

(.Al-Mamun Proving the Imamate of Imam Ali (A.S

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The most important thing which those who believed that al-Ma'mu`n was a Shi`ite gave as a proof of that he was a Shi`ite is that he held scientific sessions and gave firm proofs of that 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, was an Ima`m, that he was the first Muslim leader after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, that he was more entitled to his rank and worthier of his office than the rest of the people.

Among the most marvelous and important sessions which al-Ma'mu`n held in his palace is that which attended by the forty traditionalists and theologians, whom Yahya` b. Akkthem had chosen from among the scholars of Baghdad, who spared no effort to prove that the caliphs were better than Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him.

However, al-Ma'mu`n refuted their proofs through his decisive indications, which showed his skill and abundant knowledge of theological researches. We will mention the full text of this marvelous debate because it is of great importance; it is as follows:

When the scholars appeared before al-Ma'mu`n, he turned to them, greeted them, and said to them: "On this day of mine I want to place an argument between Allah and me, so he who suffers from retention of urine or wants to relieve his nature, then let him go and relieve his nature; be delighted; take off your sandals and your cloaks."

They carried out al-Ma'mu`n's order, then he turned to them and said: "O People, I have summoned you in order to advance you as an argument before Allah, the Exalted, so fear Allah; consider your own souls and your Ima`m (leader); let not my majesty and my place prevent you from saying the truth wherever it be and returning falsehood to him who brings it; fear for your own souls from the Fire; seek nearness to Allah, the Most High, through His good pleasure and preferring obedience to Him, for everyone who seeks nearness to a creature through an act of disobedience to the Creator, Allah empowers him over him; therefore debate with me with your all intellects.

"I claim that 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib is the best of all creatures after Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. If I am right, then regard me statement as right; if I am wrong, then answer me quickly. If you want me to question you, I will question you; if you want to question me, then question me."

.In this speech there is no crookedness or deviation from logic, for its owner seeks plain truth

The Traditionalists

"Rather, it is we who will question you," retorted the traditionalists.

Al-Ma'mu'n undertook the matter and guided them to the way to debates, saying: "Give (me your proofs) and entrust one of you with your speech. When he speaks and one of you has an addition, then let him add it to his speech; if he brings a shortcoming, then show him
".rightness

The First Proof

A traditionalist mentioned a proof of that Abu` Bakr was the best of the community after Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "We claim that Abu` Bakr is the best of the people after Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, for a tradition, upon which there is unanimous agreement, has been transmitted from Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who said: 'Follow those who will come after me: Abu` Bakr and 'Umar.' As the Prophet of mercy ordered (us) to follow them, we have come to know that he
".ordered us to follow none except the best of men

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He objectively discussed the traditions fabricated against the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "The traditions are numerous; there is no escape from that either they are all right or they are all false or some of them are right or some of them are false; if they are all right, then they are all false, for they contradict each other; if they are all false, then the religion
is false and (Islamic) law is dead.

As these two possibilities are untrue, the third (possibility) is true, namely some traditions are right and some are false. If (the matter) is such, then there is no escape form (giving) a proof of which of them is right, that we may believe in it and reject the opposite of; therefore, if the evidence for a tradition is right in itself, then it is necessary for one to believe in it and to put it
into effect.

"As for this tradition of yours, it is one of the traditions whose proofs are false in themselves, for Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, is the wisest of the wise, the most entitled of the creatures to truthfulness, and the farthest of men from ordering the impossible and making the people embrace the opposite, for this means that these two men (i.e. Abu` Bakr and 'Umar) are harmonious with each other in all sides, (namely) they are one in number, quality, form, and body; it is impossible that two (persons) are equal in meaning in all sides.

"If they are different, then how is it permissible to follow them? This is an order (to perform) that which is unbearable, for if you follow one (of them), you will oppose the other; the evidence for that they are different is that Abu` Bakr had ordered the apostates to be taken as prisoners, while 'Umar regarded them as free; 'Umar ordered Kha`lid to be removed (from the office) because he had killed Ma`lik b. Nuwayra, whereas Abu` Bakr prevented him from doing that; 'Umar prohibited the two mutt'as, while Abu` Bakr had adopted them; 'Umar established the Divan of Gifts, whereas Abu` Bakr had not adopted it; Abu` Bakr had appointed ('Umar) as successor (after him), whilst 'Umar did not do that; there are numerous examples of this (matter)."

Al-Ma'mu`n's answer is very trustworthy, for he refuted the tradition and established that it was .one of the fabricated traditions

The Second Proof

Through a tradition attributed to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, another traditionalist indicated that the two Shaykhs (i.e. Abu` Bakr and 'Umar) were better than Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, saying: "Surely, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If I had to take a bosom friend, I would have taken Abu` Bakr as .a bosom friend

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

Al-Ma'mu`n disproved this tradition, saying: "This is impossible, for your traditions show that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, asked his companions to associate as brothers with each other, and that he delayed 'Ali, peace be on him. When he ('Ali) asked him about that, he replied: 'I have delayed you (for nothing) except for my own soul.' Therefore, if one tradition is established, the other is null and void."

Al-Ma'mu`n's discussion about the tradition is objective; there is no partiality therein; rather it .was based on a decisive proof

The Third Proof

Another traditionalist said: "Surely 'Ali, peace be on him, said on the pulpit: 'The best of this community after the Prophet are Abu` Bakr and 'Umar.'"

Al-Ma'mu`n discussed this tradition, saying: "This is impossible, for if the Prophet, may Allah

bless him and his family, had come to know that they were the best (of the community), he had not appointed 'Amru` b. al-'Ass as a commander over them one time and Usa`ma b. Zayd another time; among the things which refute this tradition is the statement of 'Ali when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, passed way: 'I am more worthy for being near to the Prophet (than they are), but I feared that the people would become apostates'; these words of him, peace be on him: 'How are they better than me? I have worshipped Allah before and after them.'" In this manner al-Ma'mu`n disproved the tradition and showed that it was fabricated

The Fourth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "Surely Abu` Bakr closed his door and said: 'Is there anyone to accept my resignation and I will render my resignation to him?' So he ('Ali), peace be on him, said to him: 'Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, has advanced you, then "who can delay you

Al-Ma'mun's Answer to the Tradition

He disproved the tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is untrue, for 'Ali, peace be on him, did not pledge allegiance to Abu` Bakr; you have narrated that he did make homage until Fa`tima, peace be on her, died, and that she asked ('Ali) to bury her at night lest they (Abu` Bakr and 'Umar) should witness her coffin. "Another proof is that if the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, appointed him (Abu` Bakr) as a caliph, then why did he resign and say to the Ansa`r: "I have chosen for you these two men: Abu` 'Ubayda and 'Umar

The Fifth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "'Amru b. al-'Ass asked: 'O Prophet of Allah, which woman is the most lovable to you?' 'Ai'sha,' he replied. 'Amru asked again: 'Which man is the most lovable to you?' 'Her father (i.e. Abu` Bakr),' he answered."

