

Triumph of the Truth

A Historic Debate between the Ahl al-
Sunnah and the Shī'ah

by:

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Transliteration key

أ - 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ṣ
ت - t	ع - 'c
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - w, ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him; we seek His help, forgiveness and guidance. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our own souls and misdeeds. None can mislead whomsoever Allah guides, and none can guide whomsoever Allah causes to go astray.

I testify that there is no deity worthy worship except Allah. He is One and He has no partner. I equally testify that Muḥammad ﷺ is the servant of Allah and His Messenger.

It is authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

This ummah shall be divided into seventy three factions; all save one of them shall be in Hell.¹

The group which will attain salvation is the one that upholds the path of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and that of his noble and righteous Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ, who are the best of mankind after the Prophets and the best community ever evolved for mankind. Allah says:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ
جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

*And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muḥammad H) after the right path has become manifestly clear and follows other than the believers' way, We shall leave him on the path he has chosen, and enter him in Hell, what an evil destination.*²

Adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and following the path of the believers in belief and practice are the distinct characteristics of the victorious and the saved group known as Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah.

1 Tirmidhi

2 Sūrah al-Nisā': 115

In the course of studying the erroneous fundamentals of the seventy-two misguided groups, the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah unanimously agreed that the most erroneous of the deviated groups is the Shī'ah sect. This is the reason why this misguided sect is sometimes called 'Shī'ah of falsehood' or 'Shī'ah of desire'

However, Allah so wished that I should contribute somewhat in challenging these people and their falsehood that He brought to me a confused young man from among the Ahl al-Sunnah. The cause of his confusion was that the Shī'ah had seized him as a result of his ignorance and inadequate knowledge about the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah and the reality of the erroneous ideology of the Shī'ah. Therefore, they were able - through deception, demonstration of false love, fake generosity and claims of bogus love for members of the Prophet's ﷺ household - to attack his pure and untainted correct belief. These deceptions worked on this poor youth to such an extent that he believed that these Shī'ah were angels and advocates of truth.

The following is an account of his story and the subsequent debates that took place in establishing the truth.

I beseech Allah to make it useful for the Muslims and to regard it as a humble and accurate contribution towards acquainting the Muslims with the reality of their enemies. I hope for my reward from Allah alone. He is Sufficient for us and Excellent is He as a Protector! All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

(Abridged)

Majdī Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad

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Chapter One:

The First Debate

Prologue:

The following pages are an account of the debate that took place between myself and the leaders of the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah Shī'ah. I did not prepare for it. It was rather pre-ordained by Allah in order to show the truth to the deceived members of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah who are carried away by the vicious da'wah activities of the Shī'ah establishments, whose apparent goal is to unite the ranks of all those who call themselves Muslims, but whose real hidden agenda is to spread the Shī'ah ideology among the youth of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah, who are not firm-rooted in their knowledge of the truth.

They aim to mislead the youth into doubting the Qur'ān and the Sunnah; to mislead them from their belief in the righteousness of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ into insulting, cursing and regarding them as apostates as well as from having a good opinion of every Muslim who believes in the oneness of Allah into regarding the life, property and honour of such a Muslim as violable.

They want to mislead them from truth to falsehood and from guidance to error through mischievous and deceptive means; but never shall falsehood prevail over the truth, for Allah says:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۗ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

And say: "Truth (i.e. Islamic Monotheism or this Qur'ān) has come and bātil (falsehood) has perished. Surely, bātil is ever bound to perish."¹

1 Sūrah Al-Isrā: 81

Reasons for the debate

I am strongly convinced that engaging in any debate with the Shī'ah is futile because their reputation in lying precedes them. They regard lying as an act of worship and an integral part of their religion. Therefore, argument with such people is a waste of time.

There was a young man from among the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah who had good manners but little knowledge. As a result of his limited knowledge about the books of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah, he fell into the hands of the Shī'ah, who were able to penetrate his heart and mind and attack his pure belief through their deceptions and shrewdness. They pretended to love him and they showered him with their artificial generosity to the extent that he was driven into believing that they were the best of all people in religion and manners.

After they had won his confidence, they told him about the pure and righteous members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. The Shī'ah convinced him that they were the supporters of 'Alī رضي الله عنه - the Prophet's ﷺ cousin and son-in-law - whom he appointed as his brother and placed him in relation to himself as Prophet Hārūn was to Prophet Mūsā عليهما السلام. They added that it was this same 'Alī رضي الله عنه about whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

O Allah, be a friend to him who befriends him ('Alī) and be an enemy to him who shows enmity to him.

They also convinced the young man that they, the Shī'ah, alone are the lovers of Ḥasan رضي الله عنه and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه - the chiefs of the youth of Paradise - and their mother Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها - the leader of the women of Paradise.

All the above left our young man in little doubt that the Shī'ah were the angels of truth whom Allah had sent down to guide him.

The cause of the youth's confusion

In my first meeting with him, the well-mannered young man addressed me in this way:

I am seriously confused and I wish that I was not born into this world!

I told him: Take it easy, for Allah's mercy encompasses all things. He commanded us not to lose hope in His mercy.

(I kept on allaying his fears though I knew that he was suffering from a great depression that I had not yet uncovered.)

He said: I have heard good things about you and I come to you that I may find relief by you. I think well of you, though only Allah truly knows what resides in the heart.

I said: Allah willing, I am ready to listen to whatever you have to say. Please, feel free to share your feelings with me. Perhaps you will find the solution to your confusion, Allah willing. It is He from Whom we seek help.

He said: For some time now, I have come to know a young Shī'ī man, whom I have been associating and working with. We have come to trust each other. He would often tell me about members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. In fact, I have been overwhelmed by his fervent love for them. Why should it not be so, since every Muslim is required to love them? This in accordance with Allah's injunction:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ط

Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ): "No reward do I ask of you for this except to be kind to me for my kinship with you."¹

1 Sūrah al-Shūrā: 23

And the Messenger's ﷺ saying: "None of you believes until I am dearer to him than his father, children and all people."

It follows then that the Prophet's ﷺ family should be dearer to a Muslim than his own family. So I became more attached to this Shī'ah man, in spite of all that I know about the Shī'ah and the error of their way. His love for me increased so much so that he would come to me and put himself at my service with his car. He had really won me over with his generosity.

In the beginning, he would often tell me about good things that I thought the Shī'ah did not believe in. He would tell me about his passionate love and that of the entire Shī'ah for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and members of his household. He would inform me about the Shī'ah love for Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها, the Prophet's ﷺ daughter and the leader of the women of Paradise, about whom he said: "Behold! Fāṭimah is part of me. He who hurts her, hurts me and he who hurts me, hurts Allah."¹

He would tell me about his passionate love for Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهما, the chiefs of the youth of Paradise. He would make me understand how deeply he and all the Shī'ah love Imām 'Alī رضي الله عنه, the Prophet's ﷺ cousin, friend and son-in-law.

I would have no objection to all this because, deep in my heart, I love all the above-mentioned personalities and I told my friend: "We also love all these personalities." He would keep quiet, even though grudgingly.

The relationship between us grew stronger and stronger; and he would take me to his friends who were similar minded, extremely well-mannered, enormously accommodating and hospitable. I was enthralled by their manners that I had a feeling that these individuals should not have been humans. They should have been angels walking on the surface of the earth. If I requested anything, I would find it the next morning in my house; if I wanted to go anywhere, they would all offer to take me in their cars.

1 This version is unauthentic as would be explained on page 69.

Meanwhile, they gave me a beautiful book in which I hardly found anything of the falsehoods of which the Shī'ah are accused of. I can still recollect that book that made me start considering becoming a Shī'ah. It is the book titled: *Ahl al-Bayt- Maqāmuhum, Manhajuhum, Maṣāruhum*.

The book is filled with aḥādīth classified as authentic by the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah. It calls for loving, befriending and praising members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. Nevertheless, it took me little by little towards the belief the Shī'ah hold. It sometimes raises doubts and then removes them. According to that book, the Shī'ah believe in the Qur'ān and in the ḥadīth, and they honour and respect members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. This is what is naturally expected from every Muslim who believes in the oneness of Allah.

I asked my friend: "Please tell me more about the Shī'ī sect. I have heard that it is an erroneous and perverted sect founded upon insulting and cursing the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ and regarding them as disbelievers, upon hating the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah and upon a belief that the Qur'ān has been altered, but now, I could see that your books refute all these allegations. Please tell me about Shī'ism, may Allah have mercy on you."

My friend then gave me a book titled, *al-Murāja'āt*. I dedicated all my time to reading and rereading it. In the book, I was astonished at the confirmation of the great Shaykh of al-Azhar University to all the proofs presented by the young Shī'ī man, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Sharf al-Dīn al-Musawī.

I was extremely pleased with this book and wondered when the Ahl al-Sunnah would be able to produce a book like this. I could sense that the elusive but much needed unity between the Shī'ah and Ahl -Al-Sunnah could easily be achieved if only our scholars could get rid of their ignorance of the reality of the Shī'ī religion. With the help of my friend, my understanding of unity among the Muslims narrowed into a belief that all of the Ahl al-Sunnah must become Shī'ah, so that all of us will be in the ark of safety- the ark of the Prophet ﷺ and the pure members of his blessed household.

I was in this situation for about four months during which time my relationship with my Shīʿī brother became stronger and stronger. I would follow him to all their religious symposia and gatherings. I wish I did not go.

You might be surprised at this last sentence: “I wish I did not go.” Yes!

It was my habit that whenever I heard the names of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا to say: “Raḍī Allāhu ‘anhumā” (may Allah be pleased with them). This is because Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the Ṣiddīq, the Prophet’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ companion in the cave and the second most important personality in Islam. He is the father of ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, the Prophet’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ wife and the mother of the faithful. And above all, he was the khalīfah of the Muslims.

As for ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, he was the second khalīfah in Islam. With him, Allah made distinction between truth and falsehood. Through him, Allah strengthened Islam and many lands were conquered. He was famous for his uncompromising support for justice (and his sternness against any kind of injustice).

That was my belief concerning these two righteous men.

But these Shīʿah had been very careful with me in the beginning. My friend would often tell me about injustices done to Imām ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and how he was deprived of his right to succession and rulership. But he would sense that I was not enthusiastic about that story until that fateful day arrived.

I was in one of their gatherings and the name of ‘Umar al-Fārūq رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was mentioned and I said: “Raḍī Allāhu ‘anhu”. One of them scolded me: “This (referring to ‘Umar) is a disbeliever and an accused apostate! Do not invoke Allah’s pleasure upon him.”

This statement hit me like a thunderbolt. I wondered how this statement tied up with the books they showed me and which did not say anything unpleasant about the Prophet’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. I concluded that perhaps this man was

only a bigoted extremist. But I was surprised to find out that all of them shared the same viewpoint on 'Umar رضي الله عنه.

My friend then told me bluntly: “Our creed is based upon allegiance and renunciation; to love the pure members of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم household and to renounce and hate all those who attacked them and usurped their rights.”

He went on lecturing me on how Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and 'Umar رضي الله عنه jointly wronged members of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم household; how they humiliated 'Alī رضي الله عنه, set his apartment on fire and struck his wife, Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها, on her belly so hard that it led to miscarriage of her unborn baby and she herself later died from the pain of that attack. He continued telling stories of shameless deeds that even the meanest people would not think of committing let alone eminent men like Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and 'Umar رضي الله عنه.

To be honest, my Sunnī power of resistance by this time had already completely vanished. I believed all the tales they narrated about Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and 'Umar رضي الله عنه such that I began to hate them, especially the story about the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم purported attempt to write a will of succession for 'Alī رضي الله عنه and how 'Umar رضي الله عنه prevailed upon him not to do so.

With time and through often repeated stories about the Companions’ رضي الله عنهم alleged injustice against Imām 'Alī رضي الله عنه and the members of his family, it became easy for me to hold a bad opinion of them; and with repeated stories about the injustice wrought against other members of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم household, especially 'Alī’s رضي الله عنه family - that later culminated in the murder of Husayn رضي الله عنه - I could not help hating all those who were not Shī'ah.

That was how I became a Shī'ah wholeheartedly, believing things that would previously be impossible for me to believe: the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم were all infidels with the exception of few such as: al-Miqdād, Abū Dhar and 'Ammār رضي الله عنهم, who were 'Alī’s رضي الله عنه supporters. Therefore, the basis of the Shī'ah religion is to renounce all the Companions رضي الله عنهم except these few. Why it not be

so when they deprived the members of the Prophet's ﷺ household of their rights? It is therefore a fundamental of the Shī'ī religion to insult and curse the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ.

However, I was not comfortable with this 'concept' of cursing the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. Whenever I was with them, I would be impacted by their talks that were emotional, and sentimental stories that revolved around the alleged injustice done to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and the murder of Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. They are nothing but stories repeated over and over, the objective of which is to rouse your anger and hatred against those who 'perpetrated injustice' against members of the Prophet's ﷺ household and usurped their rights.

But whenever I was alone, I would tell myself: "How dare you curse Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, who was the Prophet's ﷺ inseparable companion? How could you insult 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, on whose tongue truth was pronounced? How could you have the audacity to insult 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, who compiled the Qur'ān and protected it against anomalies and discrepancy? How could you dare curse all the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ? Can you still remain a Muslim after cursing all these eminent people?"

I am really in a state of confusion, the extent of which is known to Allah alone. I am telling you this while wishing that I was never born or that I was long dead and forgotten!

I am really in a dilemma! I cannot be counted among the Shī'ah nor among the Ahl al-Sunnah. I am haunted by the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah that I have held throughout my life, and by the Shī'ah religion in which I am living now. If I am in the company of these Shī'ah, I am inclined to the Shī'ah religion regardless of insults and curses that this creed demands against those who never deserved to be cursed. And when I am alone, I prefer the path of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the path of safety that demands loving all members of the Prophet's ﷺ household and his noble Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ and invoking Allah to be pleased with all of them.

Do you then have remedy for this confusion of mine? Can you please clarify the incontestable truth for me? If you decide to engage me in a debate, kindly permit me to speak purely from the Shī'ī perspective, and please, do not have any misgiving towards me for that. For I am looking for the truth from any source.

Remedy for the Confusion

My guest spoke while I listened with rapt attention. It was clear that he had fallen victim to a campaign orchestrated by well-funded Shī'ī organisations with the purpose of converting our youth to the Shī'ism by causing them to doubt their beliefs. We take solace in Allah's words:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ط فَسَيُنْفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ ط وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

Certainly, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to hinder (mankind) from the Path of Allah, and so will they continue to spend it; but in the end it will become an anguish for them. Then they will be overcome. And those who disbelieve will be gathered unto Jahannam.¹

Before I responded, I asked my guest if there were others from among the Ahl al-Sunnah who were in the same situation as he is and who attend Shī'ī gatherings. He answered that there were three other young men and that they had all embraced the Shī'ī religion.

This confirmed my suspicion that the Shī'ī propaganda machine had advanced greatly in their efforts. I was very sad with this phenomenon. For, how could falsehood be allowed to be spread freely? I then reminded myself that it was during the slumber of the truth and its supporters that falsehood reigns. I pitied some of our deluded scholars who did not know the reality of the Shī'ī religion and its dubious activities.

1 Sūrah al-Anfāl: 36

I realised that the uncertainties and misconceptions with which my guest was living could not be removed with a brief explanation.

I thus asked him: My brother, have you ever read any book of beliefs written by our eminent scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah?

He said: Frankly, I have not read anything of such but I know the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah.

I said: From where did you learn it?

He said: I have lived all my life among the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah and listened to them. I also know about belief in Allah, and in His Angels, Books, and Messengers. I also know about belief in destiny, whether good and bad.

I told him: These are pillars of faith and they are the foundations of a Muslim's belief, but do you think that your knowledge of these pillars is sufficient for you to decide which is correct between the way of Ahlus- Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah and that of the Shī'ah?

He kept silent for a while and then said: You are right. This information is not sufficient to know which of the two ways is correct.

I then moved closer to my guest and told him: The remedy of your confusion is easy with the permission of Allah.

He said: How?

I asked him whether he reads the Qur'ān and he answered in the affirmative. I then asked: "Have you read Allah's word:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best of nations ever raised for mankind.*¹

¹ Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 110

He replied in the affirmative.

I then said: What did you understand from this verse?

He said: What I understood there is that the Muslims are the best nation ever raised up for mankind.

I said: May Allah reward you with good. The followers of Muḥammad ﷺ are the best of all nations. They are the best of all people because they enjoin all that is good and prevent all that is evil. They believe in Allah and they guide people to the way of imān.”

I then added: The ones who have greatest right to this description are the Prophet's ﷺ Companions. They were the ones who bore the message of Islam with the Prophet ﷺ and fought on his side with their lives and wealth, so that this religion could be spread and that people could be guided to the right path and believe in Allah.”

My friend agreed.

