdensome undertaking, its hard provisions, clinging to obedience to Allah which is obligatory on him who undertakes it (the caliphate), and fear of Him concerning what He has burdened with it. So he has tired his body, kept his eye awake, elaborated his thinking on that through which the religion is glorified, the polytheists are suppressed, the community is set right, justice is spread, the Book and the Sunna are established; and he has deprived himself of ease, gentleness, and happy life.

He is aware of that about which Allah will ask him; he likes to meet Allah while he is loyal to Him regarding His religion, His servants, choosing for succession after him and taking care of the community the best one (of men) in religion, piety, and knowledge, and the most hoped of them for assuming the command and right of Allah, whispering (to Him) through seeking refuge (in Him) concerning that, asking Him for inspiration in which there is His good pleasure and obedience to Him by day and night, reflecting on seeking and requesting him through the members of his household from among the children of 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abba`s and 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib, confining himself to his knowledge of him whose condition and doctrine he has come to know, sparing no effort and power to ask about him whose affair is unknown to him, till he examined their affairs through knowledge, tried their stories through seeing, regarded their conditions as innocent through observing, and discovered that which is with them through questioning.

"So his (al-Ma'mun's) choosing him (al-Rida`) was after asking Allah for the best and exerting himself in accomplishing His right toward His servants and His earth concerning the two houses in general. That is because he (al-Ma'mun) has seen his (the Ima`m's) brilliant excellence, his plain knowledge, his manifest piety, his pure asceticism, his renouncing the world, and his being safe from the people. He has clearly come to know that reports, tongues, and words have unanimously agreed upon him.

Besides, he still knows his excellence when young and adult, hence he has appointed him as his successor after him, having confidence in asking Allah for the best regarding that, for Allah has come to know that his act is as preferring for him and the religion, taking care of Islam and the Muslims, seeking safety, and establishing argument and salvation on the day when men will stand for the Lord of the worlds. "The Commander of the faithful had summoned his sons, the members of his house, his personal entourage (khassa), his commanders, and his servants, and they with pleasure have pledged allegiance (to al-Rida). They are aware of that the Commander of the faithful has preferred the obedience to Allah to his own desire regarding his children and other than them from among those who are more interlaced than him in womb relationships and closer (than him) in kinship.

"He (al-Ma'mun) has named him al-Rida` (consent), for the Commander of the faithful is satisfied with him; therefore, O group of the household of the Commander of the faithful and those who are in the guarded city from among his commanders, his soldiers, and the Muslims in general, pledge allegiance to the Commander of the faithful and after him to al-Rida`, 'Ali b. Mu`sa` in His name, His blessing, His good decree for His religion, and His servants, with a pledge of allegiance for which you stretch out your hands and at which you are delighted. You

are aware of what the Commander of the faithful has intended through it (the pledge of allegiance), preferring through it the obedience to Allah, taking care of himself and you, giving thanks to Allah for what He has inspired in the Commander of the faithful through it regarding accomplishing His right in taking care of you, his clinging to directing you and setting you right, hoping for the advantage of that through reuniting you, sparing your blood, bringing you together, closing your frontiers, strengthening your religion, defeating your enemy, setting right your affairs; and hasten to obedience to Allah and to the Commander of the faithful, for it is security; if you hurry to him and praise Allah for him, you will know that good luck is through him, Allah willing."

This document has ended and was dated on Monday on the eighth of the month of Ramada`n, in the year 201 A. H. Al-Ma'mu`n asked Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, to write the document of regency with his own sacred hand, and he, peace be on him, wrote the following:

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, praise belongs to Allah, the Doer of what He intends, there is no repeller of His decision; nor is there any repeller of His decree, who knows the stealthy looks and that which the breasts conceal, and His blessings be upon His Prophet, the last of the prophets, and his family, the good, the Pure.

"I say, and I am 'Ali b. Mu`sa` b. Ja'far, that the Commander of the faithful, may Allah support him with rightness and give him success for right guidance, has come to know of our right of which other than him has failed to know, so he has tightened the womb links which have been cut, made safe the souls which have become frightened; rather he has enlivened them while they were already destroyed, made them rich while they were poor, seeking the good pleasure of the Lord of the world, wanting no reward from other than Him, and Allah will reward the grateful and He does not waste the reward of the doers of good.

"And that he has entrusted his regency and the great authority to me if I remain (alive) after him, so he who unties the knot of the command of Allah through tying it and breaks a handle whose fastening is more lovable to Allah, then surely Allah will make lawful his sacredness if he through that reproaches the Ima`m and violates the sacredness of Islam, according to this the former (i.e. Ima`m 'Ali) did, was patient toward the random matters, and did not object the resolutions, for he feared that the religion would be scattered, the cord of the Muslims would be disordered, the affairs of the pre-Islamic paganism age was close (to him), an opportunity might be seized, and calamity might quickly be created.

"And I have appointed Allah (as witness) over my own soul if He makes me take care of the authority over the Muslims and vests me with His vicegerency to work among them (men) in general and the children of al-'Abba`s b. 'Abd al-Muttalib in particular, through obedience to

Him and to His Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, that I will not shed forbidden blood; nor will I make lawful pudenda nor property except that which is shed by the punishments prescribed by Allah and made lawful by the religious duties issued from Him, and that I will do my best and power to choose the most qualified persons, and through that I have placed against my own soul a certain promise about which Allah will ask me, for He, the Great

and Almighty, says: And fulfill the promise; surely (every) promise shall be questioned about. "And if I originated or changed or altered, I would be worthy of being changed and liable to severe punishment, and I seek refuge in Allah from His wrath, desire for success in obeying Him, coming between me and disobeying Him, (giving) well-being to me and to the Muslims. "Al-jami'a and al-jafr indicate the opposite of that, and I do not know what will be down toward me and you, surely the judgment is Allah's; He relates the truth and He is the best of the deciders, but I have obeyed the order of the Commander of the faithful, preferred his good pleasure, and Allah protects me and him; I have called Allah to bear witness to my own soul through that, and Allah is enough for a witness.

"I have written (the document of regency) in my own handwriting in the presence of the Commander of the faithful, may Allah prolong his life, al-Fadl b. Sahl, Sahl b. al-Fadl, Yahya` b. Akkthem, Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, and Hamma`d b. al-Nu'ma`n, in the month of Ramada`n, in the year 201 (A. H.)."

Al-Fadl b. Sahl, the minister of al-Ma'mu`n, wrote the following: "The Commander of the faithful, may Allah prolong his life, has decreed reading the meaning of this letter outwardly and inwardly in the Holy Shrine of our master, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, between the theological center (rouda) and the Pulpit in the presence of the elite from among the Banu` Ha`shim, the rest of the friends and the soldiers, and he asks Allah to make the Commander of the faithful and all Muslims know through it the argument over all Muslims and to invalidate the vague errors which have hindered the viewpoints of the ignorant: On no account will Allah leave the believers in the condition which you are in."