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He refuted this tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is false, for you have narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, placed before him a grilled bird and said: 'O Allah, bring me the most lovable creature to you,' and it was 'Ali (who came to him). Then which of your traditions do you accept?"

The Muslims have unanimously agreed that 'Ali was the most lovable of the creatures to Allah
.and the nearest of them to Him

The Sixth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "'Ali said: 'If one prefers me to Abu` Bakr and 'Umar, I will administer
".the punishment of the liar to him

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He answered this tradition ascribed to Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, saying: "How is it permissible for 'Ali to administer such a punishment to him against whom there is no punishment? Therefore, he broke the punishments prescribed by Allah and opposed His orders. He who prefers 'Ali to Abu Bakr and 'Umar is not a liar, for you have narrated on the authority of your Imam (Abu Bakr), who said: 'I have become a caliph over you but I am not the best of you.' So which of the two men is more truthful in your viewpoint Abu Bakr against himself or 'Ali against Abu Bakr, though the tradition contradicts itself? There is no escape from that he is either truthful or a liar. If he is truthful, then how did he come to know that? Through a revelation (whereas) the revelation has ceased? Or through conjecture (while) the conjecturer is perplexed? Or through thinking (whereas) thinking (nazar) is a research? And if he was untruthful, then it is impossible for a liar to undertake the authority and precepts of the Muslims and to administer the
".prescribed punishments to them

The Seventh Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'Abu` Bakr
".and 'Umar will be the masters of the old men of the Garden

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He said: "This tradition is impossible, for there will be no old men in the Garden; it is narrated that Ashhamiya visited the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and he said to her: 'No old woman will enter the Garden.' She wept, so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said to her:
[Allah, the Most High says:] 'Surely We have made them to grow into a (new) growth. Then We

have made them virgins, loving, equals in age. 1' If you claim that Abu` Bakr will be a young man when he enters the Garden, then you have narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said concerning al-Hasan and al-Husayn: 'Surely they are the masters of the youths of the haven from among the first and the last; their father is better than them.'
.Al-Ma'mu`n's answer to the tradition is logical and not based on doctrinal caprices and trends

The Eighth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet said: 'If I had not been appointed (as a prophet) among you, then 'Umar would have been appointed

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

Disproving this tradition, al-Ma'mu`n said: "This (tradition) is impossible, for Allah, the Exalted, says (to the Prophet): Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh and the prophets after him. And He, the Most High, said: And when We made a covenant with the prophets and with you, and with Nuh and Ibrahim and Musa and Isa, son of Maryam. Therefore, is it permissible for Allah to appoint as a prophet him with whom He had not made a covenant and to delay him with whom He had made a covenant for Prophethood?"

Al-Ma'mu`n's answer to the tradition is based on intellect and logic, and nothing therein deviates from them.

Another traditionalist advanced an argument, saying: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, looked at 'Umar on the Day of 'Arafa, smiled (at him) and said: 'Surely Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, boasts of His creatures in general and of 'Umar in particular

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

Disproving this tradition, al-Ma'mu`n said: "This is impossible, for Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, does not boast of 'Umar and leaves His Prophet; therefore, 'Umar is among the elite and the Prophet is among the populace.

"This tradition is not more wonderful than your tradition which says that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'I entered the Garden and suddenly I heard the beat of two sandals; (I came to know that) Bila`l, Abu` Bakr's retainer, had entered the Garden before me.' For this reason you have said: 'Abu` Bakr's retainer is better than the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, for the early is better than the late

The Tenth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If the
".punishment came down, none would be safe from it except 'Umar b. al-Khatta`b

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He said: "This tradition also opposes the Book, for Allah, the Exalted, says to His Prophet: But Allah was not going to chastise them while you were among them. So you have regarded 'Umar
".as an equal to the Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family

The Eleventh Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, bore witness that
".'Umar would enter the Garden before ten of his companions

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He said: "If 'Umar was as you have said, he would not say to Hudhayfa: 'I adjure you before Allah, am I among the hypocrites?' If the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, had said to him: 'You are among the inhabitants of the Garden,' and he did not believe him and Hudhayfa confirmed him, then he believed Hudhayfa and did not believe the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and this is (something) opposes Islam; if he had believed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, then why did he ask Hudhayfa? These traditions contradict each
".other

The Twelfth Proof

Another traditionalist said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'I was placed in the scale of a balance and my community was placed in the other scale, and I outweighed it; then Abu Bakr was put in my place, and he outweighed it; then 'Umar (was put in
".his place), and he outweighed it; then the balance was raised

Al-Ma'mun's Answer

He confuted this tradition, saying: "This (tradition) is impossible, for either their bodies or their deeds were placed in the balance. If their bodies (were placed in the balance), then every

human being knows that their bodies do not outweigh the bodies of the community; if their deeds (were placed in the balance), then they have not been (weighed) yet. Just imagine how much more is that which has not been (weighed) yet?"

Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to the traditionalists and asked them: "Tell me: Through which thing do the people claim that they are superior to each other?"

"They claim that they are superior to one another through good deeds," replied a traditionalist. Commenting on this statement, al-Ma'mu'n said: "Tell me about him who was more excellent than his companion during the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family: did the less excellent (mafdul) do after the death of the Messenger more than the most excellent (al-fadil) did in the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? Would he be equal to him? If you say 'yes', then I will make you find in this time of ours him who is the best of them in jiha'd, hajj, fasting, prayer, and alms."

"You are right," they all replied, "the most excellent (fadil) in our time is not equal to the most excellent in the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family."

So al-Ma'mun said to them: "Carefully consider what your Ima`ms, from whom you have taken your doctrines, have narrated concerning the outstanding merits of 'Ali, peace be on him, and compare them with what it has been mentioned concerning the ten (persons) for whom they have borne witness that they will enter the Garden.

If they ('Ali's outstanding merits) were part of numerous parts, then you are right; if they (your Ima`ms) have narrated concerning 'Ali's excellences more (than they have narrated concerning the excellences of the ten persons), then take what your Ima`ms have narrated and do not exceed (it)."

The traditionalists were perplexed, not knowing what to answer, for al-Ma'mu'n had closed before them all avenues of argument. Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to them and asked: "Why have you kept silent?"

"We have fully searched out (the matter)," they replied. That is because they had nothing to advance as an argument.

"I am going to question you," said al-Ma'mu'n, "tell me: which work was the best when Allah appointed His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family?"