I went on saying: But the Shī'ah claim that after the death of the Prophet ﷺ all his Companions apostatised except five¹ who are: al-Miqdād, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Dhar and 'Ammār who remained with 'Alī رضي الله عنه. Is it then reasonable that of about one hundred thousand Companions who were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ during the farewell pilgrimage, only six men or thereabout remained upon Islam after his death? Is it then reasonable that this is the best nation ever raised up for mankind? If these Companions were as described by the Imamī Shī'ah, who are the rejecters of truth, it should then follow that they are the worst nation ever raised for mankind; for they apostatised and bargained away their faith!

1 Some Shī'ah claim that all the Companions apostatised with the exception of only twelve who are: 'Alī and some members of his family, Salmān, Abū Dhar, 'Ammār, al-Miqdād, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Ḥaytham ibn Ṭayḥān, Sahl ibn Ḥanīf, 'Ubādah ibn Sāmit, Abū Ayyub al-Anṣārī, Khuzaymah ibn Thābit and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه. However, majority of the Imamiyyah Shī'ah believe that their number is much less than that.

Do you know, my dear friend, how the Shī'ah recite this verse? They read it as: “You are the best A'immah¹ ever raised for mankind.” Since they could not agree to the message of this verse, they resorted to this malicious distortion in order to be able to interpret the “Ummah” to mean “Shī'ah A'immah”.

My friend said: But the Shī'ah believe in the Qur'ān as it was revealed and in its present form without any addition or omission. This is, at least, what they told me.

I said: Wait a minute. It is not yet time for this. They only told you this in line with their concept of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation). This concept is one of the basics of their religion. The one who does not practise it, his religion is null and void. In their corrupt belief the more you practise *taqiyyah* the greater your piety and religiosity. But this concept according to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah is nothing but deception and hypocrisy. They deceive you so that you and others like you will not slip away from their hands. Their situation is as described by Allah in His saying:

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا ۖ وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَؤُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

And when they meet those who believe they say: “We believe” but when they are alone with their shayāṭīn (polytheists, hypocrites), they say: “Truly, we are with you; verily, we were but mocking.”²

My brother, it is not yet time for discussing *taqiyyah* and whether they believe in the Qur'ān or not. We are now talking about their stand in respect to the Companions رضي الله عنهم. Did you read Allah's saying:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءَ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۗ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِمَّنْ آتَرَ السُّجُودَ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ ۗ

1 A'immah is the plural of Imām.

2 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 14

وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْطَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾

Muḥammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are severe against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and falling down prostrate (in prayer), seeking Bounty from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. The mark of them (i.e. of their Faith) is on their faces (foreheads) from the traces of prostration (during prayers). This is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Injīl (Bible) is like a (sown) seed which sends forth its shoot, then makes it strong, and then becomes thick and it stands straight on its stem, delighting the sowers, that He may enrage the disbelievers with them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds, forgiveness and a mighty reward (i.e. Paradise).”¹

This verse is one of the greatest proofs of the Companions uprightness and sound imān. Since Allah is referring to them: “and those who are with him (the Prophet ﷺ). His statement: “severe against disbelievers” is a reference to their strong and certain belief in Allah. His saying: “merciful among themselves” is a commendation for them from Allah. His saying: “you see them bowing and falling down prostrate (in prayer)” is an allusion to their worship. And His saying: “seeking Bounty from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure” indicates that they were sincere in their acts of worship and they did not expect reward except from Allah alone. These are the qualities of the Companions as mentioned in the Qur’ān.

My friend, do you know who are those who become enraged when the Companions ﷺ are mentioned? They are the disbelievers, as Allah describes them in the Qur’ān: “that He may enrage the disbelievers with them”. Therefore, it is only disbelievers and apostates who are enraged whenever the Prophet’s Companions ﷺ are mentioned.

Now, which of the two should be regarded as disbelievers: the Companions ﷺ or those who are enraged when the Companions ﷺ are mentioned? You have a decisive verse from the Qur’ān before you. It is now up to you to decide.

1 Sūrah al-Fatḥ: 29

My friend said: Why did Allah add in the same verse: “and do righteous deeds (among them)”? His saying: “among them” is a proof that there are some from among the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who did not believe and who did not do righteous deeds.

I said: May Allah guide you! All the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were indeed noble and righteous people. They were all believers and pious. We all know that most of those who were with the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ were sincere and righteous Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who fought along with him. There were also hypocrites known for their hypocrisy such as ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ubay ibn Salūl and his cohorts. So the verse clarified that those who deserve Allah’s praise are the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who were sincere and righteous, those who raced to obey Allah and His Messenger صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

It should also be realised that the preposition ‘من’ in the verse, which is interpreted as ‘from among’, does not - in the correct interpretation of the verse - apply to only a section of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. It is rather used to describe them as a class of people to the exclusion of others who are not Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

Here is what the scholars of tafsīr have to say on this preposition:

The preposition ‘من’ here is not to distinguish some Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ from others. It is rather used to describe them all as a class of people. An example of this is Allah’s command:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

So shun the abomination (worshipping) of idols, and avoid false statement.¹

The word ‘من’ in the verse above could never imply that only a part of idol worshipping is abominable and therefore only that form should be shunned.

1 Sūrah al-Ḥajj: 30

On the contrary. the meaning is ‘idol worshipping is a class of abomination that should be shunned’. However, some scholars said that the word ‘from among them’ in the verse refers to the shoot which the sown seed sends forth and they are those who enter Islam. The shoot is therefore referred to in plural form ‘from among them’ to allude to those who will enter into the religion of Islam till the Day of Resurrection.¹

I proceeded: Have you not read Allah’s saying:

وَالسُّبْقُونَ الْأُولُونَ مِنَ الْمُهِجْرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا
عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

And the foremost to embrace Islam of the Muhājirīn (those who migrated from Makkah to Madīnah) and the Anṣār (the citizens of Madīnah who helped and gave aid to the Muhājirīn) and also those who followed them exactly (in imān). Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.²

Who then are “the foremost to embrace Islam” if not Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, Zubayr, Ṭalḥah, Sa’d, Sa’id and Abū ‘Ubaydah رضي الله عنهم, who are those given the glad tidings of paradise? Who are they if not the participants in the Battle of Badr and whose faith is attested to?

The foremost men to embrace Islam - who are the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār and then those who followed them in righteousness - are the ones who have attained Allah’s pleasure. He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide forever.

1 *Tafsīr al-Ṭabrī* vol. 26 pg. 115-166, *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī* vol. 16 pg. 295-296 and *Tafsīr Ibn al-Kathīr* vol. 7 pg. 344

2 Sūrah al-Taubah: 100

In light of this verse, is it then logical to think that the Companions رضي الله عنهم who were praised in such glowing tributes, would apostatise with the exception of only three, four or five?

Have you not listened to Allah’s saying:

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهْجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۗ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصُّدُوقُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّأُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۗ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَخِ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(And there is also a share in this booty) for the poor Muhājirīn, who were expelled from their homes and their property, seeking bounties from Allah and to please Him, and helping Allah (His religion) and His Messenger (Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم). Such are indeed the truthful ones.

And (it is also for) those who, before them, had homes (in Madīnah) and had adopted the faith, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their chests for that which they have been given, and give them (Muhājirīn) preference over themselves even though they were in need. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, it is they who will be successful.

And those who came after them say: “O our Rabb! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. O our Rabb! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful.”¹

These three verses exemplify the perfect and complete way of refuting the allegations of the Shīrah and the rejecters of the truth against the Companions رضي الله عنهم.

1 Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr: 8-10

The first verse praises the Muhājirīn, describing them to be truthful and sincere, and it depicts Allah's love for them.

The second verse praises the Anṣār and describes them as selfless and successful. The two verses therefore commend the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

As for the third verse, it refused and repudiated the belief of the rejecters of the truth (the Shī'ah). Since Allah emphasized therein that the believers who would come after the Companions shall invoke Allah's forgiveness for themselves and for the believers who preceded them in faith, and that they would ask Allah not to put in their hearts any hatred against those who have believed.

Since the Shī'ah revile the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and declare them as disbelievers, they have practically excluded themselves from any of the three categories of believers mentioned previously: the truthful Muhājirīn, the successful Anṣār and the seekers of forgiveness who came after them and bear no malice in their hearts against those who preceded them in faith.

(I clarified further to my friend that the third verse indicates Allah's praise for the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions who accepted Islam before and after the Conquest of Makkah and that Allah promised both groups great reward.)

I then asked him: Now tell me, how could the Shī'ah regard it a religious obligation to revile, curse and declare as disbelievers the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ earlier and latter Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ, whom Allah has promised great reward?

Have you not listened to Allah's saying:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

Thus We have made you a just (and the best) nation that you be witnesses over mankind.¹

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 143

The Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ that he may read it to his Companions ﷺ and to inform them they were the witnesses over mankind. Then tell me, how could these witnesses be apostates? This is, indeed, the greatest absurdity!

I said further: In the Qur'ān there are many verses preceded by the phrase: “O you who have believed.” Who were the ones the Prophet ﷺ was reading these verses to?

He said: To those who were around him.

I said: Yes! Those who were around him were his Companions ﷺ. Then how could Allah address them as believers if they were not? Who knows better about the Prophet's ﷺ Companions: Allah or the Shī'ah? My friend, may Allah grant you happiness in invoking His pleasure on the noble Companions ﷺ who conveyed the Qur'ān, the sunnah and the laws of Islam to us. They were the ones who sacrificed their lives and their wealth so that this religion might spread and prevail

Dear Friend! If it had not been for the Companions ﷺ after Allah's mercy, we would not have become Muslims today and our countries would not have practised Islam. Should the compensation for these great deeds then be insults, curses and accusations of apostasy? No Muslim would ever do this!

My friend said: No one can deny that the Qur'ān praised the Companions ﷺ, but after the Prophet's ﷺ death they changed, and they deprived Imām 'Alī ﷺ of his right. They wronged him, set his house ablaze and struck his wife Fāṭimah ﷺ, the daughter of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, in her belly. This resulted in her miscarriage and eventually leading to her death.

I told my friend: Wait a minute! Where did you get these lies and false narrations from? The recognized scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah regard these stories as false. The authentic narrations are those that reported the mutual love

and affection that existed between the Companions and 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and members of the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ household. I would then like to ask you: What are the names of 'Alī's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ sons? Do you know that it was out of his love for his fellow Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ, especially, the rightly-guided caliphs, that he named some of his sons after Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ? Do you know to whom 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ married his daughter, Umm Kulthūm? He married her to the dearest person to him, 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

Do you know that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was the Judge of Madīnah during the Khilāfah of 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ? Do you know that he was keenest to give him sincere advice? When 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ intended to lead the battle against the Persians himself it was 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who advised him to stay at Madīnah, because he was the pillar unto whom the Muslims would return, and he advised him to send someone else he trusted to lead the army in his stead.

Do you know that 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ played an important role in Fāṭimah's marriage to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا?

Indeed, the mutual love that existed among the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ was so legendary that Allah described them as such in His glorious Book:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

*Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves.*¹

A Muslim should, therefore, believe in the purity of the minds of all the prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions. For, it was the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ who nurtured and trained them under Allah's protection. Could it then be acceptable that the prophet of mercy and wisdom, who was sent to purify the entire mankind, would be unable to purify those who were around him?

1 Sūrah al-Faṭḥ: 29

Allah says about him:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

It is He Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger (Muḥammad ﷺ) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them (from the filth of disbelief and polytheism), and teaching them the Book (Qur'ān) and Ḥikmah (the sunnah) although they had been in manifest error before.¹

My friend said: I agree with you concerning the Companions رضي الله عنهم but there is a more important issue, which is fundamental with regards to them. It is the issue of *Imāmah* (leadership) and the explicit proof that indicated that 'Alī رضي الله عنه is the leader and the khalifah (after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم). If this is proved correct then we must agree that the Companions deprived 'Alī رضي الله عنه of his right, but if it is proved incorrect then I will have to accept that you are right.

I told him: This issue is much easier than the earlier one, but I think we should study it academically so that all ambiguities related to it will be completely dispelled. I would like to acquaint you with what our scholars said about these misconceptions. After that, we can discuss whatever you like.

He said: How is it possible to study the issue of contention between the Shī'ah and the Ahl al-Sunnah academically, as you say?

I got up and brought three books and then told him: These are books I would like us to read together. After that, we can discuss the misconceptions.

He said: I would like to ask for permission to leave because it is already late. Tomorrow - Allah willing - I will remain with you until we arrive at the clear truth, but what are the three books?

1 Sūrah al-Jumu'ah: 2

I said: *Al-'Awāsīm min al-Qawāsīm*, by Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī, *Al-Sunnah wa al-Shī'ah* by Iḥsān Ilāhī Ḍahīr; and *Al-Shī'ah wa Ahl al-Bayt* also by Iḥsān Ilāhī Ḍahīr.

On the following day, my friend came with a small bag and told me: I know that you live alone these days. So, I have taken leave from my workplace so that I can devote my time to searching for the truth. Therefore, I am going to be your guest until my doubts are replaced with certainty. With all praise due to Allah, last night was the first time I could get a good night sleep for the past three months. This is largely due to the restored confidence I have in the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ and the restored confidence I have in my faith and religion.

I told him: You are warmly welcome - not as a guest - but as the owner of the house. Rest for a while and after that, we can resume our study.

He said: I have already had enough rest. Let us start our study with Allah's permission.

(I gave him the book *Al-'Awāsīm min al-Qawāsīm* by Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī and told him: "You can read the book while I sit beside you. If anything is unclear to you, we can then read it together." I watched him reading the book with total concentration. The book deals with the Shī'ī allegations concerning the Companions' ﷺ stand after the Prophet's ﷺ death, providing articulate and convincing responses to these allegations. My friend continued reading the book and occasionally shared his feelings with me about what he had read. He would say: "Where was I in relation to this knowledge? Ibn al-'Arabi has really restored my life with this knowledge."

He then enthusiastically turned to me and said: I have finished the first book. Where is the second one?

I said: No! That will be too much on you. Take a rest for today, and tomorrow, Allah willing, you can read the second book. (But upon his-insistence on having

the second book, I gave it to him and said:) Now, your mind is at peace concerning the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. The first book alone was enough to destroy the false Shī'ah ideology. This second book will reveal to you the reality of the Shī'ī religion and the reality of its stand on the Qur'ān, the sunnah, the Companions ﷺ and the entire Muslim nation. After realising the truth about these Shī'ah, you will not be able to resist cursing them¹ and denouncing their religion which explicitly goes against the religion of Islam in every aspect.

¹ The Shī'ah referred to here are the Imāmiyyah Ithnā 'Ashariyyah.

The academic study continues

My friend began reading the pages of the second book *Al-Shī'ah wa al-Sunnah* by Iḥsān Ilāhi Zāhīr, striking his hands together in amazement when he realised the gravity of the beliefs of the Shī'ah and what they had been concealing from him over these past months. He was entirely absorbed in reading for the next two consecutive days. Nothing would stop him except the obligatory prayers and short naps. During these two days, he finished reading the three books.)

After finishing the books, his sentiments changed towards his friends of yesterday. He now realised that he was only being honoured by the Shī'ah as a hunter would honour his prey. He realised the havoc that the Shī' concept of taqiyyah wreaks on simple-minded Muslims. He then started renouncing and cursing them. He would say: "It is safer for me to curse these Shī'ah than to curse and insult Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and the rest of the noble Companions رضي الله عنهم. Far indeed are the Companions رضي الله عنهم from deserving any curse!"

My friend then got ready to leave. He hugged me, thanked me and asked me for advice. I advised him to hold unto the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and to concentrate on the books of beliefs written by our recognised erudite scholars.

I also warned him that these Imāmī Shī'ah are sinful liars who should preferably be avoided, for they are hypocrites. Their hearts are distorted. They neither listen to the truth nor reason with it. They are as Allah says:

صُمُّ بِكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهَمٌ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

They are deaf, dumb, and blind, so they return not (to the Right Path).¹

A debate comes unexpectedly

After two days, my friend unexpectedly arrived to inform me that one of the

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 18

Shīʿī scholars was expecting me for a debate concerning the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Shīʿah; which of the two is on the correct path. I could see that he was in a hurry. I wanted to confirm the matter and I asked him to tell me about what had happened. However, he only said: "Right now, there is a young man from the side of the Shīʿah in front of the house waiting for us. There is no time for discussion now."

I told him: This is not what we agreed upon. My admonition for you was that you should keep away from them. We did not agree that you would take me to them.

He replied: But you have to proclaim the truth! You need to expose their falsehood!

I told him: These people have perverted hearts. I surely know that they neither desire truth nor will they follow it if it is shown to them. Arguing with them is mere waste of time.

(But my friend insisted that I go with him saying that my debate with them would benefit him. So, I got dressed and went with them to the place of debate. We arrived there and I found myself in a large open square filled with people. It was like an academic symposium. At the front row of this courtyard was a man wearing a black turban and black robe. He was sitting on a sofa large enough to seat three people. Other people were sitting on the floor beneath him. I then realised that he was their leader who wanted to debate with me.)