Al-Fadl b. Sahl wrote (this document) in the appointed date. Yahya` b. Akkthem has written the following: "Yahya` b. Akkthem has testified to the content of this page outwardly and inwardly, and he has written in his own handwriting the (appointed) date." Hamma`d b. al-Nu'ma`n has written the following: "Hamma`d b. al-Nu'ma`n has testified to the content (of this document) outwardly and inwardly." Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir has written the following: "Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir has testified to the like of that and written in his own handwriting the (appointed) date."

It is necessary for us to pause in order to consider the document of al-Ma'mu`n, what Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, has written, and what al-Fadl b. Sahl has testified, and that is as

:follows

The Contents of the Document of Regency

The document of regency signed by al-Ma'mu`n and Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, contains the following:

Firstly, praising Islam and Allah's great Book, which is a perfect system and an inclusive institution for making man happy and righteous. Secondly, lauding the great Prophet, the greatest summoner to Allah, hoister of torch of monotheism and intellectual renaissance on earth. Thirdly, clarifying the succession after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for through it the religion is established, the authority over the Muslims is regulated, and it is the shadow of Allah on earth.

Fourth, it is obligatory on the Muslims to obey the caliphs, for disobedience to them causes disadvantages to Islamic world. Fifth, the caliphs undertake important responsibilities of which are preferring obedience to Allah to all things, ruling over men with fairness and justice, and other important responsibilities which the document has inclusively shown.

Sixth, among the most important responsibilities of the caliphs is that they designate successors after them, that the designation should be based on perfect choice and exact test regarding him whom they appoint after them, and that the choice should not be subject to partiality and desires, for such an action leads the community to disadvantages. Seventh, al-Ma'mu`n did his best to choose the successor after him, so he did not find in the 'Abba`sids and the 'Alawide families anyone more meritorious than Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, because

he had noble qualities of which are the following:

- A. Brilliant excellence,
- B. Useful knowledge,
- C. Pure asceticism in the world,
- D. And refraining from all things made unlawful by Allah, the Most High.

It is these noble qualities which urged al-Ma'mu`n to elect the Ima`m and to nominate him for .regency after him

The Contents of what the Ima`m has written

As for the contents of what Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, has written concerning regency, they are as follows:

Firstly, praising al-Ma'mu`n's relationships with the 'Alawides, for he refreshed them through such relationships after they had faced tyranny and oppression through the 'Abba`sids rulers, who spared no effort to eliminate the 'Alawides from the face of earth; it is worth mentioning

that the 'Abba`sids buried the 'Alawides while they were alive, killed them everywhere, threw their babies into the Tigris, and wreaked other tragedies upon them.

Secondly, through these word of him, "if he through that reproaches the Ima`m," Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, referred to his grandfather, Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, the gate of the city of the knowledge of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and the pioneer of his wisdom, whom the people removed from his office which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, entrusted to him on the Day of Ghadīr Khum, and accordingly the community suffered from terrible kinds of tragedies and calamities, for the caliphate was undertaken by some criminals such as Mu'a`wiya, Yazid, al-Walī~d, al-Mansu`r, and other than them from among the Ima`ms of oppression and tyranny who spared no effort to oppress the people and to force them to yield to what they hated.

Similarly, through these words of him, "and was patient toward the random matters," he referred to the words of 'Umar b. al-Khatta`b, who described the pledge of allegiance to Abu` Bakr as, "a random matter (falta) from whose evil Allah has protected the Muslims." So Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, was patient toward this random matter, which he has mentioned in his saying: "and there is pricking (qadha) in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat."

That is because he feared that the word of Islam would collapse, and the unity of the Muslims would crack, for the Muslims were still close to the pre-Islamic paganism age, and the enemy forces lied in wait for attacking Islam if any division occurred in it; therefore, it is this matter which prompted Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, to be patient toward those who took his legacy.

Thirdly, the Ima`m promised before Allah and the Muslims that he would rule the Muslims with a policy based on pure justice, that he would return to the people the practices of his grandfather the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and that he would choose for the organ of government qualified and righteous persons who feared Allah, the Exalted, and sought the next world. If the Ima`m had undertaken the caliphate over the Muslims, he would have achieved all these great goals.

Fourth, the Ima`m, peace be on him, predicted that he would not assume the caliphate; nor would the community lead a life of ease and comfort during his rule, for he had read al-jami'a and al-jafr, which were among the deposits of the Prophethood, in which was the knowledge of what was and what would be until the Day of Resurrection, which showed that he would not undertake the caliphate, and that al-Ma'mu`n would deceive him through regency

As for what al-Fadl b. Sahl wrote in the document of regency, it refers to that al-Ma'mu`n ordered this document to be read in the mosque of the Prophet between the theological center and the Pulpit, and in the presence of the Hashimite notables, the armed forces, and the rest of the people, for reading the document in such a place would emphasize regency and disprove the views of the ignorant and of the partial. These are some contents of the document and its supplements. They are plain; there is no confusion or ambiguity in them.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Imam

Al-Ma'mun held a general popular festival attended by the ministers, the high-ranking statesmen, the commanders of the armed forces, and the rest of the people; at their head were the 'Alawides and the 'Abba`sids; the festival was held on Tuesday, the second day of the blessed month of Ramadan , in the year 201. Al-Ma'mu`n was seated and he had had two great cushions placed for Ima`m al-Rida`, so that he would have the same kind of seat and covers. He seated al-Rida`, peace be on him, on them; he was dressed in green and wearing a turban and a sword. Then al-Ma'mu`n ordered his son, al-'Abba`s, to be the first of the people .to make the pledge of allegiance to him , and then the people pledged allegiance to him

The Way of the Pledge of Allegiance

As for the way the people followed to pledge allegiance to the Ima`m, peace be on him, it was unique, with which the Umayyad and the 'Abba`sid kings were not familiar, for he, peace be on him, moved his hand and hit his own face with the back of it and their faces with the palm. "Stretch out your hand for the pledge of allegiance," al-Ma'mu`n demanded. "The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, used to make the pledge in this way when the people pledge allegiance to him," retorted al-Rida, peace be on him. Perhaps the Ima`m depended on these words of Him, the Exalted: "The hand of Allah is above their hands." So it was not permissible for one who made the pledge of allegiance to place his own hand above the hand of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or above the .hand of the Ima`m, peace be on him

The Imam predicts that this Matter will not be achieved

Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, was dressed in the robes of honor and attended that meeting. Orators and poets rose and began to mention his great merit and summoned the people to pledge allegiance to him. The Ima`m, peace be on him, looked at one of his close associates, who was feeling happy about what had happened. He signaled him to come closer. He went closer to him, and he said so that no one else could hear: "Do not occupy your heart with this matter and do not be happy about it. It is something which will not be achieved." The matter

was as the Ima`m, peace be on him, had said, for this pledge of allegiance to him was not achieved, and al-Ma'mu`n broke his promise when he gave him poison to drink and .assassinated him

Al-Ma'mun delivers a Speech

When the ceremonies of the pledge of allegiance to the Ima`m were over, al-Ma'mu`n rose, ascended the pulpit, and addressed the people, saying: "O people, you have come to know about the pledge of allegiance to 'Ali b. Mu`sa` b. Ja'far b. Mohammed b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib, peace be on him. By Allah, if I recited these names before the deaf and the ".dumb, they would recover with the permission of Allah, the Great and Almighty

Imam al-Reza (A.S.) delivers a Speech

After the pledge of allegiance to Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, had terminated, al-Ma'mu`n asked him to ascend the pulpit and address the people, so he went up on the pulpit. He praise and glorified Allah, and then he said: "O People, we have a right due to us from you through the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, and you also have a right due to you from us through him. If you carry out your duty to us, then it is necessary for us to carry out our duty to you."