"Priority in belief in Islam," they all answered, "for Allah, the Exalted, says: And the foremost are the foremost, these are they who are drawn nigh (to Allah)." "So did you know that there was anyone earlier than 'Ali (in belief) in Islam?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"He (Ali) was earlier but he was still young; there was no religious, obligatory duty on him. As for Abu` Bakr, he became a Muslim when he was an old man, and there was a religious,

obligatory duty on him, so there is a difference between these two states," they answered. Al-Ma'mu'n answered, saying: "Tell me about the Islam of 'Ali: Was it through an inspiration by Allah, the Exalted, or through the summons of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? If you say that it was through an inspiration, then you have preferred him to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for the Prophet had not been inspired; rather Gabriel came to

him from Allah; he summoned him to Him and informed him of Him.

"If you say (that 'Ali became Muslim) through the summons of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, then did he summoned him (to Islam) of his own accord or through the order of Allah, the Most High? If you say (that he summoned him to it) of his own accord, then this opposes the words through which Allah has described His Prophet, saying: Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it; nor am I of those who affect , and through these words of Him, the Exalted: Nor does he speak out of desire. It is not naught but revelation that is revealed.

If he (summoned him) on behalf of Allah, then Allah had ordered His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to summon 'Ali (to Islam) from among the boys of the people and preferred him to them. Therefore, he (the Prophet) summoned him ('Ali to Islam) because he was trustworthy and Allah, the Exalted, supported him.

"Yet there is another quality. Tell me: Is it permissible for the Wise (Allah) to impose upon His creatures unbearable religious duties? If you say 'yes', then you are unbelievers; if you say 'no', then how is it permissible for Him to order His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to summon him who does not accept what he is ordered (to perform) because of his boyhood, minority, and his being weak to accept (Islam).

"Still there is another reason. Did you know that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, summoned any boy from among the boys of his family or other than them, and he was equal to 'Ali? So, if you claim that he had not summoned any other than him, then this is an excellence for 'Ali over the boys of the people."

Then al-Ma'mu'n turned to the traditionalists and asked them: "Which work is after the precedence to faith?"

"Jihad in the path of Allah," they all answered.

As a result al-Ma'mun continued establishing argument against them concerning that Ima'm 'Ali was the most excellent one, saying: Do you think that any of the ten (persons) had any act during jihad as 'Ali had throughout the attitudes of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family? (For example, at the Battle of) Badr more than sixty polytheists were killed; 'Ali killed more than twenty, and the rest of the people killed forty."

"Abu` Bakr was directing it (the battle) along with the Prophet,

may Allah bless him and his family, in his canopy," a traditionalist replied. "You have brought a wonder through this," retorted al-Ma'mu'n, "was he (Abu` Bakr) directing it with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or without him? Did he make him as a partner? Was the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, in need of Abu` Bakr's opinion?

Which of these three (viewpoints) is the most lovable to you?"

"I seek refuge in Allah," replied the traditionalist, "I do not claim that he (Abu` Bakr) directed it without the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or he (the Prophet) made him as a partner or the Prophet was in need of him."

"Then what is the excellence (of his being) in the canopy?" asked al-Ma'mu'n, "if the excellence of Abu` Bakr came through absenting himself from the battle, then all those who absented themselves (from it) must be more excellent than the muja`hideen, while Allah, the Great and

Almighty, says:

The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury, and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons are not equal; Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a (high) degree, and to each (class) Allah has promised good; and Allah shall grant to the strivers above the holders back a mighty reward. "

Then al-Ma'mu'n addressed Isha`q b. Hamma`d b. Zayd, a leading traditionalist, saying: "Recite the Sura Hal Ata."

Ishaq recited the Sura. When he reached these words of Him, the Exalted: And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive...., al-Ma'mu'n asked him:

"Concerning whom these verses have been revealed?"

"Concerning 'Ali," answered the traditionalist. "Have you heard that 'Ali, peace be on him, had said: 'We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks,' when he had given food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive?"

"No," replied the traditionalist, "surely Allah, the Most High, had known 'Ali's inner self and intention, so He has manifested that in His Book, that His creatures may recognize his ('Ali's) affairs."

"Did you come to know that Allah has described the Garden with a thing other than the (transparent) glasses made of siliver (qawarir) as it is in this verse?" asked al-Ma'mu'n. "No," came the answer.

"Therefore, this is another excellence," retorted al-Ma'mu'n, "What did Allah mean by the (transparent) glass made of siliver (qawarir)?"

"I do not know," was the answer.

"He meant that they were made of silver because of their clearness," commented al-Ma'mu'n, "what in them is seen just as what outside them is seen; this is like these words of him (the Prophet), may Allah bless him and his family: 'O Isha`q, your longing for the (transparent) glasses made of silver (qawarir)' (must be) gentle, by this he meant the women who were as transparent as glasses made of silver; (this is) like these words of him, may Allah bless him and his family:

'I rode the horse of Abu` Tallha and found it a sea,' namely, it was like a sea because of its abundant running; and like these words of Him, the Exalted: And death will come to him from every quarter, but he shall not die; and there shall be vehement chastisement before him 1, which mean that as if death came to him (from every quarter); and if it came to him from one quarter, he would die."

"O Ishaq, are you not among those who bear witness that the ten (persons) are in the Garden?" asked al-Ma'mu'n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"If one says: 'I do not know whether this tradition is right or wrong,' do you regard him as an unbeliever?" asked al-Ma'mun.

"No," was the answer.

"If one says: 'I do not know whether this sura (belongs) to the Qur'a'n or not,' do you regard him as an unbeliever?" asked al-Ma'mun.

"Yes," came the answer.

"O Isha`q," said al-Ma'mu'n, "tell me about the tradition of the grilled bird: Is it authentic in your view?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"By Allah, your obstinacy has appeared," retorted al-Ma'mu'n, "either this (i.e. 'Ali) is as the Prophet summoned him or he is rejected, or Allah had known the most excellent (al-fadil) of His creatures, but the less excellent (al-mafdul) was more lovable to Him, or you claim that Allah does not distinguish the most excellent (al-fadil) from the less excellent (al-mafdul); therefore, which of these three (views) is the most lovable to you?"

Isha`q became perplexed, did not find any answer, and remained thinking until he found a way to defend his viewpoint, saying: "O Commander of the faithful, surely Allah, the Exalted, says concerning Abu` Bakr: "He is the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Grieve not, surely Allah is with us. So Allah ascribed him to the companionship of His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family."

"Glory belongs to Allah!" exclaimed al-Ma'mu'n, "how little your knowledge of the language and

the Book is! The unbeliever may be the companion of the believer. Therefore, which excellence is in this (companionship)? Have you not heard these words of Him, the Most High: His companion said to him while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then He made you a perfect man? He made him a companion for him; and al-Hazali composed poetry, saying:
I left early in the morning and my wild companion (which) was under the cloak was aware of
the east.