The man stood up, welcomed me and made me sit beside him. He then started his speech thus:

We were discussing about the Imāmah and how it is a fundamental aspect of the religion such that even the Prophets were not indifferent to it. It is a principle that should not be left for the generality of the people, to avoid differences in religion that can lead to mischief and corruption in the land."

He then turned to me and said: Is it then reasonable that the Prophet ﷺ should die and leave his ummah just like that without appointing for them a leader who would succeed the Prophet ﷺ manage the affairs of the ummah and lead them to the land of safety?

Let me give you an example: Assume that a driver of a large bus that is full of people drove the bus from the beginning of a journey. He exerted all his energy to drive the bus throughout the desert until he arrived at the safe road. He then tired and wished to rest. Is it then reasonable that he should leave the bus there without appointing a skilled driver who would drive the bus to the land of safety? The answer is definitely no.

This then shows us that the matter of Imāmah is a fundamental one that no Messenger should be indifferent to or leave for the masses to decide, thereby causing differences of opinions. Hence, there is no issue more important in the religion than Imāmah; through which this religion can be preserved, differences can be averted and stability can be achieved.”

My response was in the following points:

One: All praise is due to Allah. Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger, his household and Companions. It is really shocking that in these days when people from all over the world are speaking and boasting about political, social and ideological freedoms they have achieved through principles such as ‘the right to elect their representatives in government’, we still see some of us citing logical reasons for necessity of ‘stipulating (and imposing) a leader’. I wonder how this argument can be logically supported, since it is fundamentally inimical to common sense.

The Muslim ummah is not a flock of sheep on which a shepherd must be imposed. This ummah is rather, by Allah’s blessing, the best of all nations. Allah honoured its sincere and believing members and made their affairs subject to mutual consultation among them. This is the perfect honour to the intellect with which

Allah blessed the upright man who knows Allah, knows his religion and is aware of the welfare of his ummah.

When Allah describes the believers, He says:

وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

*And they (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation.*¹

He further emphasised His honour for them by commanding His Prophet ﷺ to consult his followers. He says:

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

*And consult them in the affairs.*²

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the keenest person when it comes to respecting the ummah's right to choose whoever it deems suitable to lead it in matters of religious and worldly affairs, and whoever it sees suitable to lead it to safety.

That is why we find the Prophet ﷺ leaving them without imposing any particular person on them because he trusted their ability in exercising their God-given right to choose the most suitable person to lead them. However, he taught his Companions ﷺ qualities that must be found in a suitable leader, and he alluded that these qualities are found in Abū Bakr ᷺, though he did not leave any specific instruction to appoint him as the leader after him.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not a dictator who issued orders, imposed restrictions and rescinded people's rights, abilities and their social, intellectual and political freedoms. He had great respect for the people and their rights.

1 Sūrah al-Shūrā: 38

2 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 159

Allah describes him as follows:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

*Certainly there has come unto you a Messenger (Muḥammad ﷺ) from among yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious over you; for the believers he is full of pity, kind, and merciful.*¹

The keen observer of the Prophet's ﷺ character will realise that in most cases his instructions in matters affecting the ummah are based upon divine revelation. In the absence of divine revelation, he would resort to consulting his Companions رضي الله عنهم. Since there is no explicit evidence on succession in the Qur'ān that would necessitate appointing a successor, the kind and compassionate Prophet ﷺ respected the right and intellectual capability of the ummah without interfering in this matter as the emperors and monarchs would do.

Two: The example cited by the lecturer concerning the driver and the bus is a distorted example. It suggests that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ left his followers as a flock of sheep who were incapable of understanding hence they required a shepherd to guide them.

The fact is that the Prophet ﷺ left his ummah such that they were the best nation in terms of knowledge, understanding and morality. He left them with the knowledge that there were among them hundreds of potentially qualified and unique leaders who could lead them to safety. He left them, having confidence in their ability to select their own representative who would lead them in upholding Allah's law, perpetuating His religion and managing their own worldly affairs. And he was proved absolutely right.

The Muslims were unanimous in selecting the best one among them, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه to lead them. He took a decisive stand against the apostates and defeated them. No other person was capable of doing what Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه did.

1 Sūrah al-Taubah: 128

If not for him - after Allah of course - only Allah knows the effect the crisis of apostasy would have had on Islam and the ummah.

Three: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ could have made a specific stipulation on Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and had he done so, the entire ummah would have agreed to his selection, but after the selection of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who would qualify to exercise this prerogative till the Last Hour?

Emphasising the necessity of stipulating a successor tantamounts to calling for changing the Islamic Khilāfah to the rule of fatalism in which the ummah will be deprived of its rights under a religious disguise akin to the Christians during the dark ages.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ however, through Allah's blessing, left the ummah's rights untouched and made the concept of *shura* (consultation) the basis for selecting the Muslims' leader. That is how the religion of Islam, from its inception - and through Allah's injunctions and prophetic teachings - affirmed these political, intellectual and social rights that became known to Western nations only after seas of blood were shed and after ages of darkness and oppression. Westerners today are bragging about these rights. If they had turned to the guidance of Islam, they would have found greater freedom and honour that confirms Allah's saying:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

*And indeed We have honoured the children of Ādam.*¹

Four: If Imāmah was a fundamental aspect of religion, whose occupier must be stipulated - and we certainly know that Islam is an everlasting religion that will abide till the Last Hour - is it then reasonable that the Prophet ﷺ would leave unmentioned the names of those who would be the leaders of the Muslims

1 Sūrah al-Isrā: 70

till the Last Hour?! If we assume that he had mentioned their names, is it then logical that such all-important information might have escaped us?

Then if the Prophet ﷺ had mentioned a particular person as his successor, will those who came after him also have the right to appoint their successors? This would have caused unthinkable corruption. As then the ummah would become coercively ruled like a flock of sheep.

Therefore, however much the rejecters of the truth try to support their argument logically, they would never be able to convince anyone but fools.

If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had (as you claim) explicitly mentioned his successor, would it be reasonable to assume that all his Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ disobeyed him and held a meeting after his death to select their own leader? We certainly deem the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ far above being disobedient to the Prophet's ﷺ clear command. Since they are the ones whom Allah is pleased with. Allah described them as believers, righteous, truthful and sincere. He made them the best community ever raised up for mankind and made them the best companions any Prophet could have. Our belief is that they are too righteous to disobey the Prophet ﷺ for in their desire to please Allah and His Messenger ﷺ; they fought against their fathers, brothers and sons for the cause of Islam. They abandoned the material pursuits of this world for the hereafter and dedicated their souls to Allah's pleasure.

All evidence indicates that the matter of Imāmah is not a fundamental of religion. It is rather a welfare issue: Allah has given the ummah the right to appoint whoever they deem fit to represent them in upholding the religion, caring for the interests of the Muslims and directing their political affairs.

The foundations of the religion are things that are successively and indisputably well-known. They are clearly defined in the Qur'ān, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ noticeably focused on them in the Sunnah. These fundamentals can be summed up as follows:

- Belief in the Oneness of Allah, His exclusive right to be worshipped and actualisation of the meaning of *Lā ilāha illallāh* (there is no deity worthy of worshipped except Allah).
- Exclusive obedience to the Prophet ﷺ and actualization of the meaning *Muḥammad Rasūlullāh* (that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah).
- Belief in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and in the Last Day; and belief in taqdīr - its good and the bad. These are the pillars of faith, without which ones belief is not valid.
- Performing of prayer, giving zakāh, observing fast in the month of Ramaḍān and performing ḥajj, if one is able to do so. These are the practical pillars of Islam.

One will realise that Islam lays great emphasis and strongly focuses on these foundations. As for the issue of Imāmah, I could hardly find any text that explicitly mentioned that it is one of the pillars of the religion.

Their leader responded: The doctor - referring to me - has spoken extensively to establish his belief. The summary of his argument is: The Prophet ﷺ left the responsibility of appointing the leader after his death to his ummah and in order to actualise the concept of shurā.

But this is not true. Since the Prophet ﷺ did stipulate that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه should become the successor after him. There is ample proof for this. Before I mention these proofs, I would like to call the attention of the doctor to an important matter: Why is it that whenever you mention the Prophet ﷺ you always say blessings and peace of Allah be upon him’ without including his family in the invocation? This is undoubtedly an incomplete invocation. For the Prophet ﷺ had taught us to invoke blessing upon him and upon pure members of his household.

(The square was filled with a loud roar when their shaykh said this and the audience said in unison: “O Allah, send blessings on Muḥammad and on the family of Muḥammad.”)

I said smilingly: “O Allah, send blessings on Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad and the Companions of Muḥammad.”

Their leader angrily said: “Where did you get the addition “and the Companions of Muḥammad” from. The invocation on the Prophet ﷺ which he had himself taught us is: “O Allah, send blessings on Muḥammad and on the family of Muḥammad.”

(A loud roar once again rented the air and the audience repeated in unison: “O Allah, send blessings on Muḥammad and on the family of Muḥammad.”)

I proceeded: The matter does not deserve this fanaticism and unreasonableness. It is true that Allah commanded us to invoke blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ through His injunction:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

Allah sends His ṣalāt (graces, honour, blessings, mercy) on the Prophet (Muḥammad H) and so do His angels. O you who believe! Send your ṣalāt on (ask Allah to bless) him (Muḥammad ﷺ) and invoke peace upon him.¹

The Ahl al-Sunnah believe that the most complete invocation for the Prophet ﷺ is:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ، اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

1 Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 56

O Allah, shower mercy upon Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad, just as You have showered mercy upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Verily, You are full of praise and majesty. O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad, just as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Verily, You are full of praise and majesty.

It is regarded an essential part of ṣalāh.

Our love for our Prophet ﷺ and members of his household is undeniable, and only those whose vision is obscured can deny it.

Their leader cuts in: Where then have you got the addition “and his Companions” This invocation is a religious matter. We should not add to it from our opinions and desires.

I said: May Allah guide you! Allah commanded His Messenger ﷺ to invoke blessing upon his Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and we are emulating him in doing so. Have you not heard the saying of Allah:

وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ

*And invoke blessings of Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of comfort for them.*¹

Therefore, if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had been commanded to invoke blessing upon his Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ we - his followers - have greater reason to emulate him in that.

(There was some consternation in the audience. They could not agree that the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ deserved invocation of blessings since, in the creed of the Shī'ah, the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ are considered to be apostates.

1 Sūrah al-Taubah: 103

I calmed the situation with this statement: The lecturer had promised that he would bring various proofs that indicate that the Prophet ﷺ specifically mentioned 'Alī رضي الله عنه as his successor. I hope that he would kindly mention the most prominent of these proofs and their sources.

I would also like to call the attention of the lecturer to the rules of debate that demand that proofs presented should be authentic, clear, straight to the point and decisive. They should be evidence that explicitly supports your assertion that Imāmah is a fundamental of the religion, and a fundamental does not need any exercising of personal judgment or deduction to be clarified. It should rather be as clear as the sun - in light of its proofs.

Their leader: The first evidence is the ḥadīth of “Ghadir Khum”. This ḥadīth is mentioned in your authorised books. This evidence alone is enough to establish the fact that the Prophet ﷺ explicitly appointed 'Alī رضي الله عنه as his successor.

(At this point, I requested him to let me comment on the ḥadīth after he finished quoting it.)

He continued: When the Messenger ﷺ was coming back from his farewell pilgrimage, the following verse was revealed to him on 18 Dhū al-Hijjah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ

O Messenger (Muḥammad رضي الله عنه)! Proclaim (the message) which has been sent down to you from your Rabb. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. Allah will protect you from the people.¹

The Prophet ﷺ then halted at a place called Ghadīr Khum that lies between Makkah and al-Madīnah. He stopped there until those who were behind him

1 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 67

caught up with him and those who had went ahead of him were called back. He then announced a congregational prayer. After he led them in *ẓuhr ṣalāh*, he addressed them. He said among other things: “Do you not know that I am closer to the believers than their own selves?” They said: “Yes!” He said: “Do you not know that I am closer to every believer than his own self?” They said: “Yes! O Messenger of Allah.” He then held ‘Alī’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ hand up and said: “O people! Allah is my friend and I am your friend. And whoever I am his friend then ‘Alī is also his friend. O Allah! Be a friend to he who is a friend of ‘Alī and be an enemy to he who is his enemy. Support whoever supports him and forsake whoever forsakes him. Love whoever loves him and hate whoever hates him.” He then said: “O Allah! Be my Witness!” And they did not depart from that place before Allah revealed the verse:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

*This day, I have perfected for you your religion, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.*¹

The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then said: “Allah Akbar for perfecting the religion, completing the favour, and for being pleased with my messengership and for ‘Alī being the wali.”

This event of Ghadīr Khum is therefore a sufficient proof that the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ did stipulate that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ should be the leader after his death, for he said: “And whoever I am his wali, ‘Alī is also his wali.” And wali here means leader.

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ would not have stopped his Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and gathered them at Ghadīr if not to clearly announce to them that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the leader after him. It should also be noted that it was only after this announcement that Allah revealed the verse:

1 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 3

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

*This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.*¹

I commented: Our lecturer, in his presentation of his proof, insisted on merging different narrations that the listener would think that they are all part of single ḥadīth and not different narrations that occurred on different occasions.

This merging actually contradicts the reality. It is nothing but a product of fantasy in order to satiate their desire. It can be disproved in the following points:

One: Regarding the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ

*O Messenger (Muḥammad ﷺ)! Proclaim (the message) which has been sent down to you from your Rabb. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. Allah will protect you from mankind.*²

The authentic narration concerning the reason for its revelation is that it was a habit of Allah's Messenger ﷺ that whenever he set out for any of his battles, he would assign some of his Companions رضي الله عنهم to guard him against the enemy. This situation continued this way until one night Allah revealed this verse to him. He then stuck out his head from his tent and addressed his guards: "O people, you can go for Allah is protecting me." After the revelation of this verse, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never took a personal guard and relied on Allah alone for his protection.

It happened that one day a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and told me: "Give me your sword so that I can inspect it." The Prophet ﷺ gave the sword to

1 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 3

2 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 67

him. The man wanted to kill the Prophet ﷺ with the sword but his hand started shuddering and he dropped the sword. This was how Allah protected His Messenger ﷺ and prevented the man from carrying out his evil plan.

So what is clear from the above is that the verse was revealed in the night unto the Prophet ﷺ while he was in his tent and on his bed. That is why Imām al-Suyūṭī referred to the verse as the “nightly and bed-time verse”, inferring that it was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ in the night, while he was on his bed.

If the scholars could be so accurate in pinpointing times of revelation of the verses, would it then be logical to think that they would forget to link it to the event of Ghadīr - in spite of their close connection - as claimed by the lecturer?

Two: Regarding verse: 3 of Surah al-Mā'idah, the authentic report concerning its revelation is that it was revealed on the Day of 'Arafah during the Prophet's ﷺ farewell pilgrimage, which was a Friday. This is the incontestable truth that all recognised scholars of the ummah agreed upon. It is supported by authentic narrations from collections of *Bukhārī*, *Muslim* and others. Ṭāriq ibn Shihāb narrated: “The Jews said to 'Umar رضي الله عنه: “You (i.e. Muslims) recite a verse, and had it been revealed to us, we would have taken the day of its revelation as a day of celebration.” 'Umar said: “I know very well when and where it was revealed, and where Allah's Messenger was when it was revealed. (It was revealed on) the day of 'Arafah, and by Allah, I was at 'Arafah.”

These narrations indicate that the verse was revealed on the day of 'Arafah. It was also known that this took place days before the event of Ghadīr. How could some people then claim that it was revealed at Ghadīr while all authentic narrations and all recognized scholars agree that it was revealed days before the Prophet ﷺ arrived at Ghadīr?

The most astonishing part of the lecturer's merging of narrations is the assertion that it was revealed immediately after the Prophet ﷺ had specifically

mentioned 'Alī رضي الله عنه as his successor. By Allah! He never did so and neither was the verse revealed at Ghadīr Khum.

Three: What really happened at Ghadīr Khum - according to the authentic narration - is that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم after leading the people of Madīnah to their way, passed by a water well called "Khum". It was located at a place between Makkah and Madīnah. According to his habit whenever he travelled, he would halt for rest at various places and wait for his Companions رضي الله عنهم who lagged behind. It was there that some people complained about 'Alī's رضي الله عنه austerity, even though he was upon the truth.

The story about this complaint runs thus: When the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was going to Makkah for his farewell pilgrimage, he sent 'Alī رضي الله عنه to Yemen to collect the zakāh. When he finished the collection of the zakāh, he came to Makkah to join the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the pilgrimage, while the zakāh he collected was still with him. Along the way, the people who were with him wanted to avail themselves of some of the zakāh but he refused to give them because it was the property of the Muslim treasury. This firmness of his made things difficult for his companions. When they had the opportunity to meet the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they complained to him.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw that 'Alī رضي الله عنه was right, so he commended his action. In order to show the people that 'Alī رضي الله عنه was right to take the stand he took, he reminded the people of Allah and admonished them on the necessity of adhering to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. He then commanded them to treat members of his household - including 'Alī رضي الله عنه - with kindness.