The Ima`m did not mention anything other than these words in which he has expressed his right due to him from the people, for he is the grandson of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, who was faithful to their religion and their world, and took them out of the life of error and estrangement, so if they had carried out his right and installed him as a caliph, then it would have been obligatory on him to establish in their regions justice in all its senses .and concepts

Al-'Abbas delivers a Speech

Al-'Abba`s, the orator, delivered an eloquent, wonderful speech and ended it with this poetry line: There is no escape for the people from having a sun and a moon, so you are a sun, and this is that moon.

Persons abstain from pledging Allegiance to the Imam

Some persons abstained from pledging allegiance to the Ima`m, for they harbored malice against him, hated him, and were indignant with al-Ma'mu`n because of his appointing the Ima`m as a successor after him. They are as follows:

1. 'Isa al-Juludi.
2. 'Ali Bin 'Umra`n.

.Al-Ma'mu`n ordered them to be arrested and imprisoned

Al-Ma'mun orders them to be executed

He ordered these three persons to be taken out of the prison. When they stood before him and saw Ima`m al-Rida` sitting beside him, they became so angry that 'Ali b. 'Umra`n addressed al-Ma'mu`n, saying: "I seek refuge for you, O Commander of the faithful, with Allah from taking out this authority, which Allah has vested in you and with which He has singled you out, and placing it in the hands of your enemies and those whom your forefathers had killed and made homeless in the land."

"O Son of the adulteress," shouted al-Ma'mu`n at him, "why have you insisted on that?" Then he ordered his head to be struck off. Then Abu` Yunus was brought before him. When he saw the Ima`m sitting beside al-Ma'mu`n and enjoying honor and magnification, he became displeased and addressed al-Ma'mu`n, saying: "O Commander of the faithful, by Allah, this (one) who is sitting beside you worships an idol apart from Allah."

As a result al-Ma'mu`n ordered him to be executed, and he was executed. Then 'Isa al-Julu`di was brought into his presence. It is worth mentioning that he was the mortal enemy of the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them. It was he whom Harun al-Rashīd had sent to Medina (Yathrib) in order to loot and confiscate the garments and jewels of the granddaughters of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. Accordingly, he went to the house of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, intended to break into it and to loot the garments of the 'Alawide ladies.

The Ima`m refused that, but al-Julu`di paid no attention to him. So the Ima`m began entreating him and promising him that he would go in and bring him what he wanted. Al-Julu`di yielded to the words of the Ima`m, who went in, gathered the garments and jewels of the 'Alawide ladies, and gave them to him. He took them and went away. As for the Ima`m, he asked al-Ma'mu`n to pardon al-Julu`di, but he refused him vigorously, saying: "O my master, it is this (person) who had looted (the garments and jewels) of the granddaughters of Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family!" Al-Juludi looked at the Ima`m when he was speaking to al-Ma'mu`n and entreating him in order to pardon him, but the stupid one (i.e. al-Julu`di) thought that the Ima`m intended to avenge himself upon him because of what he had done toward him, so he said to al-Ma'mu`n: "O Commander of the faithful, I ask you through Allah and my service to al-Rashīd not to accept the statement of this (i.e. the Ima`m) concerning me." Al-Ma'mu`n turned to Ima`m al-Rida` and said to him: "O Abu` al-Hasan, he has asked me for pardon, and we regard his oath as true." Then he addressed al-Julu`di, saying: "No, by Allah, I will not

accept his statement concerning you."

Then he turned to the police men and said to them: "Let him join his friend!" So he was .advanced and his head was struck off

Important Decrees

Al-Ma'mu`n issued some important decrees on the occasion of appointing Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a successor. They are as follows:

1. Giving salaries to the soldiers for one full year.
2. Abandoning the black uniform of the 'Abba`sids , and dressing in green. I (i.e. the author) think that the inhabitants of the Garden will be dressed in green, for Allah, the Most High, says:
"And they shall wear green robes of fine silk and thick silk. "
3. Striking dirhams and dinars with the name of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him. Al-Sayyid : 'Abd al-Qa`dir Ahmed al-Yusuf has mentioned some examples of that currency as follows

The Dinar))

It has been written in the center of its face: "There is no god but Allah, the One without associate with Him." It has been written in the girth: "In the name of Allah, this dinar was struck in Samarqand in the year 202." And it has been written in the circle: "Allah's is the command before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice at Allah's help." It has been written in the center of the back: "Allah, Mohammed is Allah's Messenger, al-Ma'mu`n is the vicegerent of Allah, of what the Emir al-Rida`, the regent over the Muslims, 'Ali b. Mu`sa` b. 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib has commanded."

And it has been written in the circle of the center of the back: "Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah; He has sent him with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail
".over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse

The Dirham))

'Abd al-Qa`dir has moved the shape of the dirham from Berlin Museum numbered 1295. The formula of the writing in the center of the face is: "There is no god but Allah, the One without an associate with Him." in the year 203. The writing in the circle is: "Allah's is the command before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice at Allah's help." The writing in the back is: "Allah, Mohammed is Allah's Messenger, al-Ma'mu`n is the vicegerent of Allah, of what al-Rida` has commanded." The writing in the circle is: "Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah; He has sent him with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over
all religions, though the polytheists may be averse."

Another shape of the dirham available in the British Museum in London, number 289 is as follows:

The writing in the center of the face is: "There is no god but Allah, the One without an associate with Him."

The writing in the girth is : "the year"

The writing in the circle is: "Allah's is the command before and after."

The writing in the center of the back is: "It was commanded by the Emir of the Muslims, 'Ali b. Musa...'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib...Dhu al-Riya`satayn."

The writing in the circle is: "Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah."