"And al-Azdi has said:

I summoned the wild animal regarding it and my companion has pure legs and body.
"Therefore, he regarded his own horse as his companion. As for these words of Him: surely Allah is with us, Allah is with the pious and the sinful. Have you not heard these words of Him, the Most High: Nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them; nor (between) five but He is the sixth of them; nor less than that nor more but He is with them wherever they are. 1 As regarding these words of Him: Grieve not, tell me about the grief of Abu` Bakr: Was it obedience or disobedience? If you claim that it was obedience, then you have regarded the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, as one who prohibits obedience, and this opposes the attribute of the Wise (Allah); and if you claim that it was disobedience, then the disobedient have no excellence. Tell me about these words of Him, the Exalted: Allah send down His tranquillity upon him. Upon whom (did He send tranquillity)?"

"He sent down tranquillity upon Abu` Bakr," replied Isha`q, "for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was free from the quality of tranquillity."

Then al-Ma'mun demanded: "Tell me about these words of Him, the Exalted: Certainly Allah helped you in many battlefields and on the Battle of Hunayn, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating. Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Apostle and upon the believers. Do you know the believers whom Allah has meant in this verse?"

"No," was the answer.

Then al-Ma'mu`n explained the meaning of this sacred verse, saying: "Surely the people turned their backs in flight at the Battle of Hunayn, so none stayed with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, except seven Ha`shimites: 'Ali, peace be on him, was striking (the polytheists) with his sword; al-'Abba`s took hold of the bridle of the mule of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and five persons were surrounding the Prophet, may Allah

bless him and his family, lest he should be wounded by the weapon of the unbelievers until Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, granted His Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, a victory.

The believers whom Allah meant in this verse were 'Ali and the Ha`shimites who were present. So who was more excellent^¾ he who was with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and the tranquillity was sent down upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and upon him or he who was in the cave with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and was not entitled to sending it upon him?

O Isha`q, who is more excellent^¾ he who was in the cave with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or he who slept on his bed and protected him with his own soul until the determined emigration went well with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family?

"Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, ordered His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to order 'Ali to sleep on his bed and to protect him with his own soul. So he ordered 'Ali to do that, and he said: 'Will you be safe, O Allah's Prophet?' 'Yes,' he said. 'I listen and obey,' he retorted. Then he ('Ali) wore the Prophet's garment, and slept on his bed. As for the polytheists, they surrounded him; they were sure that it was the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, who was on bed.

They had unanimously agreed that each man from each Qurayshi tribe should strike him one time, lest the Ha`shimites should demand his blood. As for 'Ali, peace be on him, he heard of the order of the people which would destroy his own soul, but he was not as impatient as Abu` Bakr was in the cave while he was with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. 'Ali was still alone with patience and fore-thought, so Allah sent His angels to protect him from the polytheists of Quraysh. When he entered upon morning, he got up.

The people looked at him and asked: 'Where is Mohammed?' 'I do not know,' he answered. 'Then you have deceived us,' they retorted. Then he followed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. Therefore, 'Ali was still the most excellent due to his (brave) attitudes; he increased himself nothing except good until Allah, the Exalted, took him to Himself while he was praiseworthy and forgiven."

"O Isha`q, do you not narrate the tradition of authority (hadith al-wilaya)?" asked al-Ma'mu`n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"Narrate it," ordered al-Ma'mu`n.

He narrated it to al-Ma'mu`n, and he asked him: "Do you not see that it (the tradition) has made obligatory his right against Abu` Bakr and 'Umar whereas it has not made obligatory their rights against him?"

"The people say that the Prophet said this tradition concerning Zayd b. Ha`ritha," answered Isha`q.

Denying this answer, al-Ma'mu`n asked: "Where did the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, say it?"

"He said it at Ghadir Khum," replied Isha`q, "after he had finished the Farewell Pilgrimage." Al-Ma'mu`n hastened to disprove that, asking: "When was Zayd b. Ha`ritha killed? Was he not killed before Ghadi`r Khum?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Tell me: If you came to know that your own son became fifteen years of age and said: 'My master is the master of my cousin, O people accept (him),' would you hate that?" asked al-Ma'mu`n.

"Yes," came the answer.

Denying these words of Isha`q, al-Ma'mu`n asked: "Do you deem your son far above what you do not deem the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, far above?"

Then al-Ma'mu`n turned to him in order to establish an argument against him, saying: "Do you narrate the statement of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, to 'Ali: 'Your position with me is as Ha`ru`n had with Mu`sa`.'?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Did you not know that Ha`ru`n was the brother of Mu`sa` on side of his father and mother?" asked al-Ma'mu`n.

"Yes," came the answer.

"So did 'Ali have such a position?" asked al-Ma'mu`n.

"No," was the answer.

"Ha`ru`n was a prophet," retorted al-Ma'mu`n, "but 'Ali was not a prophet, so the third position is nothing except the succession (khilafa). The hypocrites said: 'He (the Prophet) was displeased with him ('Ali); he appointed him as a successor in order to soothe him.' This is just as Allah has given an account of Mu`sa` when he said to Ha`ru`n: Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers., "

Commenting on these words of al-Ma'mu`n, Isha`q said: "Surely Mu`sa` appointed Ha`ru`n as successor among his people while he was alive, and then he went to the appointed place and time of his Lord; surely the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, appointed 'Ali when he went out to make campaigns (ghazawat)."

Al-Ma'mu`n answered him, saying: "Tell me about Mu`sa`: Was there with him any of his companions when he appointed Ha`ru`n as successor and went to the appointed place and

time of his Lord, the Great and Almighty?"

"Yes," answered Isha`q.

"Did he not appoint him as a successor over them all?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"So such was 'Ali," explained al-Ma'mu`n, "when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, went out to make campaigns, he appointed him as a successor over the weak, the women, and the boys, for most of his people were along with him; he appointed him as a successor over them all; the proof of that he appointed him as a successor over them all during his lifetime, his absence, and after his death is this statement of him, may Allah bless him and his family: '

'Ali's position with me is as Harun had with Musa, except that there will be no prophet after me.' According to this statement, he was also the helper of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for Musa supplicated Allah, the Exalted, and said in his supplication: And give to me an aider from my family, Harun, my brother. Strengthen my back by him, and associate him (with me) in my affair. Therefore, if 'Ali had a position with the Prophet as Ha`ru`n had with Musa, then he was his aider just as Ha`ru`n was the aider of Mu`sa` and was his successor just as Ha`ru`n was the successor of Musa."

Al-Ma'mun debates with Theologians

After al-Ma'mu`n had debated with the traditionalists and overcome them through discussing the traditions which they produced as evidence in support of their beliefs, he turned to the theologians and asked them:

"Shall I question you or you question me?"