In order to absolve 'Alī رضي الله عنه of any blame he said: "He to whom I am a friend, 'Alī is also his friend." To emphasise his praise for 'Alī رضي الله عنه he said: "O Allah! Be a friend to whoever befriends him and be an enemy to whoever takes him as an enemy."

This is what happened at Ghadīr Khum. 'Alī رضي الله عنه was the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم appointee on the one-fifth of what is collected (khums) and he appropriated it

duly and justly. So, the Prophet ﷺ saw that his firmness was worthy of commendation and supplication.

As for the additions and exaggerations which some people spuriously added to the Prophet's ﷺ statement such as: “O Allah, help those who help him, forsake those who forsake him and let the truth move with him wherever he moves”; they are fabricated additions that the scholars have not paid even the least attention to.

Four: The last part of the ḥadīth quoted by the lecturer is totally fabricated. Nothing of it is authentic. It is not true that the Prophet ﷺ held up ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه hand neither is it true that verse: 3 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah was revealed on that occasion, nor is the statement: “Allahu Akbar for perfecting the religion...” authentic. These additions are lies and darkness upon darkness.

Five: In spite of the distortion of facts perpetrated by the lecturer, his drawing inference from the Prophet's ﷺ statement: “He unto whom I am the friend, ‘Alī is also his friend”, as an indication of appointing ‘Alī رضي الله عنه as the successor is totally incorrect.

This inference contradicts the Arabic language and contradicts the understanding of the Prophet's ﷺ Companions, who are well-versed in the language. As none of them or any of the recognized authorities in Arabic language made such an inference. According to the Sunnah and the proper understanding of Arabic language, the word “mawlā” means friend and supporter.

Six: Even if we have to agree - for the sake of argument - that the word mawlā in the narration means “leader”, as the lecturer would have us believe, it does not constitute an explicit proof that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه should be appointed the ruler after the Prophet ﷺ. An explicit proof for such a claim would be : “‘Alī is the Imām after me”, “‘Alī is the khalīfah after me” or “none except ‘Alī should be my successor” or any similar unambiguous remark.

Since you have mentioned earlier that Imāmah is a fundamental rule of your religion and fundamental rules of the religion can only be established through explicit proofs, this ḥadīth cannot then be cited as the proof to back your claim for it is not explicit or precise.

The most we can infer from the ḥadīth is that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ should be loved and regarded a friend and this is what the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah do. They love 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, invoke Allah's pleasure upon him and regard him as the fourth of the rightly-guided caliphs.

Their leader: You can leave that one. There is another textual proof of explicit appointment of Imām 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as the successor after the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. This proof is the 'verse of Wilāyah'. Allah says:

﴿إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رُكْعُونَ﴾^{٥٥}
 ﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ﴾^{٥٦}

*Verily, your walī is none other than Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, who perform ṣalāh and give zakāh, and are those who bow down in prostration. And whosoever takes Allah, His Messenger, and those who have believed, as friends, then the party of Allah will be the victorious.*¹

The scholars of tafsīr all agreed that this verse is revealed in respect to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who while bowing in prayer, removed his ring and threw to a beggar who had asked him for some alms. So these verses were revealed on this occasion. In other words, the 'Wilāyah' is exclusively meant for 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ after the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ because the verse was revealed in reference to his action.

I responded: This evidence is much weaker than the one before it. If we agree - for the sake of argument - that it is authentic, there is absolutely nothing in it that suggests that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was explicitly chosen as the Prophet's successor. The verse and the narration concerning its revelation would rather apply to all believers.

1 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 55-56

‘Wilāyah’ here means love and support, and does not, in any way, refer to who should be the khalīfah and ruler. Even if we agree that it means rulership - which is of course an outrageous interpretation as far as the language is concerned - the words of the verse came in plural form. And this means that it is applicable to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and all other sincere believers.

Another point is that the story in itself, is questionable as far as chains of its narrators are concerned.

One other important point is that excessive external actions while one is in prayer, invalidates the ṣalāh. Ṣalāh in itself is an act of worship that needs total concentration. One engaged in prayer should not preoccupy oneself with other deeds, even if they are righteous. Since ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is known as one of the leaders of the sincere, devoted and focused worshippers, his removing and tossing of the ring while in prayer is utterly unimaginable, given his status.

If we agree that the story was true, where then in the verse is the explicit mention of ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه right to rulership after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم?

As you can see, there are different interpretations to the verse. There are some scholars - and they are in the majority - who are of the opinion that ‘Wilāyah’ here means: love, friendship and support. And you interpreted it as “leadership”.

Also, the fact that a verse was revealed on a particular occasion does not prevent it being general in its application. Therefore, the verse is applicable to all Muslims who observe the things mentioned in the verse such as performing ṣalāh and giving alms.

The truth is very clear and as such this evidence is not suitable, implicitly or explicitly, to establish your claim that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed ‘Alī رضي الله عنه as his immediate successor.

Their leader: Your scholars of tafsīr opined that the verses were revealed in reference to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. And we do not know anyone who gave alms while in the state of bowing in prayer except him. The verses did support his action and explicitly stipulated his leadership. The verses only came in plural form - even though it was revealed in reference to the action of a single person - in order to encourage people to do righteous deeds to emulate their leader, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, whose prayer did not prevent him from giving to the poor and the destitute.

I responded: The ḥadīth that mentioned that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه gave away his ring as ṣadaqah while he was praying is fabricated according to the consensus of the erudite scholars¹, regardless of those who negligently mention it or write it in their books. Hence, you should not support what you regard as a fundamental aspect of your religion, which you give preference over ṣalāh, fasting, zakāh and ḥajj, with a contrived and fabricated ḥadīth.

The difference between you and I is the exact text of the verse, and the verse, in its text, contains nothing about ‘Alī رضي الله عنه neither does it contain any allusion to his purported right to rulership after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The message of the verse is that friendship, alliance and support should be given only to Allah, His Messenger and to those who sincerely believe in him, perform ṣalāh, give zakāh and worship Him with humility.

Their leader: You can ignore that one. There is another proof that explicitly stipulated ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه right to leadership. It is the ḥadīth of *manzilah* (position), in which the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه: “Are you not pleased that you are to me as Hārūn was to Mūsā? It is only that there is no Prophet after me. And I must not go without you being my successor.”

This ḥadīth is authentic according to the opinion of your scholars. And the explicit mentioning of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه as the successor is clear to everyone. The ḥadīth affirmed that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه occupied all positions that Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام occupied in relationship to Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام with the only exception of prophethood.

¹ Ibn Taymiyyah declared this in his book *Daqā'iq al- Tafsīr* vol. 1 pg. 104

Hārūn عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was Mūsā's عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام minister and companion, and he was his deputy when he was away. This is clearly supported by the text of the Qur'ān that tells us that Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام said:

﴿وَأَجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي﴾ ﴿٢٩﴾ هُرُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٣١﴾ وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٢﴾

And appoint for me a helper from my family, Hārūn, my brother. Increase my strength with him, and let him share my task (of conveying Allah's message and prophethood).¹

And Allah answered his supplication with His words:

﴿قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى﴾ ﴿٣٦﴾

Allah said: You are granted your request, O Mūsā!²

The Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ statement: “And I must not go without you being my successor.” is therefore, the greatest proof of explicit appointment of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ successor.

My response: The version of the above narration that is regarded as authentic by our scholars is the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ statement: “Are you not pleased that you are to me as Hārūn is to Mūsā? It is only that there is no Prophet after me.”³

But your statement: “And I must not go without you being my successor”, is falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. It is not at all authentic neither should it be cited as proof.

The ḥadīth in all its authentic narrations is connected to a famous story. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was heading to Tabūk to fight in the way of Allah and he

1 Sūrah Tāhā: 29-32

2 Sūrah Tāhā: 36

3 This ḥadīth is narrated by *al-Bukhārī* (3706), and *Muslim* (2404)

commanded all the people to go out with him. He assigned 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه to stay behind and take care of the women and children, and no one else among the men stayed behind except the hypocrites, those with excuse and the infirm.

'Alī رضي الله عنه - out of his love for jihād and the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم company - wept and complained of being assigned to care for women and children. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم then said those words in order to comfort him and to show him that his requesting him to stay behind was not because he did not want to keep his company - as the hypocrites claimed - but out of his strong confidence in him. This is the story about the Ḥadīth of *manzilah*, and it does not entail any stipulation of 'Alī's رضي الله عنه leadership.

As for your statement that this ḥadīth conferred on 'Alī رضي الله عنه all the positions of Hārūn عليه السلام except the prophethood and your claim that the ḥadīth implies that 'Alī رضي الله عنه should be the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم successor and the most qualified person to be the leader after him, the ḥadīth indicates none of these claims because of the following reasons:

One: Hārūn عليه السلام died during the lifetime of Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, so he did not succeed him in leadership. It was Yusha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام who succeeded him. This is indisputable.

Two: Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام only appointed Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام to stand in for him as the leader of the Jewish nation when he alone went into seclusion for the worship of his Rabb. As for the case of Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم he went in the company of all his Companions رضي الله عنهم and he only appointed 'Alī رضي الله عنه to take care of the women and children.

Three: The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had on different occasions assigned a number of his Companions رضي الله عنهم to manage the affairs of Madīnah when he was absent. This indicates that he did not assign 'Alī رضي الله عنه each time he was out of Madīnah, and as such the ḥadīth cannot be cited as an explicit proof that 'Alī رضي الله عنه should obligatorily be regarded as the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم successor during his lifetime and after his death.

Four: The Prophet's ﷺ statement to 'Alī رضي الله عنه for a specific reason, which was to soothe the heart of 'Alī رضي الله عنه for being left behind to take care of women and children.

An important observation:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would, on some occasions, liken some of his Companions رضي الله عنهم to some Prophets. Would that mean that such Companions رضي الله عنهم are like those Prophets in all aspects?

It is authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ likened Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to Prophets Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and 'Isā عليه السلام. He also likened 'Umar رضي الله عنه to Prophets Nūḥ عليه السلام and Mūsā عليه السلام. And it is known that Prophets Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, 'Isā عليه السلام and Nūḥ عليه السلام are all higher in status than Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام, for they are Prophets of Resoluteness (Ulul 'Azm).

It follows then that this ḥadīth indicated a merit of 'Alī رضي الله عنه just as other aḥādīth mentioned the merits of other Companions رضي الله عنهم and not any allusion to his right to succession.

The explicit text would be if the Prophet ﷺ made a declaration such as: “Alī is the ruler after me”, “Alī is your Imām (leader) after me” or “I have appointed 'Alī as my successor over you”. This is an example of an explicit text. As for the Ḥadīth of manzilah, it cannot be regarded as explicit text.

Their leader (already wet with perspiration): I have already told you the clear-cut evidence at the end of the ḥadīth which your scholars recorded in your recognised books. Your Bukhārī recorded it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which according to your belief, is like the Qur'ān. The text is what the Prophet ﷺ told 'Alī رضي الله عنه: “And I should not go without appointing you as my successor.”

I said: The text reported by *Bukhārī* and others does not include this trumped up addition that is falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This

fabricated addition also contradicts the Prophet's ﷺ deeds, for he had assigned other people besides 'Alī رضي الله عنه to manage the affairs of Madīnah in his absence. On one occasion, he sent 'Alī رضي الله عنه to Yemen and he himself remained in Madīnah. When he was going on his farewell pilgrimage, he took 'Alī رضي الله عنه along with him and assigned another companion to manage the affairs of Madīnah in his absence. How could he then say: "I should not leave without appointing you as my successor."? This is indeed a clear contradiction.

As for your claim that we treat *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* as equal to the Qur'ān, it needs to be clarified in no uncertain terms that we - the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah - never liken anything to the Qur'ān. Our only belief is that the aḥādīth of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* are all accepted in view of the exceptionally painstaking and meticulous conditions that Imām al-Bukhārī followed in verifying each and every ḥadīth of his collection.

Their leader: But there are certainly some aḥādīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* which are clearly fabricated. Yet, you claim that all the aḥādīth of the collection are authentic!

My response: We need to be focused in our discussion. What we are discussing is the clear-cut and explicit proofs on the right of 'Alī رضي الله عنه to leadership immediately after the Prophet's ﷺ death. You claimed that there are so many proofs to support this yet you have not given a single one.

As for your claim concerning aḥādīth of *Saheeh al-Bukhārī*, this will be discussed later, if Allah wills. You will then learn what is the true level of authenticity in this ḥadīth collection, their exceptional accuracy and the extent to which we - the Ahl al-Sunnah - are proud of the sciences of ḥadīth, knowledge of the chain of transmitters and the sciences of al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'deel through which Allah preserved and guarded the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ throughout the centuries against the liars and forgers.

Uproar and change in approach

There was an uproar in the gathering and their leader motioned to them with his hand that they should be quiet. He also signaled to the person in charge of recording the proceedings of the symposium to stop and that the microphones be switched off.

He then suddenly changed his approach that had been hitherto characterised with courtesy into aggressiveness. He might have discovered that practising taqiyyah is not workable with people like me.

Their leader: It seems the doctor - referring to me - is an expert in twisting the proofs. He insisted on twisting clear proofs on the right of Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to leadership after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and persisted on denying him the right that Allah gave him and which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded that he should be given. However, this is not the first time an injustice would be done to Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. Before he was deprived of his right, his wife (Fāṭimah) al-Zahrā رضي الله عنها was beaten so cruelly that she had a miscarriage and later died and her sons were killed and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه was slaughtered like a goat”

(He was saying all this in a sad tone. When I noticed that he no longer had interest in debating with me and I felt that his interest had shifted into talking to his Shī‘ī audience, I did not want the debate to end like that.)

I interrupted: Excuse me, I think the search for the truth should be through proofs and evidence and not through emotions and tales.

Someone from the audience: Can you not see that we have been enduring you for a while? Can you not see that we have been magnanimous with you? Can you not see that we have been good hosts to you?

I said: I did not come to you as a guest. You invited me for a debate and my presence here was only in response to your invitation.

Their leader (to me): Do not be incensed by what our friend said. He did not mean to hurt your feeling.

I said: No problem - all praise is due to Allah. Please go on giving me the rest of the proofs that explicitly mention the rights of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to rulership immediately after the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم death.

Their leader: The proofs are many but I am going to give you one more evidence, perhaps Allah will open your heart for the love of Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and other members of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم household. The evidence is ‘Āyat al-Taḥīr’ and the ḥadīth of ‘al-Kisā’.

The verse is Allah’s saying:

أَمَّا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

*Allah wishes only to remove al-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the house (of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) and to purify you with a thorough purification.*¹

All scholars of tafsīr agreed that those who are meant by members of the family are: ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهم. This is also agreed to by your authorised narrations.

Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها, the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم wife, narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها (his daughter): “Bring your husband and your sons to me.” When she brought them, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم threw a sheet over them and then placed his hand upon them and said: “O Allah, these are members of Muḥammad’s family. Bestow Your blessings upon the family of Muḥammad as You had done upon the family of Ibrāhīm. You are indeed worthy of praise, the Mighty.” Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها said that she raised the sheet to join them but the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم pulled her aside by her hand and said: “You are already blessed.”

1 Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 33

The verse indicates that evil deeds and sins had been removed from members of the Prophet's ﷺ family, and the ḥadīth indicated that members of the Prophet's ﷺ family are: 'Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهم. Since Allah has-removed evil deeds from them, this means that they are infallible and, by virtue of their infallibility, they have more right to rulership than others.

My response: It seems you have run out of your 'countless' proofs and that is why you are now citing as evidence, texts that are absolutely irrelevant to the point in discussion.

What is the relationship between the verse and the ḥadīth that you have just quoted and the explicit mentioning of 'Alī رضي الله عنه as the leader after the Prophet ﷺ, whereby the one who opposes it would be regarded as being unjust to 'Alī رضي الله عنه and as a result deserve to be condemned as an apostate?