These dots show that some letters have been erased, for they have copied in this manner in the world catalogs. This writing has been erased because the currency is very old and used very much. There are examples of the dirhams which were struck in the year 704 A. H., the same as the currency of the Ima`m, and it has been written in them what had been written in .the original currency

The Imam marries al-Ma'mun's Daughter

Al-Ma'mu`n asked Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, to marry the Princess, Mrs. Umm Habib ; the Ima`m accepted that and married her. Al-Ma'mu`n intended to seek nearness to the Ima`m, that the relationships between them might be strong. Some traditionalists think that al-Ma'mu`n married his daughter to the Ima`m in order to spy on his behavior and activities. This .step suits al-Ma'mu`n, who is famous for deception and trickery

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Imam in all Cities

Al-Ma'mu`n ordered all his governors over all Islamic cities and regions to take from all citizens the pledge of allegiance to Ima`m al-Rida` regarding regency. The following are some :cities where the pledge of allegiance to him was taken

Medina (Yathrib) .1

All popular classes in Medina (Yathrib) happily received the news of regency of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him. The governor of Medina, 'Abd al-Jabba`r al-Masa`hiqi, hurried to the mosque of the Prophet in order to take from the inhabitants of the city the pledge of allegiance (to the Ima`m). That was after al-Ma'mu`n's command concerning that. He ascended the pulpit and addressed the people, saying: "O People, this is the matter for which you have wished, the justice for which you have waited, and the good for which you have hoped. This is 'Ali b. Mu`sa` b. Ja'far b. Mohammed b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib,

the peace of Allah be upon them. "

The pledge of allegiance to Ima`m al-Rida` was the most important and valuable hope for which the Muslim community waited, for it impatiently waited for the return of the rule to the Ima`m, that he might establish pure justice among it, spread security and welfare among its .regions, and save it from the oppression and tyranny of the 'Abba`sids

Egypt .2

Al-Ma'mu`n wrote to his governor over Egypt, al-Sari, and ordered him to take from the Egyptians the pledge of allegiance to his successor Ima`m al-Rida`. The letter came to al-Sari in the month of Muhrrah, in the year 202. So al-Sari started taking the pledge of allegiance to the Ima`m, peace be on him. But Ibra`him b. al-Mahdi, the leader of the singers in Baghdad, spoiled this pledge of allegiance, for he wrote to the prominent soldiers and their commanders in Egypt and ordered them to depose al-Ma'mu`n and his heir apparent and to revolt against al-Sari. So some of them responded to him, among them were al-Ha`rith b. Zar'a b. Mahzam at al-Fista`t, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Wazir al-Jarawi at the bottom of the land, Sala`ma b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Azdi al-Taha`wi at al-Sa'id, Sulayma`n b. Gha`lib b. Gabriel, and 'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Abd al-Rahma`n b. 'Abd al-Jabba`r al-Azdi. As a result they revolted against al-Sari, summoned the people to pledge allegiance to Ibra`him, and appointed 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Azdi as a governor over Egypt.

So al-Sari warred against them, captured 'Abd al-'Aziz and a group of his family. He killed some of them, sent some of them along with 'Abd al-'Aziz's daughter to al-Ma'mu`n, and he ordered them to be killed. The rest went to al-Harawri in order to protect them. In this manner .the revolt was suppressed, and the people pledged allegiance to the Ima`m

Mecca .3

Al-Ma'mun sent 'Isa al-Juludi to Mecca in order to take from its people the pledge of allegiance to the Ima`m, and in Mecca was Ibra`him, the brother of Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him. 'Isa al-Juludi summoned the Meccans to pledge allegiance to the Imam, peace be on him, and to dress in green. So they responded to him with happiness and thankfulness, invoking (Allah) for al-Ma'mu`n for accomplishing their wish and hope through this pledge of .allegiance

Kufa .4

The overwhelming majority in Ku`fa received the news of the pledge of allegiance to the Ima`m with happiness and delight. Al-Ma'mun entrusted al-'Abbas, the son of Ima`m Musa, peace be

on him, with taking from the Kufans the pledge of allegiance (to the Imam). Ibrahim b. 'Abd al-Hamid gave him one hundred thousand dirhams and said to him: "Fight on behalf of your brother, for the Kufans respond to you for that, and I am along with you." Al-'Abba's undertook this task, so a large group of them responded to him. A group of people said to him: "If you summon (us) to al-Ma'mun and then after him to your brother, then we are in no need of your summons; and if you summon (us) to your brother or to some of the members of your household or to yourself, then we will respond to you." So al-'Abbas said to them: "I summon (you) to al-Ma'mu'n in the first place, and then after him to my brother, al-Rida."

These people abstained from pledging allegiance to the Imam, condemned those who pledged allegiance to him, and summoned them to break the pledge of allegiance. When Ibra'him b. al-Mahdi came to know about the desertion of the Kufans, he ordered his army residing at the Nile and under the leadership of Sa'id and Abu al-Bit to occupy Kufa and suppress the mutiny.

The armies of Ibrahim marched and arrived at al-Qantara near Dir al-A'war. There they were hindered by a military force headed by the 'Alawide, 'Ali b. Mohammed b. Ja'far and Abu 'Abd Allah, the brother of the great leader Abu' al-Sara'ya', so it met them, and finally the armies of Ibra'him b. al-Mahdi won a victory (over it). Then the armies of Ibra'him advanced towards Ku'fa; they were dressed in black; their motto was: "O Mansu'r there is no obedience to al-Ma'mu'n." The Ku'fans cowered and were unable to war against them, so they sent a delegation to the commander-in-chief of the army of Ibra'him in order to give security to al-'Abba's and his group, and he responded to them for that and made it a condition on them that al-'Abba's and his companions should leave Ku'fa. Then the delegation came back to al-'Abba's, who had no knowledge of that, and said to him: "Surely all your followers are mobs; you will see that the people will face war, loot, and murder; therefore, leave us; we are in no need of you."

Accordingly, al-'Abba's left Ku'fa while he was sad and sorrowful. He came to know that the Ku'fans would not protect him; nor would they fulfill their promise and covenant toward him. Then the armies of Ibra'him entered Ku'fa, but no clashes took place between them and those who pledged allegiance to the Ima'm as a heir apparent. These are some of the regions where .the pledge of allegiance to the Ima'm was taken as a heir apparent

Persons criticize the Imam

Some Shi'ites criticized the Ima'm for his accepting the succession after al-Ma'mu'n, the : 'Abba'sid. They are as follows

Mohammed Bin 'Arafa .1

Mohammed b. 'Arafa came to the Ima`m and asked him: "O son of Allah's Messenger, what has made you accept regency?" "That which made my grandfather the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, accept the consultative council," replied the Imam. Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, was forced to take part in the consultative committee which 'Umar b. al-Khatta`b chose in order to elect the caliph after him. The Ima`m announced his sadness and sorrow because of his joining the members of the consultative council, saying: "But good heavens! What had I to do with this consultation? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones?" Ima`m al-Rida` was forced to accept regency just as his grandfather was forced to accept the .consultative committee

A Man .2

A man criticized him for his accepting regency, saying: "May Allah set you right, how have you become the successor of al-Ma'mu`n?" Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, denied his accepting the succession after al-Ma'mu`n. Then he asked the man: "Who is better^{3/4}the Prophet or the testamentary trustee?" "No, the Prophet," replied the man. "Who is better the Muslim or the polytheist?"