"Rather we shall question you," they replied.

A theologian turned to al-Ma'mu`n and asked him: "Wasn't the Ima`mate of 'Ali, peace be on him, (decided) by Allah, the Great and Almighty? Was it reported from Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, by him who reported the religious duties such as the four-rak'a noon prayer, one dirham per five dirhams, and the hajj to Mecca?"

"Yes," replied al-Ma'mu`n.

"Why have the people not differed over all religious duties and differed over the Ima`mate of 'Ali only?"

"Because they do not compete and desire for the religious duties as they do for the succession (khila`fa)," answered al-Ma'mu`n.

Another theologian asked: "Have you not denied that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, ordered the people to elect a man from among them in order to take his place as a sign

of mercy and gentleness toward them, without that he himself did not appoint anyone as a successor lest his successor should be disobeyed, so the punishment would befall them?" Al-Ma'mu`n replied: "I have denied that, for Allah, the Exalted, is more merciful to His creatures than the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and He already sent His Prophet to them and knew that there were obedient and disobedient among them; still that did not prevent Him, the Most High, from sending him.

"Yet there is another reason: If he (the Prophet) had ordered them to elect a man from among them, then either he would have ordered them all or some of them. If he had ordered them all, who would have been the elected one? And if he had ordered some of them, then there would have been a sign for this meaning. If you say that (the sign) is the jurists, then there is no escape from specifying the jurist and his qualities."

Another theologian said: "It has been narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'If the Muslims regard something as good, then Allah regards it as good; and if they regard something as ugly, then Allah regards it as ugly.'"

Al-Ma'mu`n disproved this corrupt statement which requires correction (taswīb) which is generally regarded as void, and which is that when Allah decrees a certain event, some people rectify Him and others accuse Him of mistake; and this is the answer of al-Ma'mu`n:

"There is no escape from that this statement either concerns all the believers or some of them. If it concerns all (the believers), then this is impossible, for it is not possible for the whole (believers) to be in agreement; and if it concerns some of them, then each (sect) narrates something good concerning its leader (sahib) just as the narration of the Shī'ites concerning 'Ali and the narration of the Hashawiya concerning other than him, so when do you establish what you want regarding the Imamate?"

Another theologian asked: "So is it permissible for you to claim that the companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, were mistaken?"

Al-Ma'mu`n answered him, saying: "How do we claim that they were mistaken and were in agreement on error while they knew neither a religious duty nor a tradition (sunna), for you have claimed that the Ima`mate is not a religious duty from Allah nor a tradition from the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family? So how is the Ima`mate wrong while it is neither a religious duty nor a tradition in your viewpoint?"

Another theologian said to al-Ma'mu`n: "You claim that the Ima`mate belongs to 'Ali and not to other than him, then produce evidence in support of what you claim."

"I do not claim that," explained al-Ma'mu`n, "but I acknowledge that; the claimer is he who claims that appointment, deposition, and choice belong to him. As for evidence, it is entrusted

to his partners, for they are opponents, or it must be produced by other than them, and the others are not available, so how is evidence produced in support of this (matter)?"

Another theologian asked: "What had 'Ali, peace be on him, to do after the death of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family?"

"He had done it," replied al-Ma'mu'n. (i.e. 'Ali had done what was obligatory on him).

"Was it not obligatory on 'Ali to tell the people that he was an Ima'm?" asked the theologian. Al-Ma'mu'n retorted: "Surely the Ima'mate does not occur through an act from him concerning himself; nor does it occur through an act from the people concerning him such as choice or preference or the like; rather it occurs through an act from Allah concerning him just as He said to Ibrahim:

Surely I will make you an Imam of men¹. And just as He, the Most high, said to Da'wud: O Dawud We have made you a ruler in the land. And just as He, the Great and Almighty, said to the angels: I am going to place in the earth a vicegerent (khalifa).

"Therefore the Ima'm becomes an Ima'm on the part of Allah, the Exalted, and through His choosing him through good deed in beginning, nobility in ancestry, purity in childhood, and infallibility in the future. If the Ima'mate occurs through an act from him concerning himself, then he who performs such an act is worthy of it; if he performs an act opposite to it and resigns, then he is a vicegerent (khalifa) on the part of his deeds."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu'n, saying: "Why have you regarded the Ima'mate as obligatory for 'Ali after the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family?"

Al-Ma'mu'n answered: "Because he was faithful when a child just as the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family was; he renounced the error of his people and refrained from polytheism just as the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did, for polytheism is oppression, and the oppressive cannot be an Ima'm; he ('Ali) was not among those who worshipped the idols according to the unanimous resolution (of the Muslims).

He who becomes a polytheist takes the place of the enemies of Allah, the Exalted, so the decision concerning him ('Ali) is the witness to him through that on which the community has unanimously agreed until another unanimous resolution like it comes, and for it is not permissible for one convicted even one time to be a ruler; if the ruler is convicted one time, then there is no difference between him and the convicted."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu'n: "Why did 'Ali, peace be on him, not war against Abu Bakr and 'Umar just as he did against Mu'a'wiya?"

"The matter is impossible," replied al-Ma'mu'n, "for the 'why' (lima) is requirement, and 'did not do' is denying, and there is no cause for denying; rather the cause is for positiveness; it is

obligatory to think about the authority of 'Ali, peace be on him, was it (decided) by Allah or by other than Him?

If it is correct that it (was decided) by Allah, then doubt of His direction is unbelief because of these words of Him, the Most High: But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission.¹ So the deeds of a doer are a link clinging to him; therefore, if his undertaking (the authority) was from Allah, the Exalted, then his deeds from Him, and it is obligatory on the people to be content and submissive.

And Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, left a warring against the polytheists on the Day of al-Hudaybiya, on the day when the polytheists prevented his animals for immolation (haddyahu) from (going to) the House (i.e. the Ka'ba). However, when he found helpers and became strong, he warred (against them) just as Allah, the Most High, has said concerning the first (attitude): So turn away with kindly forgiveness. Then He, the Great and Almighty, said: Then slay the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. "

Another theologian asked him, saying: "If you claim that the Ima`mate of 'Ali, peace be on him, (was decided) by Allah, the Exalted, and obedience to him was obligatory, then why it was not permissible for the prophets, peace be on them, to leave delivering (their messages) and summoning (men to their Lord), while it was permissible for 'Ali to leave what he was ordered to do such as summoning the people to obey him?"