Undoubtedly, the verse you quoted was revealed in exclusive reference to the Prophet's ﷺ wives, who are pure women, may Allah be pleased with them. Let us have a keen look at these verses and study them closely.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجَكِ إِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأَسْرَحُكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَإِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالذَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُنَّ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ يٰنِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنِ يَاْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُصَعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ۗ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعَمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾ يٰنِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنْ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۗ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَادْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

O Prophet (Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) say to your wives: "If you desire the life of this world and its glitter, then come, I will make a provision for you and set you free in a handsome manner (divorce). But if you desire Allah and His Messenger, and the

home of the hereafter then verily Allah has prepared for those who do good amongst you an enormous reward.” O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits open immorality, the torment for her will be doubled, and that is ever easy for Allah. And whosoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and does righteous good deeds, We shall give her, her reward twice over, and We have prepared for her a noble provision (Paradise). O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honourable manner. And remain in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the days of ignorance, and perform ṣalāh, and give zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes only to remove al-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet ﷺ) and to purify you with a thorough purification. And remember (O you the members of the Prophet’s family, the Graces of your Lord), that which is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and al-Ḥikmah. Verily Allah is Most Courteous, Well Acquainted with all things.¹

If we study the above verses deeply, we will realise that Allah’s saying: “Allah wishes only to remove al-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet)”, does not constitute an independent verse but a part of a verse that speaks about the mothers of the faithful, the Prophet’s ﷺ blessed wives. The succeeding verses also continue speaking about them. This is the clearest evidence that the verse was revealed exclusively in reference to the Prophet’s ﷺ wives.

All praise is due to Allah that this statement is only a part of a verse, and not a separate one, thereby denying the liars the opportunity to fabricate their lies. This is the opinion of the Muslim scholars.

As regards the Ḥadīth of Kisā, the most that can be inferred from it, is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ included ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn among members of his family so that they could also be covered by the divine blessing manifested in the removal of evil deeds and thorough purification.

1 Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 28-34

That is why when Umm Salamah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا wanted to enter under the garment he told her: “You are already blessed.”

As for the claim of some people that the Prophet’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ wives, may Allah be pleased with them, are not members of the Prophet’s household, nothing could be further from the truth. What is understood directly from the words of the above verses clearly refute this claim. And the Qur’ān is the authority over every Muslim.

There is also another verse that indicates that the wives are indeed among members of one’s family. Consider Allah’s saying concerning Prophet Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and his family, though the only member of the family he had then was his wife:

رَحِمْتُ اللَّهُ وَبَرَكَتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ

*The Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be on you, O members of the family (of Ibrāhīm).*¹

Allah also said about Prophet Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:

فَلَمَّا قَضَى مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ

*Then when Mūsā had fulfilled the term and travelled with his family.*²

Though the only person with whom he travelled was his wife.

Observation

There are authentic aḥādīth in which families of al-‘Abbās, ‘Aqīl and Ja‘far are regarded as part of the Prophet’s household. All these families are forbidden from taking zakāh after the death of the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ until the Last Hour.

1 Sūrah al-Hūd: 73

2 Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ: 29

In order not to have any misconception about the 'Āyat al-Taḥhīr' we need to note an important point:

If we agree, for the sake of argument, that 'Alī, Fāṭimah, Hasan and Husayn رضي الله عنهم are the only members of the Prophet's family, though this is incorrect, nothing in the ḥadīth explicitly indicated that 'Alī رضي الله عنه should be the leader after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. If this had been true, then the rulership would need to be shared by the four: 'Alī, Fāṭimah, Hasan and Husayn رضي الله عنهم, but not even a foolish person would agree to this.

There is also nothing in the verse or in the ḥadīth that indicates the infallibility of these four people. The utmost indication is that they are purified from sins and evil deeds. Though, this does not mean that they could not be affected by forgetfulness, mistakes and misjudgments. Therefore, infallibility is one thing and purification from evil deeds is something else.

Another point of correction

The lecturer, while presenting his proofs, falsely alluded that I do not love 'Alī رضي الله عنه and members of his household by saying: "Perhaps Allah will open your heart for the love of Imām 'Alī رضي الله عنه."

I would like to say that we - the Ahl al-Sunnah - love 'Alī رضي الله عنه, invoke Allah's pleasure upon him, greatly respect him and regard him as the fourth of the righteously guided khulafā', whose paths and practices we tenaciously hold onto. Whenever we mention his name, we do so with great reverence and love. We also invoke Allah's pleasure on all members of the Prophet's household - in the wider sense of the word. We invoke Allah's pleasure upon the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم wives, the righteous ones from the families of 'Alī, Ja'far, 'Aqīl and 'Abbās, who are all members of the Prophet's household رضي الله عنهم.

However, what we regard as calamitous is to exaggerate our love for them as the Christians do in respect to Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام to the extent that this led

them to ascribing partners to Allah in His Lordship and His exclusive right to be worshipped. Two groups have indeed been misled in this aspect:

One: The *Nawāṣib*: They are those who hated ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, regarded him as apostate, believed in the violability of his blood and hated the noble members of his household. The Ahl al-Sunnah renounced this group. A cursory reading of the books of Ahl al-Sunnah would attest to the fact that they love ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and invoke Allah’s pleasure on him.

Two: The *Rawāfiḍ* (Shī‘ah): These are those whose exaggerated love for ‘Alī رضي الله عنه led them to raise him above his God-given status; a situation which he himself would not like.

This exaggeration led them to hate the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم whom Allah selected for him and to convey his message and support him. It led them to accuse the Companions رضي الله عنهم of preferring the life of this world to the hereafter and of depriving ‘Alī رضي الله عنه of his right and committing injustice against him.

The situation of these people really surprised me. Who would be just if Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما were not just? Who would be just if ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was not just?

(There was a loud cry in the courtyard.)

A man from the audience stood up and pointed at me yelling: Are you saying: “May Allah be pleased with them” for these people who are apostates and changed the religion of Muḥammad?

He then turned to the audience and said: “How can you leave this man invoking Allah’s pleasure upon these people without doing anything?”

Their leader tried to appease him and he requested him to sit down.

The man yelled again: Sayyid, did you hear him insulting us? No, we cannot endure this!

(Their leader - who was already very annoyed - got up and complained that it was too late and that he needed to go. I also said that it was late and I needed to go as well, but one of them requested that they wanted to continue the debate. Their leader then told me that the gathering would like to continue with the debate with me and that he had to go. He promised that there was going to be another session of debate between us and he went away. After their leader departed, most of the audience also left but around fifteen of their young men stayed back.)

One of them said: Doctor, Let us set aside the proofs mentioned by the Sayyid which you have adequately responded to. I want to ask you some questions.

I said: Go on.

The questioner: Who is the most knowledgeable of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ?

I answered: Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the most knowledgeable of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

The questioner: What is your evidence?

I answered: The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ presented him to lead people in the prayer when he was in his last illness, and it is known that the most knowledgeable of the people should lead them in prayers. Therefore, presenting Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to lead the Muslims in prayer is the greatest testimony from the infallible Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ that he was the most knowledgeable and the best of all the people.

The questioner: Did the Messenger صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ not say: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its door"? This is strongest evidence that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the most knowledgeable of all the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

I responded: This ḥadīth is not authentic¹ as far as we are concerned. It can therefore not stand as a proof.

The Questioner: But this Ḥadīth is in your recognised books.

I answered: According to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the science of ḥadīth is not a superficial science. It is rather a wide science on which innumerable books and works were written. Many of our scholars dedicated their lives to collecting aḥādīth and worked meticulously to distinguish the authentic from the spurious.

The books of ḥadīth, according to our scholars, are of different categories as far as authenticity is concerned. The most authentic collections are those of Bukhārī and Muslim. Mere mention that the ḥadīth is from any of these two great collections is enough for a Muslim to accept it.

They are followed by the four Sunan collections: al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah. Mere quoting a ḥadīth from any of these collections is not enough to guarantee its authenticity until it is subjected to the rules of the science of ḥadīth and decisions of the scholars of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*.

The next category is collections such as: *Sunan al-Dārmī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān* and the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim. However, mere quoting of a ḥadīth from any of these collections is not enough to establish its authenticity until the degree of its authenticity is explicitly declared.

Then we have *Masānīd* which include the authentic, the weak and fabricated aḥādīth. When any of the aḥādīth of these collections is quoted, the degree of its authenticity should be mentioned.

In short, not all aḥādīth recorded in our books can be cited as proof. It is only the authentic that could be cited as proofs. The only aḥādīth that could be

1 Instead it is a fabricated ḥadīth (Mowḍū'). When I returned home, I searched for the ḥadīth and found that ibn al-Jawzī included it in his book, *Al-Mowḍū'āt* (collection of fabricated narrations).

quoted without mentioning the degree of their authenticity are those found in the collections of *Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, because the entire ummah accepts all the aḥādīth of the two collections as authentic (on account of the rigorous scrutiny employed by both authors).

In view of the above, the ḥadīth you cited is not authentic. Even if I agreed with you that the ḥadīth is authentic, it does not necessarily mean that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the most knowledgeable of all the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

The most that could be inferred from the ḥadīth is that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is one of the gates of knowledge, and not the only gate. As it is known to all, every city has a number of gates and entrances, otherwise it could not have been rightly called a city. So 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is only one of the doors of the city of knowledge. There are indisputably other gates, the greatest of which is Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ followed by the rest of the Prophet's Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

I have told you earlier that the most knowledgeable of people has the greatest right to lead them in prayer, and the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ commanded Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to lead people in prayer in his last illness.

The questioner: The Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ command for Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to lead the prayer is mentioned only in your book. We are not obliged to accept it.

I answered: Subhān Allāh! You cited a ḥadīth and I agreed to discuss it with you though it is not authentic and I am now quoting an authentic ḥadīth that is in *Bukhārī* and you are rejecting it?! Now tell me, what is the criterion for determining an authentic ḥadīth according to you Shī'ah?

The questioner: We are not obliged to accept any of your aḥādīth and we do not recognise them at all. I only cited it to you because I know you accept it as an authority.

I said: There is no power or might except with Allah! Are you dismissing with such casualness the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ḥadīth; a wisdom that emanated from

the light of prophethood, meant to complement the Qur'ān and elucidate on its meanings, and the sunnah for which our erudite scholars dedicated their lives to preserve?

I definitely know that we are the Ahl al-Sunnah because of our belief in the Prophet's ﷺ sunnah and I certainly know that you are the *Rāfiḍah* (rejecters) because of your rejection and denial of the sunnah. Now, my knowledge in this fact is strongly confirmed.

The questioner: We (the Shī'ah) have our own aḥādīth and they are all from members of the Prophet's ﷺ family, who are the rightful heirs to all knowledge. They are infallible and their knowledge is purely divine.

I responded: Your provision, as far as the knowledge of Ḥadīth is concerned, is poor in quality. You are the furthest of all people from the ḥadīth and its sciences. You know absolutely nothing about the sciences of ḥadīth.

This is not my statement. It is rather a testimony from your own leaders and A'immaḥ. They mentioned that your aḥādīth are so full of discrepancies that you can hardly find a ḥadīth without finding another that is diametrically contradicting it. One of your scholars would declare the same thing as obligatory, forbidden, lawful, and disliked at the same time without any justification. These bizarre contradictions are the clearest proof that your aḥādīth are fabricated and are falsely attributed to the members of the Prophet's ﷺ household, who are rightly guided and are our guides. Remember, such flagrant contradictions are a sign of falsehood. Allah says:

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

*Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction.*¹

1 Sūrah al-Nisā': 82

My brother! The difference between the knowledge of the Ahl al-Sunnah regarding Ḥadīth and your knowledge about it, is as wide as the gap between the heaven and the earth. We are very proud - with all praise due to Allah - that our aḥādīth were reported from Allah's Messenger ﷺ by about four thousand of his noble Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who kept his company for more than twenty years and conveyed all his sayings, deeds, decisions, manners and his interactions with members of his household and the people to us. They also conveyed to us the stories of his wars and dealings with non-Muslims, and every other minute and great aspect of his meritorious life.

It is from these four thousand Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ that thousands of the Tābī'īn (the generation after the Companions) learned the aḥādīth and they in turn conveyed them to the erudite scholars who came after them, until the entire Sunnah became documented in an exceptionally meticulous way that became a source of pride and superiority for us over all nations and over all deviant and erroneous groups.

As for you Shī'ah, your ḥadīth is an unequalled comedy; for you take sayings of your A'immah as equal to those of the infallible Prophet ﷺ, who never spoke out of desire but only what was inspired to him. This is certainly enormous misguidance. This is the source of great contradictions that abound in your religion. For each Imām has his independent sayings and decisions.

It is ironically saddening and amusing at the same time that you take the largest part of your knowledge from a two-year old boy, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-'Askari, whose very existence is seriously doubtful, even according to your own scholars.

Tell me, how can a reasonable person accept that your knowledge of ḥadīth is learnt from a mythical two-year old boy? How I wish the Shī'ah had taken their knowledge directly and verbally from the scholars. Rather they took it from tattered materials and papers hidden in a tree during the night and removed during the day.

Can these fables that even young children would not believe, stand as a viable chain of transmission for performing acts of worship to Allah?

Do you know why we are called “Ahl al-Sunnah”? It is because of our tenacious adherence to the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ and his Sunnah. We are - without being pompous - the adherents and preservers of the ḥadīth. We know its texts and chains; and we surpassed all other people in this regard.

It is enough a pride for us that all our aḥādīth are narrated from the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ, whose main preoccupation was to memorise the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. They did not leave anything of his Sunnah unrecorded.

The questioner (interrupted): The knowledge of Imām ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ is greater than the knowledge of all these (Companions), and we possess the knowledge of Imām ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ.

I said: We want to be reasonable and logical. Is the knowledge of one Companion greater than the knowledge of four thousand Companions? In addition, ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ did not accompany the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at all times. It is known that the Prophet ﷺ would sometimes be alone with his wives who knew things about him that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ did not know. It is also known that he sent ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ to Yemen, and when he was going to Tabuk, assigned him to stay behind and take care of the women and children. During this period, he was definitely not in the Prophet’s ﷺ company. How then, could he be more knowledgeable than the four thousand Companions who were with the Prophet ﷺ at all times?

The questioner: But the Prophet ﷺ gave ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ knowledge that he did not give to anyone among them!

I responded: This claim that the Prophet ﷺ concealed some knowledge from his Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ - though it is unlawful to conceal knowledge - is an

insult to him. How could he have done so since it was to him that the following words were revealed:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ
إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾

*Verily those who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book, and purchase a small gain therewith, they eat into their bellies nothing but fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them, and theirs will be a painful torment.*¹

The questioner: Yes, Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه has mystic knowledge directly imparted from Allah. He has infinite knowledge.

I said: You see. You have contradicted yourself. This is an exaggeration you Shī'ah commit concerning the person of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, an eminent companion and one of the most knowledgeable of the Companions. This does not however mean that he had an exclusive knowledge that other Companions رضي الله عنهم did not have. This is indisputably attested to by all those who know his history.

If he did indeed possess knowledge of the unseen - as your scholars claim - what happened in the Battle of Ṣiffīn would not have happened. The Khawārij would not have been able to give him troubles and one of them would not have been able to assassinate him.

Furthermore, it is the Ahl al-Sunnah who possess ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه knowledge and that of the other Companions رضي الله عنهم. As for you, you have missed the knowledge of all the Companions رضي الله عنهم. Even as far as ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه knowledge is concerned, which you claim to possess, the fact is that you have missed most of his knowledge that are narrated by the sagacious scholars of ḥadīth among the Ahl al-Sunnah.

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 174

The questioner: We have strayed from our topic. My question is about the most knowledgeable one among the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

I said: I have answered your question that the most knowledgeable companion is certainly Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ in view of his being appointed by the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to lead the other Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ in prayer in his last illness.

The questioner: Another question: Who is the bravest companion رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ?

I answered: The Companions. رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ are all brave. Bravery is a prominent attribute of the vast majority of them. Among the brave Companions, رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ are Ḥamzah - the Prophet's uncle - 'Umar al-Fārūq, 'Alī and Khālīd ibn al-Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

(When he insisted that I mention the bravest of them all, I asked him about the benefit he wanted to derive from that.)

He kept quiet as if he was thinking and then said: The bravest of all brave people is Imām 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

I responded: If we assume - for the sake of argument - that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the bravest companion, what does that have to do with our topic?

The questioner: It follows then that he has the greatest right to being the leader. For, leadership necessitates bravery and courage.

I said: We are talking about matters governed by Islamic rules. We are not talking about bravery in isolation. If not, we should leave the religion and talk about 'Antarah ibn Shadād, who was the bravest man among the Arabs. Brother, leadership needs knowledge, astuteness, experience, wisdom, gentleness, bravery and courage.

The questioner interrupted: But Imām 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had all these attributes!

I said: Yes, he had even more. He deserves to be attributed with all good qualities. But there are some people who excelled him in them, and they are three. He is the fourth rightly guided khalīfah. We invoke Allah to be pleased with him. We love and respect him more than you, but we do so within the framework of Shari‘ah without exaggeration or negligence. The consensus among Ahl al-Sunnah, including all the Companions رضي الله عنهم, is that the rightly guided leaders and guides are the four Khulafā’ in the following order: Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘Umar al-Fārūq, ‘Uthmān Dhū al-Nūrayn and Abū al-Ṣibtayn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

Someone from among the audience screamed: Are you going to leave this man to invoke Allah’s pleasure on the Companions who are apostates and committed injustice against Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and intended to kill him and set his house on fire? Are you leaving this wolf to drag you into his path, and are debating incontestable facts with him? Are you abandoning Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها, the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم daughter, while this man invokes Allah’s pleasure on those who harmed her and beat her up so cruelly that she had a miscarriage and they set her house ablaze and wanted to kill her husband who is the Prophet’s brother, cousin and successor?!