"No, rather the Muslim," answered the man. Then the Imam, peace be on him, stated a decisive argument, saying: "The Chief of Egypt was a polytheist, and Yusuf was a prophet. Al-Ma'mu`n is a Muslim, and I am a testamentary trustee. Yusuf asked the Chief to vest him with an office, to the extent that he said to him: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land, surely I .am a good keeper, knowing well. As for al-Ma'mu`n, he has forced me to be his successor

Al-Rayyan Bin al-Salt .3

Al-Rayya`n Bin al-Salt visited Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, and said to him: "O son of Allah's Apostle, surely the people say: 'Verily, you have accepted regency though you show asceticism in the world.'" So the Imam answered him: "Allah was already aware of that I hated that. So when I had to choose between that and murder, I preferred acceptance to murder. Woe upon them! Surely Yusuf was a prophet and messenger, but when necessity pushed him to undertake the treasures of al-'Aziz (the Chief of Egypt), he said to him: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well. Similarly, necessity pushed me to accept that (i.e. regency), though I was forced and was about to be destroyed. I have accepted this matter and will leave it. So I complain to Allah, and it is He Whom we ask for help."

The Ima`m vigorously expressed his hate and detest toward this office, but he was forced to .accept it

A Kharijite .4

A Kha`rijite angrily walked towards the Ima`m and asked him: "Tell me about your entering into (negotiations) with this tyrant (i.e. al-Ma'mu`n) while you regard them as unbelievers and you are the grandson of Allah's Messenger, so what made you do that?" The Ima`m replied: "Who are more unbelieving in your viewpoint they or the Chief of Egypt and the inhabitants of his kingdom? Don't they, any how, claim that they are monotheists and those were polytheists and did not profess Allah? Wasn't Yusuf b. Ya'qu`b a prophet and son of a prophet; yet he demanded the Chief, who was an unbeliever, and said to him: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well, and took the place of the Pharaohs? As for me, I am one of the children of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. He (al-Ma'mu`n) forced me to accept this matter. What have I denied and you have become indignant with me?"

The Kha`rijite began saying: "I witness that you are the son of Allah's Apostle, and that you are truthful." Through his conversations with those who were indignant with him, the Ima`m, peace be on him, has shown that he was forced to accept being a heir apparent. That is because he had to chose between killing and accepting regency, so he accepted regency in order to save .his own soul from the destruction which would cause no advantage to Islam

The Indignant with al-Ma'mun

The anti ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them, forces were indignant with al-Ma'mu`n because of his designating Ima`m al-Rida` as a heir apparent; they regarded this procedure as taking the caliphate from the 'Abba`sids family who enjoyed its shadow. The 'Abba`sids family was the most indignant with al-Ma'mu`n, for they regarded that as a danger against their kingdom and :the end of their lives. They were so angry with him that they took the following measures

Deposing al-Ma'mun

The 'Abba`sids refused al-Ma'mu`n's pledge of allegiance to the Ima`m, regarded it as abolished, made public their mutiny against al-Ma'mu`n before the people, asked them to reject the pledge of allegiance to him and to his heir apparent. So many people responded to them. Accordingly, they stated that they were not responsible for the pledge of allegiance to al-Ma'mu`n.

The Pledge of Allegiance to Ibrahim Bin Shakkla

The 'Abbasids intended to pledge allegiance to their leader Ibrahim b. Shakkla, the Shaykh of the singers and the musicians in Baghdad. They summoned the people to accept him as a caliph and called him al-Murdi (the satisfactory one). The aware and the intellectual circles made fun of him and disdained him, for he was reckless and free from all values and traditions;

concerning him Di'bil al-Khaza'i, a revolutionary and social poet, has composed: Ibn Shakkla cried in Iraq and (among) its people, so those blind and foolish hurried to him. If Ibrahim (Ibn Shakkla) undertakes it (the caliphate), then, after him, Makha'riq and Zalzal will be appropriate for it. How do, and that does not occur, the dissolute inherit the caliphate one by one? Di'bil al-Khaza'i mocked the caliphate which was undertaken by this dissolute person. He has shown that if the caliphate had been suitable for him, then it would have been suitable for his equal singers such as Zalzal, and Makha'riq. It is an act of mockery that Ibra'him assumed the caliphate and undertook the affairs of the Muslims.

The historians have said: "Ibra'him was the mortal enemy of the family of 'Ali, peace be on him. When he had heard that regency was entrusted to Ima'm al-Rida', peace be on him, he became so angry that he composed these poetry lines: "So may the 'Abba'sids not be rewarded well, according to my claim, nor may they be delighted with my kindness.

They quickly came to me; and the barren time has brought them clear news. It has untied the bands of the properties from them and put them round the heads of the 'Alawides. So they (the bands) have clamored when they have been put round the heads which will demand the Prophet's legacy."

In his time the central budget became bankrupt, and the soldiers gathered around his court asking him for their salaries, so his messenger came out for them and said to them: "He has no money." A joker demanded and said: "In stead of money, let the Caliph comes out and sing three songs for the people on this side and three songs for the people on that side. "

Di'bil has composed a poem regarding this funny view, saying: O soldiers, do not be hopeless; take your salaries and do not be displeased. He will sing you a song the beardless and the bearded enjoy. Your leader's songs, neither enter the bag nor tie it. In this manner the caliph, who plays on the lute, provides his soldiers with the means of subsistence.

He has stamped the record of your salaries and corrected the determination; therefore do not be displeased.

The pledge of allegiance to Ibra'him is an ill omen, during it the people will be killed or .subjected to famine

Al-Ma'mu`n and his 'Abba`sids relatives exchanged letters of cursing and slandering. Al-Ma'mu`n sent the 'Abba`sids a letter which says : "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, "Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds; Allah has blessed Mohammed and the family of Mohammed, in spite of the unwilling, now then: "Al-Ma'mun has come to know of your letter, your scheming your affair, and your churning your butter. He has towered over the hearts of your young and your old. He is aware of you when you come to (him) and turn away (from him) and of what your letter had reached before you wrote it regarding coaxing falsehood, turning away the eminent figures of the truth from their places, your abandoning the Book of Allah and the traditions, and all that which has been brought by the truthful one Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, to the extent that you look like the bygone communities which had been destroyed (by Allah) through causing (the land) to sink down, drowning, the winds, the outcry, thunderbolts, and stoning. "Do they not then reflect on the Qur'a`n or are there locks on the hearts? By Him who is closer to the jugular vein than al-Ma'mu`n, were it not for that someone said, 'al-Ma'mu`n has left answer due to feebleness,' I would not answer you, because of your bad manners, your insignificant importance, your weak intellects, and your silly viewpoints in which you take ".refuge. So let a listener listen, and let those present tell those absent

This part of al-Ma'mu`n's letter contains the following:

1. Al-Ma'mu`n started his letter with calling down blessing upon Mohammed and his family, and then he said, 'in spite of the unwilling,' by which he meant the 'Abba`sids, who spared no effort to eliminate the name of the family of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and to remove their intellectual and spiritual qualities from the world of Islam.
2. He was aware of the hidden things in the souls of the 'Abba`sids and came to know of their intentions. He came to know of them when they came to him and turned away from him. He was aware of them when they supported falsehood, abandoned right, left the Book of Allah and what was brought by the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.
3. He answered their letter not as a result of taking care of them; rather he feared that it would be said that he was unable to answer them. Now, let us return to read the second part of al-Ma'mu`n's letter.