Al-Ma'mu`n answered: "We do not claim that 'Ali, peace be on him, was ordered to deliver (a message) in order to be a messenger, but he was placed as an Emblem between Allah and His creatures, so he who followed him was obedient, and he who opposed him was disobedient. If he ('Ali) had found helpers through whom he would be strong, he would have waged jihad (against those who deprived him of authority); if he had not found helpers, then the people would have been blamed, not him, for they had been ordered to obey him in all circumstances; he had not been ordered to wage jihad against them except through a force; he was of the same rank with the House (i.e. the Ka'ba), to which it is obligatory on men to make a pilgrimage; if they make a pilgrimage (to it), then they will fulfill what is against them; and if they do not do, they will be blamed, not the House."

Another theologian asked al-Ma'mu`n: "If it is obligatory that there is no escape from that there should be an Ima`m to whom obedience is due through compulsion, then how is it obligatory through compulsion that he was 'Ali apart from other than him?"

He disproved this vague error, saying: "Surely Allah, the Most High, does not impose (something) unknown; the imposed (i.e. the Ima`mate and other religious duties) is not impossible, while the unknown is impossible, for Allah, the Exalted does not impose (something) unknown, and the imposed is not impossible; therefore, there is no escape from that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, had to demonstrate divine command

in order to put an end to the excuse between Allah and His servants.

For example, if Allah, the Most High, imposed on the people fasting a month and they did not know which month it was, and the month was not marked with a mark, and it was obligatory on them to find that out through their intellects in order to find what Allah, the Exalted, had willed, then they would be in no need of the Messenger who would explain (it) to them, and of the

Ima`m who would convey to them the tradition of the Messenger."

Another theologian questioned al-Ma'mu`n, saying: "Where did you make it obligatory that 'Ali was adult when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, summoned him (to faith)? The people claim that he was a boy when he was summoned to (faith), that it was not permissible

for him to perform (the religious) precepts, and that he was not an adult."

He replied: "Surely it cannot be thought that in that time he was among those for whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, sent in order to summon (them to faith). If he was so, then it would be possible that he was responsible and strong enough to perform the religious duties."

The Traditionalists and the Theologians kept silent

The traditionalists and the theologians kept silent, for al-Ma'mu`n confuted them, established argument against them, and produced evidence in support of the Ima`mate of Ima`m 'Ali, the

Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, and then he asked them the following questions:

"Has the community not narrated unanimously that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'He who fabricates lies against me, then let him occupy his place in the Fire.'?"

"Yes, O Commander of the faithful," they replied.

Then al-Ma'mu`n presented another Prophetic tradition before them, saying: "Any one who has narrated on his authority that he said: 'He who disobeys Allah through an act of disobedience, whether small or great, then he adopts it as religion and follows it with insistence is immortal among the layers of the Hellfire.'"

The traditionalists and the theologians confirmed and admitted the tradition, so al-Ma'mu`n said to them: "Tell me about a man whom the community chooses: Is it permissible to call him the successor (khalifa) of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and (appointed) by Allah, the Great and Almighty, whereas the Messenger had not appointed him

as a successor? If you say 'yes', then you have stubbornly contended. And if you say 'no', then it is obligatory that so-and-so is not the successor of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family."

After a talk took place between him and the traditionalists and the theologians concerning this matter, al-Ma'mu`n began preaching to them, saying: "Fear Allah; consider your own souls carefully; leave imitation; avoid vague errors. By Allah, Allah does not accept (any deed) except from a servant who does not do (anything) except through that which he understands and does not enter (anything) except concerning that which he regards as true. Suspicion is doubt, and clinging to doubt is unbelief in Allah, the Most High, and its owner (i.e. the doubter) is in the Fire."

After this rebuke, al-Ma'mu`n turned to them and asked: "Tell me about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family: Had he appointed (anyone) as a successor before he died or not?"

"He had not appointed (anyone) as a successor," they all replied.

"Was his leaving that (i.e. the succession) guidance or error?" asked al-Ma'mu`n.

"Yes, it was guidance," they answered.

So al-Ma'mu`n produced evidence in refuting their beliefs, saying: "Isn't it incumbent on the people to follow guidance, to leave falsehood and to avoid error?"

"They have done that (i.e. they have followed guidance)," they replied.

Then al-Ma'mu`n established wonderful argument and proof against their false statement, saying: "Why did the people appoint (Abu Bakr) as a successor after him (i.e. the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family) while he left it (i.e. the succession)?

So leaving his practice is error, and it is impossible that guidance is the opposite of guidance. And if leaving succession is guidance, then why did Abu` Bakr appoint (someone) as a successor, while the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did not do that? And why did 'Umar regard the authority after him as a consultative council among the Muslims in contrast with his companion (i.e. Abu` Bakr)?

That is because you have claimed that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did not appoint (anyone) as a successor, whereas Abu` Bakr appointed (someone) as a successor, and 'Umar did not leave appointing (someone) as a successor just as Abu` Bakr did, and he brought a third meaning, which is the consultative council which he nominated in order to appoint the successor after him.

So tell me which of that do you regard as right? If you regard the practice of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, as right, then you have regarded the practice of Abu` Bakr as wrong, and such is (my) view concerning the rest of the statements. Then tell me: Which is

better according to your claim leaving the succession which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, did or the succession which a sect did?"

"Tell me: Is it permissible that leaving it (the succession) by the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, is guidance and doing it by other than him is guidance? Is there any guidance the opposite of guidance? So where was then the error?"

"Tell me: Has anyone become a ruler through being chosen by the companions since the death of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, up to this day? If you say 'no', then you have made it obligatory that all the people have made error after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

"If you say 'yes', then you have accused the community of lying, and your statement has disproved the existence which cannot be refuted. Then tell me about these words of Him, the Great and Almighty: Say: To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth? Is this true or false?"

"Yes, it is true," they replied.

"Isn't that which apart from Allah belongs to Allah if He has created and possessed it?"

"Yes," was the answer.

Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n became exited and said: "So this disproves your obligatory choosing a successor, your making obedience to him obligatory, and your calling him the successor of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. It is you who appoint him as a successor, remove him (from office) when you become angry with him and he works in contrast with your love, and you murder him when he refuses to resign."

After this speech, he spoke to the people with violence. Then he turned to the 'qibbla (the direction to Mecca), raised his hands, and said: "O Allah I have guided them! O Allah I have explained to them everything obligatory on me!"

"O Allah, I believe in seeking nearness to You through preferring 'Ali, peace be on him, to the creatures after Your Prophet Mohammed, may Allah bless him and his family, just as Your Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, has ordered us (to do). "

The people kept silent; they did not find any way to defend their beliefs. Most al-Ma'mu'n's indications concerning the Ima'mate of Ima'm 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, were based on logic and proof. I (i.e. the author) think that the Ima'mate of Ima'm 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, is as clear as the sun, for it has been made obligatory by his talent and geniuses, his strong clinging to Allah, his asceticism, and his renouncing the world.