He then faced me and said: Tell me, are there not narrations from your books confirming this? You are debating incontestable matters.

I responded: The brother’s statement includes a number of things that needs to be explained in some detail.

One: All narrations about threatening ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and beating up his wife are false. They should not be mentioned at all, let alone cited as proofs for anything. These narrations are fabricated by the crisis mongers and liars in order to depict the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم as primitive barbarians whose only concern was worldly materials, though they are actually too honourable to do that.

What is undoubtedly correct is the mutual love and affection that existed among all the Companions, including ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. It is also a clear and authentic fact that

‘Alī رضي الله عنه loved Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and he would praise them and ask Allah to be pleased with them. Nothing testifies to this more glaringly than his naming of three of sons after Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.

Another glaring proof of this is that he was the judge of the city of Madīnah during the Khilāfah of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and his daughter, Umm Kulthūm, from his wife Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها was married to ‘Umar رضي الله عنه.

It is a fact that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه loved ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and respected him greatly. Indeed, ‘Uthmān’s رضي الله عنه major contribution in paying the bridal gift of Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها is one of the most obvious signs of mutual love that existed between these two great caliphs. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه would often recall this favour and he would ask Allah to be pleased with ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه also loved the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār, and he would praise them. This is evident in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, a book that you rely upon, where ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is reported to have said: “The *Shūrā* (consultation) belongs to the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār. Whoever they choose for the Muslims should be their leader and Allah will be pleased with their choice.”

It is also mentioned in the same book that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه would criticise his followers on account of them not resembling the Companions رضي الله عنهم in their worship, piety, honesty and sincerity.

Therefore, all these facts unquestionably affirm that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه respected and loved all the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم and they also loved and honoured him. Whatever is narrated in contrast to this is absolutely false and fabricated by the evil crisis-mongers.

The Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم whom he trained with the guidance of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, and upon wisdom and an excellent example are too great to engage in those horrible things.

A man from the audience interrupted: Do you regard *Nahj al-Balāghah* by Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to be authentic?

I responded: *Nahj al-Balāghah* is a book authored more than three centuries after the death of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, without any known chain of transmitters. Its attribution to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is greatly doubtful. The known fact is that more than a third of the book is falsely attributed to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and it is in this part that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه were insulted and disparaging remarks made against them.

We can decisively conclude that this part was forged, especially since it contradicted texts of the Qur’ān that praised the Prophet’s noble Companions.¹

Another questioner: When did ‘Alī رضي الله عنه pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه?

I answered: After six months of assuming Khilāfah.

The same questioner: “Then why did Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه delay his pledge of allegiance if it is true that there was love between them?”

I responded: The fact of the matter is that ‘Alī was busy, along with ‘Abbās and Zubayr ibn ‘Awwām رضي الله عنه, preparing the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for burial while the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār convened and pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه as the khalīfah. So, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was not pleased with that because he felt that he was left out and not consulted.

The questioner: This means that they conspired against Imām ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and denied him his right. It shows that they were after leadership at all costs.

I said: Take it easy! This conclusion is uncalled for. If you study the matter carefully, you will realise that the truth is in Abū Bakr’s رضي الله عنه favour.

¹ This questioner may have intended to use false narrations that are in this book against me, but when he discovered that more than a third of the book is fabricated he went silent.

When the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ heard of the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death, they convened a meeting at Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah to appoint a new leader for the Muslims. They knew that Islam could not be established without leadership. When Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا heard of that, they quickly went to the Saqīfah. On their way, they met Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, the trustee of this ummah¹, and the three of them proceeded to Saqīfah.

When they arrived there, Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reminded the Anṣār of the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ḥadīth: "The leaders shall be from Quraysh". He also reminded them that Allah described the Muhājirīn as truthful and the Anṣār as successful, and reminded them that Allah commanded the people to be with the truthful by His saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

O you who believe! Be conscious of Allah and be with those who are true
(in words and deeds).²

The Anṣār agreed with Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who in an attempt to kill a potential controversy in its cradle suggested that either 'Umar or Abū 'Ubaidah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا should be appointed as the new leader. However, 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ answered him: "As long as you are among us, none of us would agree to be appointed the leader. Give me your hand and let me pledge allegiance to you." That was how 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and other Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who were present there pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as the new leader.

The following day, all the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār pledged their allegiance with the exception of 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and some members of the Prophet's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ household such as 'Abbās.

'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was displeased that the decision was taken in his absence, but Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was right, for the matter of appointing a new leader was so important that

1 A title awarded to him by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

2 Sūrah al-Taubah: 119

it could not be delayed lest there would be a crisis, the extent of which would be known only to Allah.

After six months, 'Alī's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ anger died down, so he sent to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ informing him of his intention to pledge allegiance, and thereafter 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ pledged his allegiance to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ in Masjid al-Nabawi صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. That was how their differences came to an end.¹ Is it then reasonable that we should be

1 Much has been made - primarily by the Rāfiḍah sect - concerning narrations which describe how both Zubayr ibn 'Awwām and 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ delayed pledging allegiance to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Almost all of those narrations, however, are not authentic; the one exception is a narration that was related by Ibn 'Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, who said: "Verily 'Alī, Zubayr, and others who were with them stayed behind in the house of Fāṭimah bint Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-tawthīq fī Sīrah wa Ḥayat al-Siddīq*, pg. 98) They were there for a reason: they were in charge of making preparations for the burial of the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Thier primary duties involved washing the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and wrapping him up in a shroud. This information is based, not on mere conjecture, but on a narration that was related by Sālim ibn 'Ubayd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. According to that narration, Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and to the other members of the Prophet's household: "Busy yourselves with (the affair of (i.e. the burial preparations)) your companion." Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ then ordered them to wash the Prophet's body. (ibid)

It is important to understand that the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had just died, and so, yes, some people had to concern themselves with the future course of the Muslim nation; but others had to busy themselves with making preparations for the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ burial. As a result, it was on the day after the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death, which was Tuesday - that Zubayr ibn 'Awwām and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: "When Abū Bakr climbed the pulpit, he looked at the faces of the people who were before him. Not finding Zubayr ibn 'Awwām anywhere among the crowd, Abū Bakr summoned for him to come. When Zubayr came (a short while later), Abū Bakr said to him: "O cousin and helper of the Messenger of Allah, do you want to break the stick of the Muslims (i.e. do you want to be the cause of disunity)?" Zubayr said: "There is no blame upon you (for what you say), O Khalīfah of the Messenger of Allah." after which he stood up and pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr then looked in the faces of the crowd, and, not finding 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib anywhere among them, summoned for him to come. When 'Alī came (a short while later), Abū Bakr said: "O cousin of the Messenger of Allah, do you want to break the stick of the Muslims (i.e. do you want to be the cause of disunity)?" 'Alī responded: "There is no blame upon you (for what you say), O Khalīfah of the Messenger of Allah." after which he stood up and pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ." (*Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (5/249), Ibn Kathīr ruled that this ḥadīth is authentic)

waging war against one another on behalf of two persons who had already settled their differences? This is strange indeed.

The questioner: Did Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr?

I responded: Take it easy! This is certainly a manifestation of such ignorance on your part that I least expected. Women are excused from personally pledging allegiance. However highly we respect Fāṭimah al-Zahrā رضي الله عنها, it should be made clear that she had nothing to do with the matter of leadership and khilāfah.

Khilāfah is a matter that needs intelligence, wisdom and courage. It is the responsibility of the wise and knowledgeable leaders of the community who know the right person for this position.

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This authentic narration was deemed so important by Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj رضي الله عنه - the compiler of the second most authentic ḥadīth compilation, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* - that he went to his Shaykh, Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Khuzaymah رضي الله عنه, and asked him about it. Ibn al-Khuzaymah wrote out the ḥadīth for him and read it for him. Speaking figuratively, Imām Muslim رضي الله عنه said: “This ḥadīth is worth a *Badanah* (a large cow that is slaughtered in Makkah (i.e., this Hadeeth is something of great value)).” Ibn Khuzaymah responded: «This ḥadīth is not equal to a *Badanah* only (but rather it is worth more); instead, it is equal to a *Badarah* (a bag that contains 1000 or 10,000 Dīnārs; or in other words, this ḥadīth is a priceless treasure of great importance). Commenting on Abū Sa’id’s above-mentioned narration, Ibn Kathīr رضي الله عنه said: “The chain of this narration is both authentic and correctly memorised.”

And the ḥadīth imparts very important information: Either one or two days after the Prophet’s death, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. And this is certainly true, for (throughout the duration of Abū Bakr’s caliphate), ‘Alī رضي الله عنه always remained in the close company of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه; in fact, he never missed performing a single ṣalāh behind him. (*Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (5/249).

According to another narration, Ḥabīb ibn Abū Thābit said: “‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه was in his house when a man went to him and said: “Abū Bakr has sat down in order to take pledges of allegiance (from the people).” At that very moment, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was (dressed casually) wearing only a long shirt, with no lower garment or robe above it. But he was in a rush, for he did not want to delay pledging allegiance to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه; and so, without bothering to put on the rest of his attire, he went out the Maṣjid. Once there, he sat down and asked someone to bring his robe for him. Some people brought it for him, and he wore it over his shirt.” (*Al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn* by al-Khālidī pg. 56).

Since women naturally give in to the dictates of their emotions they are excused from this matter. This does not, however diminish the status of Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا. For, she remains the best woman in this world and the chief of the women of Paradise in the hereafter.

The questioner: What then is the cause of disagreement between Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and Abū Bakr?

I responded: The disagreement was not as you perceived it to be because you take that disagreement as a means of maligning and cursing the Prophet's noble Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. A disagreement could be due to different points of view in which each of the disagreeing persons would see that they are upon the truth.

The basis of disagreement between Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was the issue of Fadak, which was a simple issue that should not have warranted disagreement in the first place.

The questioner: No, it was not a simple matter. What Abū Bakr did was that he deprived her of her right and harmed her, in spite of the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ saying: "Fāṭimah is of me and I am of her. He who bothers her in fact bothers me and he who bothers me indeed bothers Allah." It is not a simple matter. It is a fundamental of religion and faith!

I said: Is this disagreement a fundamental of religion on the basis of which you call the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ apostates? This is undoubtedly an absurd, excessive transgression that could remove one from the fold of Islam.

Do you know when the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ uttered this statement that you are citing as evidence? Do you know that he addressed it to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and not to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ? You will come to realise this soon. Let us go back to the disagreement which you claim to be a fundamental of religion.

It was about a piece of land known as Fadak that the Prophet ﷺ earned as his share of the booty during the campaign of Khaybar. When the Prophet ﷺ died, Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا came to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ asking for her share of her father's property. But Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ told her that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Our property will not be inherited, whatever we (i.e. prophets) leave is Ṣadaqah (to be used for charity)."¹

While telling her this, Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ swore to her that the members of the Prophet's ﷺ household are dearer to him than the members of his own family, and that he only needed to carry out the Prophet's ﷺ instructions.

When she heard that, she was pleased. And there are authentic reports that he visited her before her death. Where then is the disagreement that the brother claimed to be a fundamental of religion?

What then is Abū Bakr's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ sin in all this? Also if we thought over the matter deeply we would realise that Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was also a stakeholder in the Fadak property because of the share of his daughter, 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, who is the Prophet's ﷺ wife. But implementing the Prophet's ﷺ instruction is greater than this world and its materials.

Then I need to ask you a question: Why did 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ not return the Fadak property to Fāṭimah's children, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Umm Kulthūm رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا when he became the khalīfah if he was not convinced that Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was right in his decision?

Therefore, the matter which you depict as fundamental of religion was no more than a difference in points of view that ended with the dissenting party accepting the truth. The first person to disprove your lie is 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ when he approved Abū Bakr's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ decision. 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is the farthest person from sycophancy, hypocrisy and weakness when it comes to the truth.

¹ Reported by *Bukhārī* 3092 and *Muslim* 1759

As for your claim that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Fāṭimah is of me and I am of her. He who bothers her in fact bothers me and he who bothers me indeed bothers Allah.” I do not know this ḥadīth in this version.

The version I know is: “Fāṭimah is part of me. He who disturbs her in fact disturbs me and he who offends her offends me.”¹

As for the statement: “He who bothers me indeed bothers Allah.” I think it is a dubious addition, and I think it is falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. And Allah knows best.

This ḥadīth is a proof against the questioner, since the Prophet ﷺ did not address the statement to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه but to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, who wanted to marry the daughter of Abū Jahl as a second wife. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then said: “Fāṭimah is from me, and I am afraid she will be subjected to trials in her religion (because of jealousy).” The Prophet then mentioned one of his son-in-laws (i.e. Abū al-‘As رضي الله عنه) who was from the tribe of ‘Abd al-Shams, and he praised him as a good son-in-law, saying: “Whatever he said was the truth, and he promised me and fulfilled his promise. I do not make a legal thing illegal, nor do I make an illegal thing legal, but by Allah, the daughter of Allah’s Messenger and the daughter of the enemy of Allah, (i.e. Abū Jahl) can never get together (as the wives of one man).”²

What then does the ḥadīth have to do with Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه?

One of them: Do you know the story of Fāṭimah’s رضي الله عنها death and who performed the funeral prayer on her?

I answered: She died like any other human being and her husband performed funeral prayer on her.

1 Reported by *Muslim* (2449)

2 Reported by *Bukhārī* (3110)

The questioner: Why did Abū Bakr not perform the funeral prayer on her?

I responded: This is not a Jumu'ah prayer. It is funeral prayer, and in such a prayer, the strong opinion of the jurists is that the nearest relative of the dead has the greater right to lead the funeral prayer on him or her - if he is knowledgeable. This is because he is the most sympathetic with the dead person and he is likely to be most sincere in supplicating and seeking forgiveness for him or her. This is the view of many of our jurists.

The questioner: That was not what happened. You are just being evasive!

I said: Subḥān Allāh! Anyway, evasiveness is better than insulting and cursing (the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رضي الله عنهم), now tell me what happened.

The questioner: What happened is that when Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها knew that the time of her death was near, she had a bath and put on her shrouds and then laid down on her bed.

She instructed her husband to secretly perform funeral prayer on her and to bury her in the night so that Abū Bakr would not have the chance to perform funeral prayer on her. For she hated the prayers of this hypocrite.

I said: I wonder how you people could be so ensnared, blinded and infatuated by every superstitious and fabled story, supportive of every exaggeration and looking for every means of disagreement as sincere people would pursue the truth and harmony!

Then I asked him: Is it permissible to perform fajr ṣalāh before its time?

He said: No.

I said: Because its time has not yet come.

I asked him further: Is it permissible to perform ablution for fajr ṣalāh after 'ishā and then go to bed and wake up in the morning and perform fajr ṣalāh with that ablution?

(All those who were present laughed and) The questioner laughingly said: No, but what does this have to do with our topic?

I said: Why is it not permissible to perform ablution for fajr ṣalāh in the night though it would make you ready for the prayer upon waking up?

He said: Because sleeping would nullify the ablution. So it is useless.

I said: This is the link. It is also not permissible to bath a person before he dies. For, death will nullify that bath and another bath would become necessary after death. This is what your statement implies. You have nailed your own coffin. This is the first proof on the spuriousness of your ḥadīth. Another proof is ...

The man who had earlier abused me and threatened me then suddenly stood up and started shouting: This is a hypocrite! Did I not warn that you should not engage in any debate with him? He is evasive like a wolf, twisting around, rationalising and playing on you. He does not want the truth neither does he love the members of the Prophet's ﷺ family!! (Allah then made him to utter these supplications:) O Allah, raise him up in the company of Abū Bakr and 'Umar! O Allah, raise him in the company of these apostates and hypocrites!

I said (smilingly): Ameen! O Allah, raise me up in the company of these pure and righteous people who are the leaders of the faithful, the best of all mankind after the prophets and the leaders of the truthful, the martyrs and the pious.

The call was then made for fajr ṣalāh, and thus did the debate that took nearly six hours end.

I then said: It is time to go for fajr ṣalāh, but I would like to call your attention to the injustice which this man (I pointed to the man who insulted me) had done to me. He wrongly accused me that I did not want the truth and accused me of hypocrisy - and I seek refuge with Allah from hypocrisy and the hypocrites.

Allah knows that I did not come here but only to show the truth and defend it. If I were a hypocrite, I would not have debated with you with all this sincerity, clarity and frankness. I would also like to tell you that up till now I have not had the opportunity to show you the truth which I believe. Since I had been answering your questions and dispelling misconceptions. I have not yet said what I wanted to say. If I had been given the opportunity to say what I wanted to say, I would have shown you - with Allah's permission - the clear truth.

My friend who had come to my house in the first place: Talk shaykh! Say whatever you wish and we will all listen.

I said: There is not sufficient time. It is already time for fajr. I have to take permission to go and perform the prayer.