"Now then, Allah, the Exalted, sent Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, after a cessation of the (mission of the) apostles, while Quraysh were (taking care of) themselves and their properties; they did not think that there was anyone to compete with them (for exaltedness) or vie with them (for glory). So our Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was trusted and among the middle of them in house and the least of them in wealth.

So Khadija, daughter of Khwaylid, was the first to believe in him and to help him through her own wealth. Then the Commander of the faithful 'Ali b. Abu Talib believed in him while he was seven years old, did not associate anything with Allah even a flicker of an eye; nor did he worship an idol; nor did he swallow down usury; nor was he similar to those ignorant in their ignorance. As for the uncles of Allah's Messenger, they were either a mean Muslim or a stubborn unbeliever except Hamza, for he did not refrain from Islam; nor did Islam refrain from him until he passed away while he was fully aware of his Lord.

"As for Abu Talib, he looked after him (the Prophet), brought him up, defended him, and protected him. When Allah took Abu` Ta`lib to Himself, the people hurried and agreed on murdering him (the Prophet), so he immigrated to the people who made their abode in the city and in the faith, love those who have fled to them, and not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) to themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones."

This part displays the mission of the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family; it shows that the Prophet was sent to an arrogant group of people who thought that there was none to compete with him for exaltedness and glory, and that, at the dawn of the brilliant mission, none believed in him except Umm al-Mu'minin (the mother of the believers) Mrs. Khadija, who appropriated all her wealth for his message, and after her believed in him Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, the peace of Allah be upon him, who was seven years old, did not prostrate for any idol and did not worship it; rather he worshipped Allah, the Most High, due to faith in Him and sincerity to Him.

As for the uncles of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, one of them was Abu` Lahab, who was a spiteful, errant polytheist; among them was the hero of Islam, lion of Allah, the martyr Hamza, throw whom Allah exalted Islam, and who bravely defended Allah's Messenger until he died as a martyr.

The best uncle of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, is Abu` Ta`lib, who believed in Islam, adopted its goals and doctrines, stood beside the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, protected him, and drove away from him the scheming of the enemies. When this great figure died, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, lost the one who protected and defended him; in the mean time, Quraysh hurried to kill him, so he immigrated to Medina (Yathrib), took it as a quarter for his summons and a capital for his government, for therein he found the choice who were ready to sacrifice their own souls for him. Now, let us return to another part of this letter:

"None of the Muhajirin (Emigrants) supported Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his

family, as 'Ali did, for he helped him, protected him through his own soul, and slept on his bed. Then he was still clinging to the parts of the frontiers. He clashed with the heroes, did not recoil from any equal, and did not turn the back in flight from any army.

He was calm. He ordered the whole (people), but none ordered him. He was the most violent of all the people in pressure against the polytheists, the greatest of them in waging jiha`d for Allah, the most learned of them in the religion of Allah, the best of them in reading the Book of Allah, the most knowledgeable of them in the lawful and the unlawful.

"It is he who is the leader of the authority (wilaya) in the hadith of Ghadir Khum and concerned by these words of him (the Prophet), may Allah bless him and his family: 'Your position with me is as Ha`ru`n had with Mu`sa`, except that there will be no prophet after me.' He was leader of the Day of al-Ta`if, and the most lovable of all creatures to Allah, the Exalted, and to Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. It was he who opened the gate (of Khaybar) and closed the gates of the mosque. It was he who carried the standard on the Day of Khaybar, killed 'Amru` b. 'Abdu` Wu`d, and was the brother of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, when he made the Muslims associate with each other as brothers.

"He was inaccessible and generous. It was he concerning whom the verse (was revealed): And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive.¹ He was the husband of Fa`tima, the mistress of the women of the world and of the Garden, and son-in-law of Khadi`ja. He was the cousin of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who brought him up and maintained him. He was the son of Abu Talib (and similar to him) in his support and jihad, and he was the soul of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, on the Day of al-Mubahala (the contest of prayer).

"It was he whom Abu` Bakr and 'Umar had consulted before they did any affair. They carried out what he regarded as right and did not carry out what he regarded as wrong. He was the only Ha`shimite who took part in the Consultative Council. By my life! If his companions had been able to drive him away from him, just as al-'Abba`s (may Allah be pleased with him) did, and they had found a way to that, they would have done.

"As for your preferring al-'Abba`s to him ('Ali), surely Allah, the Most High, says: What! do you make (one who undertakes) the giving of drink to the pilgrims and the guarding of the Sacred Mosque like him who believes in Allah and the latter day and strives hard in Allah's way? "By Allah if a man of your men or other than him had a quality of the Commanders of the faithful's laudable qualities, excellences, and the verses interpreted in the Qur'a`n, then you would regard him as worthy of the caliphate and preferred him to the companions of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, through that quality.

Then the affairs would promote him until he undertook the affairs of the Muslims, so he did not take care of any of the Ha`shimites except 'Abd Allah b. 'Abba`s as a sign of magnifying his right and tightening the bonds of his blood relatives and confidence in him, so it was one of his affairs through which Allah will forgive him."

This part displays some excellences of Ima`m Abu` al-Husayn, the pioneer of wisdom and knowledge in the world of Islam, of which is that he defended the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, supported him, protected him with his own soul and blood, spent the night on his bed when Quraysh decided to kill him, may Allah bless him and his family, clashed with the heroes, struck off their heads as a sign of defense for Islam; therefore, he was the most violent of all the people in pressure against the polytheists and the unbelievers. So how great his advantages for Islam are! Among his excellences is that he was the most learned and knowledgeable of the people in the precepts of the religion and the law of the master of the messengers, that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, entrusted the authority to him, appointed him as his successor after him on the Day of Ghadi`r Khum, and said his famous statement regarding him:

"Whoever I am the master (mawla`) of, this man, 'Ali is his master. O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him, be hostile to whoever opposes him, support whoever supports him and desert whoever deserts him." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, praised him again when he said to him: "Your position with me is as Ha`ru`n had with Mu`sa`, except that there will be no prophet after me."

Another example of his exalted position and his great importance with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, is that he (the Prophet) ordered all the doors facing his great mosque to be closed; he did not exclude in any of them except that of 'Ali, for it remained open and was not closed. Among his virtues is that he carried the standard on the Day of Khaybar, for it was he who conquered the stronghold of Khaybar and put an end to the Jews, and killed 'Amru` b. 'Abd wud, of whom the Muslims were afraid and whom none of them fought against except the hero and protector of Islam, Ima`m 'Ali, peace be on him.

Another example of the good traits of the Commander of the faithful is that when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, made the Muslims associate with each other as brothers, 'Ali was alone, so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, associated with him as his brother and said to him: "O 'Ali, you are my brother in this world and the next."

Another example of his excellences is that this holy verse was revealed concerning him, his two sons, and his wife, the mistress of the women of the world: And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive.