All these qualities made him worthier of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, than

other than him. None of the companions or the relatives of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, had such creative qualities of knowledge, honesty, honor, and the like from among the noble qualities and great tendencies; and through this sense he was more entitled than the rest of the people to the office and rank of the Prophet. As for his relationship to the Prophet, it does not make him preferable to the rest of the Muslims, for it is incorrect to give relationship as proof of his right to undertake the caliphate.

Any how, al-Ma'mu'n gave all proofs of the Ima'mate of Ima'm 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, in order to seek nearness to Ima'm al-Rida`, peace be on him, and to find favor with him; this has been demonstrated by Isha`q b. Hama`d, who said: "Al-Ma'mu'n preferred Ima'm 'Ali, peace be on him, to all companions (of the Prophet) in order to seek nearness to Ima'm Abu` al-Hasan al-Rida`, peace be on him, who himself would say to his trustworthy companions: 'Do not be deceived by his (al-Ma'mu'n's) statement. By Allah, none will kill me except him, but it is necessary for me to be patient until the moment of death
"'.comes

His Entrusting the Imam with Regency

Yet another proof depended by those who believed that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite is that he entrusted regency to Ima'm al-Rida`, peace be on him, that he subjected to danger the caliphate the 'Abba`sids undertook and hand it over to the 'Alawides. These are the most important proofs given by those who say that al-Ma'mu'n was a Shi'ite .and had 'Alawide thought and opinion

His Shiism is false

Through abundant consideration and research, I (i.e. the author) have come to know that al-Ma'mu'n was not a Shi'ite; nor did he show love for the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them. He took the previous measures for political considerations, not for summoning the people to adopt the Shi'ite doctrines, and this can be proved through the following:

1. Al-Ma'mun belonged to the 'Abbasid family, who is famous for showing detest and enmity toward the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them. This family begot none except tyrannical persons who wreaked their wrath upon the family and the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. They killed them, made them homeless, and punished them severely. They committed crimes toward them, to the extent that even the

Umayyad family did not commit them.

Rather the Umayyad family thought famous for violent enmity toward the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family did not treat them as the 'Abba`sids did; the Umayyads had excellences better than those of the 'Abba`sids. In this book we have explained that the 'Abba`sids persecuted the 'Alawides.

Any how, it is very unlikely that al-Ma'mu`n turned away from the line of his fathers, that he changed their program and behavior overnight, that he became an 'Alawide, that he showed love for the opponents of his fathers and subjected his state to danger.

2. As for his disparaging Mu'a`wiya and the rulers before him, and preferring Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, to them, it was not earnest; rather it was formal and for political purposes, for al-Taghlubi, a contemporary of al-Ma'mu`n, has narrated: "Al-Ma'mu`n said: 'And they have thought that it is not permissible to prefer 'Ali except through disparaging the predecessors; I seek sanctuary in Allah from disparaging (anyone) even al-Hajja`jj b. Yusuf, so just imagine how much more are the good predecessors? He refused to disparage al-Hajja`jj b. Yusuf, the criminal terrorist, who drowned Iraq in the blood of the innocent.

The following poetry lines which confirm that have been ascribed to him: Love for 'Ali after the Prophet has become my religion in which I believe and because of which I shall not make an apology tomorrow.

I shall not curse (Abu Bakr) al-Sidiq nor 'Umar.

Then Ibn 'Affa`n, who was unjustly killed, is in the Gardens along with the righteous.

Yet I shall curse neither al-Zubayr nor Talha when a sayer treacherously says.

And I shall not curse 'A'isha, the mother; we shall disown him who fabricates lies against her. Yet there are other examples and proofs which indicate that his Shiism was false, and that he had not any relationship with the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them.

3. He assassinated Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, after he had achieved his political aims; he was not satisfied with that, so he ordered his governor over Egypt to wash the pulpits on which he delivered speeches concerning the regency of Imam al-Rida, peace be on him; this procedure shows that he had harbored malice against the Ima`m.

The 'Alawide family fully understood that the friendship al-Ma'mu`n showed toward them was false, formal, and unreal. The narrators said that al-Ma'mu`n wrote to 'Abd Allah, Ima`m al-Rida`s brother, to grant him security and to guarantee him regency after him just as he did toward his brother Ima`m al-Rida`. It has been mentioned in his letter:

"I do not think that any of the family of Abu` Ta`lib will fear me after what I had done toward al-

Rida`."

So 'Abd Allah answered him in a letter and disclosed therein al-Ma'mu`n's intentions as follows:

"I have received your letter and understood it. You want to deceive me with regard to my own soul just as the hunter does, and you want to trick me with the trick of the assassin intending to shed my blood.

"I have wondered at regency and my undertaking it after you. You think that I have not been informed of what you had done toward al-Rida`; how have you come to know that I crave after kingdom? Do you think that (I crave after) the kingdom whose bloom and sweetness have deceived you? By Allah, if I was thrown into a flaming fire while I was alive, it would be more lovable to me than undertaking an authority over the Muslims or drinking unlawful drink during intense, deadly thirst.

"Or (do you think that I crave after) the poisoned grapes through which you had killed al-Rida`? Or do you think that hiding has tired me, and my chess has become strait out of it? By Allah, for that reason I have become tired of life and detested the world.

If my religion permitted me to put my hand in yours in order to take your purpose from me, I would do that. However, Allah has made it prohibited for me to risk my blood. Would that you were able, without sacrificing my soul for you, to kill me, and I met Allah, the Great and Almighty, (stained) with my own blood, and I met Him while killed and wronged, so I would get rid of this world.

"Know that I am one who seeks salvation for his own soul; I have done my best concerning that which makes Allah pleased with me and concerning a work through which I seek nearness to Him; I have found no opinion to guide me to any of that, so I have returned to the Qur'a`n in which is guidance and cure; I run over it sura by sura, and verse by verse, but I have found nothing closer to one than martyrdom in seeking His good pleasure.

"I ran over it again considering which kind of jihad was the best and for which class (of people), so I have found Him, the Great and Almighty, say: Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness.¹ I asked myself: 'Which kind of the unbelievers is more harmful to Islam and nearer to my place, so I have found that none is more harmful to Islam than you, for the unbelievers have shown their unbelief, and the people have understood their affair, recognized them, and are careful of them.

You have deceived the Muslims through (showing) Islam and hiding unbelief; you have killed (people) through doubt and punished them through accusation; you have illegally taken the property of Allah, openly drunk unlawful wine, spent the property of Allah on the amusers, given

it to the singers, and deprived the Muslims of it; therefore, you have cheated (them) through (adopting) Islam; you have encompassed Islamic regions just as the Muslims have done; you have decided for the polytheist through Islam, disobeyed Allah and His Messenger just as the stubborn opponent has done.