My friend: Then suggest a time for continuation of the debate.

I said: As you like, though I do not think the brothers are very enthusiastic about another meeting. (But most of them declared that they were enthusiastically awaiting the next meeting).

We agreed that the next meeting should take place in the evening after 'ishā ṣalāh and I stipulated that their leader who was with us before should be present. They assured me that he would be glad to come.

Chapter Two

The Second Debate and the Triumph of the Truth

I performed fajr ṣalāh and went to work. I came back after zuhr ṣalāh and slept until the time of 'asr ṣalāh. As I was extremely tired on account of the lack of sleep of the last night. I performed 'asr ṣalāh and slept again until the maghrib ṣalāh. I then performed the maghrib ṣalāh and 'ishā ṣalāh, and waited for my friend who failed to turn up. I concluded that they had decided to cancel the debate.

On the following night after coming back from 'ishā ṣalāh, my friend arrived and informed me that the Shī'ah were waiting for me.

I got up and went with him to their gathering. When we arrived there, I realised that those who were present were almost the same people who were there two nights before. When I noticed that their leader was not there, I inquired about him and I was told that he asked to be excused and requested them to go on with the debate promising that he would meet me soon. So we started the debate.

I said: All praise is due to Allah, Rabb of all the worlds. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, and upon members of his household and his Companions.

To proceed, the last discussion was characterised by you asking while I answered the questions. I would like you to allow me in this session to ask questions while you answer. I hope that the answers you are going to give will be frank and clear and not based on taqiyyah, so that the debate can be fruitful.

One of them: We have been frank with you from the beginning in order to let the truth manifest.

I said: What is your belief concerning the Qur'ān?

One of them: It is the Book of Allah.

I said: I know that. Do you believe that there are alterations in the Qur'ān?

The speaker: The Qur'ān is divinely protected against any alteration.

I said: Is there any addition or omission in the Qur'ān.

The speaker: There is no any addition or omission in the Qur'ān.

I said: Is this the standard belief of all the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah?

The speaker: Yes, that is the consensus among us.

I said: What then is the rule concerning a person who claims that there is alteration in the Qur'ān, or that there are additions or omissions in it or that a verse thereof is written in contradiction to what was revealed?

The speaker: Such a person is a disbeliever.

I said (pointing to all those who were there): Do you all concur with the brother in what he said?

The audience: Yes, we and all the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah concur with him. All that is attributed to us that we believe that the Qur'ān is altered is untrue and false.

I said: Then, let us keep this testimony in our minds, as we will need it later. Now tell me, what is your view about a Shī'ī scholar who authored a book in which he quoted hundreds of narrations that support a claim the Qur'ān was altered. The book's name is *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī Ithbāt Tahrīf Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb* (the definitive conclusion in proving the distortion of the book of the absolute Lord of the lords). What is your view about this book and its author?

The speaker: The book is fake. It was rejected by the scholars of the Imāmī Shī'ah.

I said: What about the author?

The speaker: I do not know that. You can ask the Sayyid (their leader) when you meet him.

I said: The matter is clear! The man claims that the Qur'ān is altered. And to support this claim, he wrote a book in which he tried - albeit unsuccessfully - to establish this claim. Moments earlier, all of you agreed that whoever claims that the Qur'ān is altered or that there is an addition or omission in it is a kāfir. Therefore, this man must be a disbeliever.

The speaker and the entire audience: This question can only be answered by the Sayyid.

I said: Do you know who this scholar is? He is Mirzā Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrasī. Do you know the reward he got for authoring this book? He got buried in your holiest site on the earth; Najaf.

This deed clearly indicates that the belief that the Qur'ān was altered is inherently rooted in your religion. If not, you would have declared him an apostate who should be executed and who did not deserve to be buried in Muslim cemeteries.

A man from the audience: We told you in no uncertain terms that the Qur'ān is protected against any alteration. This should be sufficient for you. The man died a long time ago and was buried. We do not need to revive issues that are not in the interest of the Muslims.

I said: We are not talking about political matters. We are rather seeking the truth within the framework of the Sharī'ah, and as long as all of us adhere to the truth, our search will definitely be fruitful.

I would therefore return to the issue of the Qur'ān and say: the problem is not in a book that Ṭabrasī authored. It lies in the fact that the book contains narrations

directly quoted from your most authentic books such as *al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī, which is your best, most ancient, and most authentic book - whose author you greatly revere and call *Thiqat al-Islām* and whom you regard as the reformer of the Imāmiyyah Ithnā‘Ashariyyah in the third century.

This al-Kulaynī filled his above-mentioned book with narrations that claim that alterations, additions and omissions had occurred in the Qur’ān, that the Companions رضي الله عنهم removed a third of the Qur’ān revealed in reference to members of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم family, that there is what is called a *Muṣḥaf Fāṭimah* and that the real Qur’ān - which does not include even a single word from the present Qur’ān - will be brought by the ‘Absent Imām’.

It is very clear that al-Kulaynī would not quote narrations he did not believe in. Can you then reject al-Kulaynī’s book, *al-Kāfī*, which is your most essential reference book, as you have rejected *Faṣl al-Khitāb* by Ṭabrisī? Would you dare to call him an apostate in line with your claim that whoever says that the Qur’ān is altered is an apostate?

Someone from the audience (angrily): All these narrations are weak and unreliable. We are here in front of you declaring that the Qur’ān is not altered. What then is the problem?

I said: We who are present here are not the problem. We are here searching for the truth. I am going to show you the stand of the scholars of the Ithnā‘Ashariyyah regarding the Qur’ān. The opinion of a sect is represented only by the declarations of its leaders and recognised scholars, and not by the view of ordinary members like me and you.

Let us leave aside al-Kulaynī and his book, *al-Kāfī* which is the greatest Shī‘ah work. Let us rather look at al-Qummī (who is ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī) and his famous tafsīr (*Tafsīr al-Qummī*).

Al-Qummī does not need any introduction. He was your most prominent shaykh in Tafsīr and ḥadīth, and his *Tafsīr* is the most recognised Shī‘ī tafsīr. In the

introduction of this *Tafsīr*, he claims that the Qur'ān was altered. He said: "There are in the Qur'ān things that are contrary to what Allah had revealed."

He then filled the book with narrations that claim that the Qur'ān was altered. An example of this -though there are many others- is when he commented on verse: 110 of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān where Allah says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best of nations ever raised for mankind.*¹

Al-Qummī quoted some of your 'infallible' A'immaḥ saying: "How could they be the best people since they had killed the leader of the faithful 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and his son Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ? The correct version of the verse rather is: "You are the best A'immaḥ - referring to the twelve A'immaḥ of the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah - ever raised up for mankind." Therefore, the verse is one of the verses altered in the Qur'ān.

Would you then reject al-Qummī and his *Tafsīr*, as you have rejected *Faṣl al- Khitāb* by Ṭabrisī? And if you reject *al-Kāfi* and you reject al-Qummī and his *Tafsīr*, you will then not have any book to cite as your authority, for these are the men who are the authorities in the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah school.

Hence, you have two options: to follow these scholars in their opinion and agree with them that the Qur'ān has been altered or to renounce the entire Ithnā 'Ashariyyah system of belief, because their scholars claim that the Qur'ān had been altered.

One of them: Look, debate is not done in this manner! We are telling you that our belief is that the Qur'ān is not altered and you are insisting that our belief is the opposite. I will bring you a book that will clarify our belief to you.

1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 110

(He then asked the youngest person in the gathering to bring a book from the library. When the book was brought, he turned to me and said). This is the book of *Creeds* by Ibn Bābūwayh al-Qummī¹. It confirms our opinion that the Qur’ān was not altered.

(He then opened a page and started reading) “Our belief is that the Qur’ān which Allah revealed to our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and which is in the hands of the people is as it was revealed... Whoever claims that we have a belief that is contrary to this is a liar.”

This is the belief of all of us. Why then do we need to stir up controversies and arguments that are detrimental to Islam?

I responded: No! These arguments are detrimental to the Imāmī Shī‘ah alone as they are the ones who claim that there are alterations, omissions and additions in the Qur’ān.

Another person from the audience: After we have read our belief to you, you are still saying this? You are definitely interested only in argument and not in the truth.

I said: The matter is not that simple. The belief that the Qur’ān was altered is the fundamental principle according to the Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah. All your scholars of tafsīr quote sayings from your ‘infallible A‘immah’ that the Qur’ān was indeed altered. Your erudite scholar, al-Jazā‘irī also affirmed this in his book, *Al-Anwār*, that there are abundant and successive reports that there are alterations in the Qur’ān.

Do you know what “successive” and “abundant” mean? It means: beyond any doubt. Al-Jazā‘irī claimed that there are more than two thousand narrations and

¹ This Qummī is different from the Qummī mentioned earlier, this is Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Bābūwayh al-Qummī.

authentic reports indicating that there are alterations in the Qur'ān. Another of your eminent scholars, al-Majlisī also made the same claim, asserting that rejection of these narrations would necessitate the rejection of all narrations about Imāmah.

And it is quite clear to everyone that rejection of all narrations about Imāmah is tantamount to rejection of the Shī'ī religion in its entirety, especially the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah. I am not cooking all this up. It is there in your books. I can show it to you if you like.

Now tell me, is it possible to reject all these - more than two thousand 'successive' and 'abundant' - narrations reported by your reliable and infallible A'imma?

Is it possible to abandon these narrations for the opinion of some 'fallible' scholar such as Ibn Bābūwayh? Indeed, what Ibn Bābūwayh wrote is nothing more than another method of taqiyyah invented to deceive the Ahl al-Sunnah. And according to your belief, taqiyyah is a principle that represents nine-tenth of your religion.

Therefore, you can never abandon the saying of your 'infallible A'imma' for the opinion of a scholar who is vulnerable to errors. This word is not from me. It is rather from the seal of your erudite scholars, buried in your holiest Najaf: al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrasī.

Al-Ṭabrasī had rejected Ibn Bābūwayh's claim and asserted that rejection of his opinion is easier than the rejection of the sayings of the 'infallible A'imma'. He then added that Ibn Bābūwayh and others made this claim as a way of practicing taqiyyah to deceive the common people. Al- Jazā'irī also concurred with al-Ṭabrasī.¹

By Allah, I wish I could believe that you do not claim that the Qur'ān was altered.

¹ *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* by Ṭabrasī and *al-Anwār al-Nu'māniyyah* by al-Jazā'irī vol. 2 pg. 357,358

Since doubting the authenticity of a single word from the Qur'ān removes one from the fold of Islam.

But, believe me, there are many factors that convince our scholars that you - the Imāmiyyah Shī'ah - certainly believe that there are alterations in the Qur'ān, however much you try to hide this belief. Some of these factors are:

- The many texts from your books that clearly state that there are alterations in the Qur'ān.
- Your ill opinion of the Prophet's ﷺ Companions ﷺ though they are the ones who compiled the Qur'ān and whom Allah praised in the Qur'ān. How could you then claim that you believe the Qur'ān to be intact and still assert that the Companions ﷺ who compiled the Qur'ān and conveyed it to us had apostatised?

You must either believe in the trustworthiness and praiseworthiness of the Companions. ﷺ and the intactness of the Qur'ān or disbelieve in both. For, it is unacceptable to distinguish between the two intertwined issues.

(There was a loud uproar in the gathering, and most of those present disagreed with this statement.)

One of them volunteered to speak: We (the Shī'ah) are not the only ones to claim that the Qur'ān was altered, there are also some among you (the Ahl al- Sunnah) who believe that there are alterations in the Qur'ān. Your books confirm this.

I said: Subhān Allāh! At the beginning of this debate, all of you unanimously claimed that you did not believe that the Qur'ān was altered, but after I showed you quotations from your books that contradict your claim, you are now alleging that we also believe in the alteration?

For your information, you will never find in the books of Ahl al-Sunnah, in their vast multitude, the least indication that there is any alteration in the Qur'ān. This

is because, the Ahl al-Sunnah are the custodians of the Qur'ān. They harmonise with the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān also harmonises with them. The Qur'ān praises the Companions. رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and they also praise them; the Qur'ān commands them to love the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and the members of his household and they carry out this commandment; the Qur'ān praises the mothers of the faithful and they also ask Allah to be pleased with them. So they are with the Qur'ān wherever they are.

The speaker: There are reports in your authorised books that 'Umar, used to erase Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās from the Qur'ān saying that they were not part of the Qur'ān.

(The audience applauded and breathed a sigh of relief.)

A pretentious speaker among them: We have earlier on warned you that we should not delve into this matter that is harmful to you and us and detrimental to Islam. But you insisted on delving into it.

(He then ostentatiously said): I suggest that we close this chapter completely and take up more important issues that can benefit us all.

I said: No, by Allah, I am not going to leave this issue until it is clarified completely. When you failed to free yourselves from the belief that the Qur'ān was altered - a belief that most of your scholars hold - you now intend to attribute the same belief to us so that we could have a share in that insult. How preposterous!

All the Muslims who are the followers of the Sunnah unanimously agree that all that is in the Qur'ān is Allah's word with no addition or omission. They hold that anyone - whoever he or she may be - who claims that there is any alteration, addition or omission in the Qur'ān, even if it is a single letter, is an apostate who has removed himself or herself from the fold of Islam.

You have access to books of belief written by our unique and sagacious scholars that do not in any way contradict this belief.

What then would make us claim that the Qur'ān is altered?! It was our Khalīfah Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, who compiled the Qur'ān in consultation with 'Umar رضي الله عنه. It was our Khalīfah 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه who produced copies therefrom (and sent them to the regions). All these men are our guides and the rightly guided leaders. What would then make us claim that there are alterations in the Qur'ān?

As for you, you have every reason to hold a belief that there are alterations in the Qur'ān because you regard Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, who compiled the Qur'ān as apostates; and your religion is based upon cursing and denouncing them.

We - the Ahl al-Sunnah - on the other hand, regard the Qur'ān as ours. It is our Book. So it is impossible for us to claim that there is any alteration in it.

Let me go back to the claim of the brother that 'Umar رضي الله عنه would erase Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās from the Qur'ān script. I would like to give him correct information in this regard. The narration he referred to did not mention 'Umar رضي الله عنه, for 'Umar رضي الله عنه is too knowledgeable not to know that the two Sūrahs were part of the Qur'ān. It is rather narrated from Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, and this refutation from him was an individual judgment that no other companion concurred with him in.

The reason for this is that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite supplications for protection against evil eye and other harmful things, but when the two Sūrahs were revealed, he abandoned all other supplications and recited them only. So 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه thought that the two Sūrahs were part of those supplications and not part of the Qur'ān.

This assumption was strengthened by the fact that he did not have an opportunity to hear the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recite any of these two Sūrahs in prayer.

Above all, there are authentic reports that 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه later abandoned his opinion for that of the rest of the Companions رضي الله عنهم.

Therefore, it is the consensus of all the Muslims - with the exception of the Imāmiyyah Shī'ah - that the entire Qur'ān, including Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās, is intact, and that it is divinely protected against any alteration, addition or omission. 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه only disputed it being part of the Qur'ān for the reasons given above, and he had abandoned his previous opinion when the truth became clear to him. There are occasions in which a companion would act contrary to the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم injunction because he was unaware of that injunction but when informed of it, would immediately abide by it.

(At this point, members of the audience started talking among themselves, then one of them addressed me): Doctor, engaging in debate with you is fruitless. You are not seeking the truth. You only came here to impose your opinion. Therefore, we need to bring this discussion to end. Thank you for your visit. We ask Allah to guide us all to the truth and to the love of and respect for members of the Prophet's household.

I responded: You are rather the ones who do not want to accept the truth. Engaging in debate with you is fruitless. For, you do not want the truth. You only want people to embrace your wrong belief blindly.

As for me, I praise Allah for guiding me to the love of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the entire members of his household starting with his pure wives, mothers of the faithful, and ending with families of 'Abbās, 'Aqīl, Ja'far and 'Alī رضي الله عنه.

I ask Allah to guide us and you to the love of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم starting with the four rightly guided caliphs, the ten who were given glad tidings of Paradise, veterans of the Battle of Badr, participants in the Pledge of Riḍwān (Bay'at al-Riḍwān), all the Muhājirīn and Anṣār رضي الله عنهم, and all those who follow them in righteousness till the Day of Resurrection.

I thought you were looking for the truth, and I had many truths to tell you but you do not want to listen.

My friend who came with me: No, by Allah! You cannot go until after saying all that you want to say. They are obliged to listen to you as you had listened to them and they have right to criticise you if they have knowledge. If not, they should admit their ignorance and leave the religion alone for those who are knowledgeable.

I said: They are not interested in debate.

One of them: It is not that we do not want debate. The problem is that we keep telling you that we believe in the intactness of the Qur'ān but you insist on forcing a contradicting view on us.