Another example of his virtues is that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, married him to the mistress of the women of the Muslims and part of him, Fa`tima al-Zahra`, peace be on her, for there was no man equal to her except 'Ali. Yet another example of his great traits is that he was the soul of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, as it is indicated by the Verse of al-Muba`hala, for he, the peace of Allah be upon him, through his talents and genius,

had a personality similar to that of the noble Messenger, who filled the world with light. As Ima`m 'Ali had an exalted character and a great rank, Abu` Bakr and 'Umar consulted him when they intended to carry out a certain affair; of course, they consulted him regarding the precepts of the religion. In this part of al-Ma'mu`n's letter is that if any of the Muslims had had excellences like those of Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, then he would have been worthy of undertaking the caliphate and authority over the Muslims. Now, let

us listen to another part of this letter, which says:

"Then we (the 'Abba`sids) and they (the Umayyads) were like one hand just as you claim until Allah, the Exalted, decided the authority for us, so we terrified them (the 'Alawides), straitened them, and killed them more than the killing of the Umayyads toward them. Woe unto you! Surely the Umayyads killed anyone (from among the 'Alawides) who unsheathed a sword, while we, the 'Abba`sids, have killed en masse; so, ask the great souls of the Ha`shimtes what sin they committed.

Ask those who were thrown into the Tigris and the Euphrates, and those who were buried in Baghdad and Ku`fa while they were alive. How far! So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it1. " This part of the letter gives an account of the 'Abba`sids rulers who committed tragedies toward the family of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for they spared no effort to wrong them and to eliminate them. In this connection al-Mansu`r al-Dawa`niqi said to Ima`m al-Sa`diq, peace be on him: "I will kill you and your family to the extent that I will leave none of you." And al-Mansur said: "I have killed more than one thousand (persons) from among the progeny of Fa`tima, and

I have left their master and protector, Ja'far b. Mohammed."

And Isma'il al-Diba`jj said when he escaped from al-Mansu`r:

The tyrant is not satisfied with our blood which he sheds every where, and he does not fall short of looking for (us).

Nothing will quench his thirst except that he will not see on earth a son belongs to the daughter of the Prophet.

Al-Ma'mu`n has shown terrible kinds of tragedies which the 'Abba`sids wreaked upon the 'Alawides, and of which are the following:

A. Destroying all the 'Alawides.

B. Throwing them into the Tigris and the Euphrates while they were still alive to the extent that they died of drowning.

C. Burying them in Baghdad and Ku`fa while they were still alive.

The children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, suffered from other persecutions through the 'Abba`sids. Now, let us listen to another part of this letter:

"As for what you have mentioned regarding the deposed one (al-Amīn) and the confusion concerning him, by my life, none other than you had confused him, for it was you who had made easy to him breaking (the pledge of allegiance), adorned for him treason, and said to him: 'What could your brother do? He is an exiled man. You have properties and men. We will send for him, and he will be brought.' So you had told lies and schemed (against him), and you have forgotten these words of Him, the Exalted: And he who has been oppressed, Allah will most certainly aid him."

In this part of his letter, al-Ma'mu`n has mentioned that some events happened between him and his brother al-Amīn, and that the events were created by the 'Abba`sids, for it was they who made al-Amīn love deposing al-Ma'mun and subduing him. In other words the events

happened not as a result of al-Amīn's view and planning. This is another part of this letter: Amīn love deposing al-Ma'mun and subduing him. In other words the events happened not as a result of al-Amīn's view and planning. This is another part of this letter:

"As for what you have mentioned regarding al-Ma'mu`n's reflection on the pledge of allegiance to Abu` al-Hasan al-Rida`, al-Ma'mu`n did not pledge allegiance to him but he was discerning concerning his affair and was aware that none on the face of the earth was clearer than him in excellence, more manifest than him in chastity, more pious than him in piety, more ascetic than him in asceticism in the world, freer than him in soul, more satisfactory than him with the personal entourage (khassa) and the populace ('a`mma), and stronger than him in Allah's Selfness, and that the pledge of allegiance to him was surely agreeing with the good pleasure of the Lord, the Great and Almighty. I did my best for Allah and paid no attention to the blame of a blamer.

"By my life! If the pledge of allegiance stems from partiality, then al-'Abba`s, my son, and the rest of my children will be the most lovable to my own heart and the most beautiful in my own eye, but I willed an affair and Allah willed an affair, so my affair did not precede Allah's." This part gives an account of that al-Ma'mu`n pledged allegiance to Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, during regency, and that it was not because of partiality, sentiments, and desires; rather it was on account of diligence, scrutiny, and consideration about the affairs of the Muslims. That

is because the great Ima`m was endowed with exalted qualities of which are the following:

A. Surely the Ima`m was the most meritorious of all people on the face of the earth.

B. He was the most chaste person.

C. He refrained from the things made unlawful by Allah.

D. All the Muslims magnified him and preferred him to other than him.

E. He, peace be on him, did not fear the censure of any censurer regarding Allah.

It is these qualities which urged al-Ma'mu`n to designate the Ima`m as his heir apparent. Now, let us listen to another part of this letter: "As for what you have mentioned regarding the alienation which has touched you during my rule, by my life, it has not occurred but from you through your helping (al-Amīn) against me and your inclination to him. But when I killed him, you scattered like slaves, so you sometimes followed Ibn Abu` Kha`lid; sometimes you followed A'ra`bi; and sometimes you followed Ibn Shakkla. Then all of you drew a sword against me. Were it not for that my trait was pardon and my nature was forgiveness, I would not leave any of you on the face of earth, for all your blood is lawful."

Al-Ma'mun has expressed the estrangement and deprivation which befell the 'Abba`sids during his time, for they were the reason for that when they helped and supported al-Amīn. However, when he was killed, they joined all those who mutinied against his government such as Ibra`him b. Shakkla and the like, so through that they filled al-Ma'mu`n's heart with malice against them.

Had it not been for that his quality was forgiveness, as he said, then he would not have left any

'Abba`sid on the face of earth. And this is another part of his letter, which says:

"As for what you have asked about the pledge of allegiance to al-'Abba`s, my son, will you exchange that which is better for that which is worse? Woe unto you! Surely al-'Abba`s is still a young man; his reason is not acquainted (with life affairs); he is not given time (to stay) alone; experiences have not strengthened him; the women direct him; and the slave-wives maintain him.

Then he has not understood the religion yet; he does not distinguish between the lawful and the unlawful; (he has nothing) except knowledge which subjects do not put into effect and through which no proof is established. If he was qualified; experiences strengthened him; he understood the religion, attained the high degree of the Emir of justice in asceticism in the world and turned away his soul from it, he would have with me nothing except what a man from 'Akk and Himyar had; therefore, do not mention this statement frequently, for my tongue is still restrained from affairs and stories which I hate (to mention), and for your souls will be broken when they are revealed. It is worth mentioning that Allah will someday reach His order

and manifest His decree.

"If you refuse (all things) except removing the cover and revealing the defects, then al-Rashīd informed me on the authority of his forefathers and of what he found in the book of the state and other than it that the 'Abba`sids would come to an end after the seventh son of al-'Abba`s and the blessing upon them would be confined to his own lifetime, so if it (the blessing) said farewell (to you), then you would say farewell to it. And if you lost my person, then seek a stronghold for your own souls. And how far! You will have (nothing) except the sword. Al-Hasani, the revolutionary, the wild or al-Sufya`ni, the forced, will reap you with a reap, and al-Qa`im al-Mahdi will not spare your blood except through its right."