"As a result if the time makes me happy and Allah helps me against you through the supporters of the truth, I will sacrifice my own soul for struggling against you with a struggle which He accepts from me, but if He gave you a respite and delayed you in order to punish you through what you deserved in your return (to Him) or the days chose me before that, then sufficient unto me would be my efforts and my intention which Allah, the Great and Almighty, had known.

Greetings!"

This letter displays al-Ma'mu`n's falseness, deception, and unreal friendship toward the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them.

As for the last paragraphs of the letter, they have added al-Ma'mu`n to the caravan of the unbelievers against whom jihad is obligatory, and whom should be toppled. They have also demonstrated that al-Ma'mu`n used a certain policy to kill the people out of doubt and punished them due to accusation, and that he was sinful, for he drank wine and spent the properties of the Muslims on amusement centers, singers, the mischievous, and the dissolute. This letter was a thunderous outcry in the face of al-Ma'mu`n, the criminal, and it is among the brilliant pages on resisting oppression and tyranny.

It is worth mentioning that another part of this letter or of another letter was sent to al-Ma'mu`n by this great Sayyid. It is as follows: "Let me avenge myself on you and your fathers, who regarded our blood as lawful, took our right, openly declared concerning our affair, and of whom we are cautious; you are the subtlest of them in stratagem toward us through your satisfying us and concealing the ordeals we have received (through you); you have deceived us one by one, but jihad is lovable to me just as it is lovable to everyone you have wronged. I have sharpened my own sword, installed my own spearhead, and chosen my own horse.

"I do not know which enemy is the most harmful to Islam, but I have come to know that Allah's Book contains all things; I have read it and found in it: O you who believe, fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness."

Yet another paragraph of this letter is the following: "I had reflected (on you) and suddenly (found) that you were the most harmful enemy to Islam and the Muslims. For the unbelievers have turned aside from it and opposed it, so the people have become cautious of them and warred against them, but you have apparently entered it, so the people have refrained (from fighting against you), and you have begun destroying its handles one by one; therefore you are

the most harmful enemy to Islam.

These paragraphs give an account of some sides of the 'Abba`sid policy which was based on wronging the 'Alawides and punishing them severely. Similarly, they give an account of this great Sayyid, the son of Ima`m Mu`sa`, peace be on him, who was eager for waging jihad against the government of al-Ma'mu`n, the mortal enemy of Islam, for he 'demolished its handles one by one,' as it has been mentioned in the letter.

4. Having assassinated Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, al-Ma'mun destroyed the 'Alawides. He ordered his intelligence and his security forces to pursue and uproot them, and they assassinated a group of the children of Ima`m Mu`sa`, peace be on him. He used poison as a weapon in order to put an end to the progeny of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

For example, he assassinated with poison the great, noble 'Alawide Ibrahim, the son of Imam Musa`, peace be on him. When Ibra`him died, Ibn al-Samma`k buried him and composed, saying:

Al-Ima`m al-Murtada` has died of poison, and the time has concealed his excellence and knowledge.

He unjustly died at al-Zawra`' just as his forefather was unjustly killed at Karbela`'.

So the yellow sun is mourning for him, and the sad moon is striking his own face Surely his assassinating the 'Alawides and pursuing them, to the extent that they escaped out of fear of him and hid themselves in the countries and the cities, disproves his summons to Shiism and indicates that he had no relationship with friendship to the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them, namely, he was like his fathers, who were the mortal enemy of .the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family

The Reasons for his Pretending Shiism

It is necessary for us to pause in order to discuss the reasons for al-Ma'mu`n's showing friendship toward the members of the House ahl al-Bayt, peace be on them, and for his announcing his Shiism in the official gatherings. I (i.e. the author) think that he pretended Shiism for the following reasons:

A. He was in disagreement with his 'Abba`sid family, who inclined to his brother al-Amin, whose mother was Mrs. Zubayda, who belonged to the 'Abba`sid family and spent generously on the 'Abba`sids. As for the mother of al-Ma'mu`n, she was Mara`jil, who was among the female-slaves in the palace. The 'Abba`sids disdained al-Ma'mu`n because of his mother, and he intended to abase them through his showing friendship to the 'Alawides and his designating

Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, as a successor after him.

B. Through his pretending Shiism, al-Ma'mu`n intended to please the commanders of his army, who showed tendencies and friendship to the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them.

C. Al-Ma'mu`n intended to display sympathy with the 'Alawides and to announce the outstanding merits of Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, that he might attract the feelings of the pious people whose sentiments and hearts were full of love and friendship toward the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, so he was able to use them as a weapon during his war against his brother, al-Amin.

D. He pretended Shiism and entrusted the office to Ima`m al-Rida`, peace be on him, in order to suppress the violent, Shi'ite revolt headed by the great Sayyids from among the children of Imam Musa b. Ja'far, peace be on him.

It is worth mentioning that this revolt extended to most regions of Islamic world and was about to put an end to the 'Abba`sid government, but with unique slyness al-Ma'mu`n was able to suppress it; that was when he appointed Ima`m al-Rida` as a successor after him, for the latter was the master and leader of the 'Alawides, and large part of this community believed in his Ima`mate.

As a result, al-Ma'mu`n was able to suppress and uproot the revolt through his artificial sympathy with the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, his designating Ima`m al-Rida` as his successor, and minting the currency in his name.

D. He pretended Shiism because he wanted to discover the Shi'ites and to make the authorities know their names and places, for they were hidden groups. It is worth mentioning that the previous 'Abba`sid governments were unable to know of them, their secret activities, and their groups.

Accordingly, through his kindness to the 'Alawides, his disparaging the caliphs, and his dispraising Mu'a`wiya, and the like, al-Ma'mu`n intended to discover the Shi'ites, that his security forces and his police might pursue them; this can be indicated by some official documents issued by him. These are some reasons for al-Ma'mu`n's showing love for the .members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them

His Policy

During the days of his rule, al-Ma'mu`n followed the policy of Mu'a`wiya b. Hind. The historians mentioned that he was asked to follow the policy of Abu` Bakr and 'Umar, but he refused to accept it. As a result he insisted on following the policy of Mu'a`wiya, the wicked pagan, who

took money and spent it according to his desires. Al-Ma'mu`n said: "There is no escape for me from (following) this (i.e. Mu'a`wiya's policy)."

" Any how, he followed Mu'a`wiya's example, so he intended to kill the innocent through giving them poison to drink, and in this manner he was able to put an end to them just as Mu'a`wiya did toward his opponents when he said: "Surely Allah has soldiers (made) of honey." Cunning .and deception were the most prominent of his qualities just as they were of Mu'a`wiya's