This part of the letter shows the reasons which prevented al-Ma'mu`n from designating his son, al-'Abba`s, as a heir apparent as follows: Al-'Abba`s did not have the qualifications which should be available in the heir apparent such as knowledge, excellence, piety, and the like. He was still a boy whom days did not educate and experience did not strengthen. He had neither knowledge nor culture. Rather, he was a youth whose affairs were directed by the women and the slave-wives, so how was it right for al-Ma'mu`n to nominate him for this important office? After this al-Ma'mun added that al-Rashīd told him about what he found in the book of the state; he told him that the 'Abbasid state would come to an end after the seventh 'Abba`sīd king, and that the 'Abbasids would not rule after him.

As for al-Rashīd, he made a mistake, for the 'Abbasid state continued after their seventh king and then it came to an end by Hulagu the Tatarian, who struck off the heads of the 'Abbasids, removed their kingdom and authority. Now, let us listen to another part of this letter, which says: "I pledged allegiance to 'Ali b. Mu`sa` because he himself was worthy of the caliphate and because I chose him; I did that because I wanted to spare your blood and to defend you through continuing love between us and them; I have followed this way in order to honor the family of Abu` Ta`lib and to aid them with a little of al-fayya' (war booty gained without fighting)."

Al-Ma'mun has said that his pledge of allegiance to Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, was for the interest of the 'Abba`sids, for, through this pledge of allegiance, he was able to spare their blood. Perhaps the reason for that is that many revolts broke out in Islamic world and summoned the people to pledge allegiance to al-Rida` from among the family of Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, that he might establish political and social justice in the quarters of the homeland. When he brought him and appointed him as his successor, those revolts terminated. If they had continued, they would have destroyed the 'Abba`sīd rule and put an end to the 'Abba`sids.

Now, let us return to another part of this letter, in which al-Ma'mu'n says: "And if you claim that I have intended to achieve a result and an advantage for them (the 'Alawides), then surely I always reflect on you, take care of you, your progeny, and your children after you, while you are inattentive, heedless, straying, in a gulf (of ignorance) blindly wandering on; you do not know what is wanted toward you, of the indignation you have cast as a shadow over him, and the extortion of the blessing. The concern of one of you is that he enters into evening while he is mounted and enters upon morning while he is drunk.

You boast of acts of disobedience and rejoice at them. Your gods are the lutes. You are womanish and stupid. None of you thinks of setting right livelihood, continuing blessing, doing a noble deed, the day on which property will not avail nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free (from evil).

"You have neglected prayers, followed desires, and busied (yourselves) with pleasures, so you will meet perdition. By Allah, perhaps, I think of your affairs, so I find none of the communities deserved punishment until it befell them out of a defect, except that I have found the defect itself in you along with many defects which, as I think, Iblis has not discovered; nor has he ordered (men) to put them into practice, while in His Holy Book, Allah has given an account of the people of (the Prophet) Salih that there was among them nine persons whom made mischief in the land; yet you have followed them inwardly and outwardly as a sign of making little of the hereafter and little certitude in the reckoning; therefore, which of you has an opinion which may be followed or useful reflection? So may your faces be distorted and your cheeks be covered with dust!"

Al-Ma'mu'n has described his own family with the ugliest qualities by which none is distinguished except low men and the deviants of regions. He has pictured them with a picture which is detested by the least of people in feelings.

Now, let us listen to another part of this letter, in which he says: "And as for what you have mentioned about the fault regarding Abu` al-Hasan (al-Rida`), may Allah enlighten his face, so, by my life, it is in my viewpoint for renaissance and independence through which I hope that I will pass al-Sirat, security and salvation from the fear on the Day of the Greatest Fear, and I do not think that I have a deed better than that except that I must return the like of it (the caliphate) to the like of him (al-Rida). How can I obtain that (deed)? And how can you win that happiness?" Al-Ma'mun has refuted the viewpoints of his own family, who criticized him for his making an unforgivable mistake through appointing Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a heir apparent. So he answered them that he took such a step for the renaissance and independence of the community, for he had nominated for the leadership of the community the

best man on the face of earth, that he might establish the truth, spread justice, and return
dignity to Islam.

This is another part of this letter, in which he says: "As for your statement that I have discredited the views of your forefathers and insights of your ancestors, then this is the statement of the Qurayshi polytheists, who have said: We have found our fathers on a course, and surely we are guided by their footsteps. Woe unto you! Surely the religion is not taken (from anyone) except from the prophets; therefore, understand (what I say to you), and I do not
see that you understand (it)."

Through this statement, al-Ma'mu`n has disproved the viewpoints of his own family, who claimed that he had discredited the viewpoints of his forefathers and spoiled the insights of his ancestors, and that was through his showing kindness to the family of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. It is worth mentioning that this silly logic was followed by the Qurayshi polytheists, who have said: We have found our fathers on a course, and surely we are
guided by their footsteps.

Now, let us listen to the last part of this letter, in which he says: "As for your reviling because of my following the policy of the Magians toward you, then nothing has made you believe in that except haughtiness even if apes and pigs govern over you. By my life, they had been Magians, and they have become Muslim just as our fathers and mothers in the past. So they are the Magians who have become Muslim, and you are the Muslims who have become apostates. Therefore a Magian who becomes a Muslim is better than a Muslim who becomes an apostate. For they prevent each other from doing evil and enjoin (men) to do good; seek nearness to good; refrain from evil; defend the sacredness of the Muslims; rejoice at evil which befalls polytheism and polytheists; give good news to one another of good which includes Islam and Muslims, so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet
awaits, and they have not changed in the least.

"You are either one who plays with his own soul or stupid or a singer or one who plays on the tambourine or one who plays on the flute. By Allah, if the Umayyads, whom you killed yesterday, were raised from the dead and it was said to them, "Do not disdain the defects through which you disparage them," they would increase nothing to what you have adopted
inwardly and outwardly as a craft and manners.

"You become impatient when evil touches you and deprive (others) of good when it touches you. You do not disdain (offenses) and do not hope (for good deeds) except out of fear. How do you disdain (offenses) while you spend the night mounted, enter upon morning admiring your own sins as if you had earned a praiseworthy deed, your goal is your stomach and your

pudenda, pay no attention to murdering one thousand sent prophets or angels brought nigh in order to attain your own desires, love him who adorns act of disobedience for you or helps you with ill-deed, are cleaned by the drunken woman, are patted by the unknown one, and your conditions are scattered? You must refrain from (doing) evil deeds and atrocities or the sword will be raised above your heads, and there is no strength save in Allah; my reliance is on Him, and He is sufficient unto me."

This letter has terminated, and in the last part of it, al-Ma'mu`n has mentioned the defects and atrocities of his own family. I (the author) think that there is no Arab family has been stained with such atrocities, which al-Ma'mu`n has mentioned, and which led this family to an endless .level of meanness