I responded: No, I am not forcing any view on you. I am only showing you the sayings of your scholars, who are your indisputable authority whom you trust. Anyway, I am not going to attribute to you what you reject. Allah knows all that is concealed, and your reckoning is with Him.

One of them: Since we have reached this agreement, we can now go on with the debate.

Another one (attempting to calm the tense atmosphere): My brother, issues concerning the Qur'ān are very expansive and the scholars have many opinions about that. You can only discuss these sensitive matters with the Sayyid because he alone has the knowledge and he certainly has responses that we do not have.

(After we had decided to continue with the debate) I said: All praise is due to Allah. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet ﷺ, members of his family and his Companions رضي الله عنهم.

One of them: You had better not add “and his Companions”. By the way, where did you get this addition from?

I said: This is what we are going to discuss now. But before we start, I would like to mention the result of our discussion concerning the Qur'ān in summary.

One of them: Concerning the Qur'ān again?

I responded: In line with our agreement, I will not go back to the topic. However, there is something in my mind that I must say, and it is going to be brief, Allah willing.

We concluded that many - if not most - of the Shī'ī scholars, the earlier and the latter ones, are of the opinion that there are alterations in the Qur'ān and there are thousands of texts from your authorised books that support this belief. There are however some of your scholars who rejected these texts and affirmed that the Qur'ān is intact, though we do not know whether they did so in line with your principle of taqiyyah.

Nevertheless, my personal view is that your claim that there is no alteration in the Qur'ān disagrees with the fundamental principle of the Imāmī Shī'ah. As according to this fundamental principle, the Prophet's Companions who compiled the Qur'ān were apostates. The implication is: how could apostates be trusted in any matter, let alone in compilation of the Qur'ān?

Anyway, all of us here agreed that there is no alteration, addition or omission in the Qur'ān and that anyone who makes any contrary claim is a disbeliever and apostate. Is there any opposition to this conclusion?

The audience: No opposition,

I continued: Allah says in His glorious Book:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best of nations ever raised for mankind.*¹

1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 110

Concerning the above verse, al-Qummi quoted one of your ‘infallible’ A’immah as saying: “How could they be the best people since they had killed the leader of the faithful ‘Alī and his son, Ḥusayn? The correct version of the verse rather is: “You are the best A’immah - meaning the twelve A’immah of the Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah - ever raised up for mankind.

Since you do not concur with him in the authenticity of this narration, what then is your view?

One of them: But we have told you that only the Sayyid could answer this question. By Allah, engaging in debate with you is useless!

I said: I do not want to go back to the issue of the Qur’ān. We all agreed on its intactness. Therefore, we should reject all those fake narrations. Do we all agree on this?

(There was silence)

I said: We all agreed that the verse: 3 of Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān is intact as it was revealed?

(Silence)

I continued: Have we not agreed on the intactness of the Qur’ān without any alteration, addition or omission?

One of them: Yes. We said that!

I said: All praise belongs to Allah! Then is this verse not the greatest proof of the merit of the Companions رضي الله عنهم and Allah’s praise for them, describing them as the best people ever raised up for the entire mankind?

Is it reasonable to believe that a people praised in such glowing terms would, all of a sudden, apostatise with the exception of only some ten persons, according to the best estimate?

Is it reasonable to believe that an entire community that numbered one hundred thousand during the farewell pilgrimage and among whom were more than two thousand eminent Companions from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, would discard the truth except for only a few men who could be counted on fingers? Does a community such as this then deserve to be called:

The best people ever raised up for mankind?

Therefore, dear brothers, you should either agree with al-Qummī in his interpretation of the above verse, in which case we will be upon a religion and you upon another and not share the religion of Islam that is based upon the Qur'ān with us. Or in accordance with your claim that the Qur'ān is free from any alteration, agree with the verse as it is: "You are the best of all people", which refers to the Prophet's ﷺ noble Companions unto whom he recited the verse when it was revealed to him.

The Companions ﷺ are rightly and deservedly called the best of all people; for all those who came after them are indebted to them. Allah says:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

*And those who came after them say: "O our Rabb! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in imān, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. Our Rabb! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful."*¹

The Companions ﷺ indeed were the foremost in righteousness, intelligence and faith. They are the best of the best in the light of Allah's word:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best of nations ever raised for mankind.*²

1 Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr: 10

2 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 110

Therefore, you should either agree with al-Qummi and become disbelievers or agree with me that the verse is intact and refers to the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and be saved.

One of them: Maybe, the Companions were the best of mankind when the verse was revealed and later they apostatised, changed the Prophet's ﷺ instructions, denied 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ his right and attempted to kill him and harm members of his household after the Prophet's ﷺ death.

There are aḥādīth reported by al-Bukhārī - and according to you all the aḥādīth of *Bukhārī* are authentic - in which the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that the Companions would apostatise after his death and that they would be prevented from coming to his ḥowḍ (pond) on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet ﷺ will then say: "O Rabb, my Companions!" It will be said: "You do not know what they did after you had left. They had turned back on their heels." The Prophet ﷺ will then say: "Far removed, far removed (from mercy), those who changed (their religion) after me." The Prophet ﷺ then added: "So I did not see anyone of them escaping except a few who were like camels without a shepherd."

The above ḥadīth indicated that the Companions changed their religion after the Prophet's ﷺ death and that none of them remained upon the truth but a few who were like camels without a shepherd, i.e. those who supported 'Alī and members of his household رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

Another man from among them (supporting the previous speaker): Yes. May Allah bless you! All of the Companions apostatised after the Prophet's ﷺ death. (He then started saying in a sad tone and weeping): They perpetrated injustice against Imām 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, they deprived him of his right, they wanted to kill him and set his house ablaze while the Prophet's ﷺ daughter رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was there. When she came out, they flogged her so mercilessly that she had miscarriage and later died. They killed Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, the Prophet's grandson and smashed his head..."

I interrupted: Brothers, when are we going to stop repeating these fables and lies against the Prophet's Companions رضي الله عنهم, the best Companions any Prophet could have and the best of all people after the Prophets? When are we going to stop these fairy-tales that go against the Qur'an which we claim to believe in?

Brothers, use your senses to ponder over these tales and lies that are insulting to 'Alī رضي الله عنه before any of the Companions رضي الله عنهم. There was nothing between the Companions رضي الله عنهم and 'Alī رضي الله عنه and members of his family but love. He had named his sons after Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه. He married his daughter from his wife Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها to 'Umar رضي الله عنه. He was the judge of Madīnah during the khilāfah of 'Umar رضي الله عنه and never hesitated to advise him sincerely.

He was always full of praise for the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, and would criticise his followers for not emulating the Companions رضي الله عنهم in their sincerity, worship and support for their religion.

He recognised the consensus of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār and believed that they held the right of allegiance. He believed that Allah would be pleased with whoever they pledged allegiance to.

Brothers, all that is narrated concerning disputes between the Companions رضي الله عنهم and 'Alī and his family رضي الله عنهم was not worth the paper which it was written on. It is detrimental to Islam and the Muslims and the majority of it is error, disbelief and transgression against the honour of the Companions رضي الله عنهم who are sincere and righteous believers.

Fear Allah concerning the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم and friends who believed in him, supported him and sacrificed their lives and wealth seeking nothing but Allah's pleasure.

Brothers, if not for the Companions رضي الله عنهم - after Allah that is- we would not have known Islam!

The first speaker: Leave that aside. Do you believe in *Bukhārī* or not?

I responded: The most authentic book after the Book of Allah is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The ummah accepts its authenticity, and its aḥādīth are accepted.

The same speaker: There are aḥādīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* which declared the Companions as disbelievers and apostates and you are saying all its aḥādīth are authentic.

(He went to the library and brought *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)

I said: Brothers, fear Allah concerning Imām al-Bukhārī. He served the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ. Far be it from him that he should regard the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ as infidels while he had filled his collection with aḥādīth on the merits of the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ.

The same speaker opened the book and offered that I read. I insisted that he should read. He then read: Listen to the first narration. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “There will come to me some people whom I will recognise, and they will recognise me, but a barrier will be placed between me and them. I will say: “They are of me.” It will be said: “You do not know what they innovated in the religion after you left.” I will say: “Far removed, far removed (from mercy), those who changed (their religion) after me.”

I said: Did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: “They are my Companions.”?

The speaker (after looking into the book): He said: “They are of me.”

I said: This ḥadīth is a proof against you. You insist on misconstruing the ḥadīth. It is known to you that the Prophet ﷺ told Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا and ‘Alī: “You are of me.”, and he said the same thing about their sons.

So, if you insist on your misconstruing of the ḥadīth, his word: “they are of me” applied to members of his household more than his Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ.

But we - the Ahl al-Sunnah - do not subscribe to this misconstrual because we love and respect the members of the Prophet's ﷺ household and we invoke Allah's pleasure on all of them. You on the other hand exaggerate in your love for some of them and you shamelessly disrespect others.

Nevertheless, the ḥadīth in question neither refers to the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ nor to pure members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. Rather, the standard belief according to the Ahlus-Sunnah including Imām al-Bukhārī is that all the leaders of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ, including 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ shall be in Paradise, and that members of the Prophet's household, especially his wives who are mothers of the faithful and his daughters and grandsons, shall also be in Paradise.

The ḥadīth does not, in any way, diminish the status of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ or members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. It is only meant to warn and exhort them not be distracted away from righteous deeds by the materials of this world.

If the ḥadīth has to be avoidably referred to any group, it should definitely not be the eminent ten ('Asharah Mubasharah) nor the veterans of Badr nor the participants in the Pledge of Ridwān nor the Muhājirīn, whose sincerity Allah has attested to, nor the Anṣār, whom Allah calls the successful, nor even those who emigrated before the Conquest of Makkah and fought and those who emigrated thereafter. As Allah has promised great reward for all of them.

The same speaker: Leave that one. There is another ḥadīth in which the Companions were explicitly mentioned. (He then read): The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "On the Day of Resurrection a group of my Companions will come to me, but will be driven away from the ḥowḍ, and I will say: "O Rabb (those are) my Companions!" It will be said: "You have no knowledge as to what they innovated after you left; they regressed (i.e. reverted from Islam)."

I think this ḥadīth is clear about the Companions that they apostatised. The ḥadīth, as you can see, is self-explanatory. And it is a proof against you.

(Those who are present supported their man but I was able to compose myself having full confidence in Allah.)

I said: What do you understand from the Prophet's ﷺ saying: “they regressed”?

The speaker: It means: they apostatised and reverted from Islam to disbelief.

I said: Who are the “Companions” who reverted from Islam after the Prophet’s death?

The speaker: All the Companions except Imām ‘Alī and his supporters.

I said: How many were they?

He said: They were many but I do not know their exact number.

I said: You lied! Narrations from your authorised books indicate that they were only three: al-Miqdād, Abū Dhar and Salmān رضي الله عنه and that ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه initially turned away and then came back and that the fifth of them was ‘Alī رضي الله عنه himself. After researching your books, I found out that the Companions whom your narrations did not regard as apostates were some ten, at most.

The speaker: I do not know what that has to do with the ḥadīth!

I said: You will come to know now. Tell me, who are the leaders of the apostates?

He said: They are: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, Ṭalḥah and Mu‘āwiyah.

I said: Is that what you understood from the ḥadīth of *Bukhārī*?

He said: Yes!

I then said: What you understood is then different from what Imām al-Bukhārī himself understood. He has recorded in the same book many aḥādīth about the merits of all these Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and many others.

He has recorded the Prophet's saying about his Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ : “The best people are my generation followed by those who came after them.” This ḥadīth is confirmed by the verse:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best of nations ever raised for mankind.*¹

And the verse:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

*Thus We have made you a just nation.*²

The ḥadīth is also supported by many verses in which the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were praised and regarded as sincere and successful.

Not only that, Imām al-Bukhārī recorded aḥādīth in which Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - whom you malign - is regarded as a truthful, righteous and pious leader. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: “If I had to choose an intimate friend, I would have appointed Abū Bakr as my intimate friend, but he is my brother and companion.”

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ also commanded that Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ be asked to lead the people in prayer when he was on his last illness. It was on this same occasion that he commanded 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: “Call for me Abū Bakr and your brother that I may write a document. For, I fear that a covetous person might come forward

1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 110

2 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 143

and say: “I deserve (the leadership)”, but Allah and the believers would prefer only Abū Bakr.”

And about ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ Imām al-Bukhārī reported: “There are men among the children of Israel who were given inspiration though they were not Prophets. If there were to be such a person among my ummah, it would certainly be ‘Umar.”

And he reported another ḥadīth on the merits of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: “While I was sleeping, I saw myself drinking (i.e. milk), and I was so contented that I saw the milk flowing through my nails. Then I gave (the milk) to ‘Umar.” They (i.e. the Companions) asked: “What do you interpret it as?” He said: “Knowledge.”

Imām al-Bukhārī recorded in his collection many aḥādīth on the merits of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ and he would invoke Allah’s pleasure on them all. Therefore, his understanding of this aḥādīth is absolutely different from yours.

The speaker: We are not obliged to follow the aḥādīth collected by al-Bukhārī, for we do not regard him as an authority. We are only citing his aḥādīth as proofs against you because you regard him as an authority.

I said: Subḥān Allāh! You people are just like Jews who believed in a section of the scripture and disbelieved in others. So, you should believe in *Bukhārī* as a whole or reject it as a whole, if not you are among those Allah refers to in His saying:

أَفْتَوْهُمُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ۖ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

*Do you believe in a part of the scripture and reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment.*¹

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 85

The same speaker: We have our own narrations and Aḥādīth which we believe in and which were reported by our own scholars and taken from the knowledge of the members of the Prophet's ﷺ family. They are all recorded in our authorised books.

I said: Where are your so-called 'authorized books' in which more than two thousand narrations attribute lies to the Qur'ān? Is it then farfetched to accept that similar spurious narrations might have been recorded concerning the Prophet's ﷺ, pure wives and commander of the faithful 'Alī, and the members of his household رضى الله عنهم؟

Brothers, the one who could tell lies about the Qur'ān could definitely do so about just anything. If you are not ashamed to tell lies about the Qur'ān, then you can tell lies about any other thing with greater brazenness! The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had said: "If you have no shame then you can do whatever you like."

One of them (feeling rather incensed): Look! We have been tolerant with you, considering that you are our guest, but you are not acknowledging this and you are not using the proper method of debate.

I said: What happened? We are not in a quarrel! We are in a scholarly debate seeking for the truth and everyone is defending what he regards as the truth!

We are not here to flatter ourselves. We are here to show the truth through debate and presentation of proofs. Your colleague would cite *al-Bukhārī* as a proof on one occasion and on another he would claim that he is not obliged to accept the ḥadīth of *al-Bukhārī*. He would accept some and reject some as if Islam is based upon his whims and desires. Then which of the two of us is not using the proper methodology of debate?

The same person: All right! Do not forget that you have not responded to the ḥadīth in which it is explicitly mentioned that the Companions have altered (the religion) and become apostates.

I said: Yes, we are back at the scholarly debate. Go back to the ḥadīth. Did the Prophet ﷺ say: “Most of my Companions would come to me” or he said: “A *raḥṭ* of my Companions would come to me”?

He looked up at the book and said: He said: “A *raḥṭ*.”

I said: Do you know what a “*raḥṭ*” means?

He said: No.

I said: In the Arabic language, a “*raḥṭ*” means a number of people from three to ten. This indicates the fewness of those who would be prevented from reaching the ḥowḍ. This contradicts your claim that most of the Companions. ﷺ apostatised after the Prophet’s ﷺ death and that only a few of them remained upon Islam.

This is in spite of the fact that the Companions ﷺ numbered approximately one hundred thousand during the Farewell Pilgrimage of whom more than ten thousand are prominent and two thousand are senior Companions ﷺ.

Therefore, the Ḥadīth explains that a “*raḥṭ*” would be prevented from reaching the ḥowḍ and you are claiming that it is only a ‘*raḥṭ*’ that will reach it. What a contradiction! You have categorically misrepresented the ḥadīth!

The speaker: Now listen to the third ḥadīth, which is the clearest proof that all the Companions apostatised but only a few.

I said: Go on reading the ḥadīth, though I believe that it is impossible that the authentic narrations of *Bukhārī* would contradict clear verses of the Qur’ān.

The speaker: Al-Bukhārī reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “While I was sleeping, a group (of my followers were brought close to me), and when I recognised them, someone (an angel) came out and said (to them): “Come along.” I asked: “Where?” He said: “To the Fire, by Allah!” I asked: “What is wrong with them?” He said: “They turned apostate after you left.” Then behold! Another

group (of my followers) were brought close to me, and when I recognised them, someone (an angel) came out and he said (to them): “Come along.” I asked: “Where?” He said: “To the Fire, by Allah.” I asked: “What is wrong with them?” He said: “They turned apostate after you left.” So I did not see anyone of them escaping except a few who were like camels without a shepherd.”

So the Prophet’s saying: “So I did not see anyone of them escaping except a few who were like camels without a shepherd”, indicates that very few of them shall be saved and they are ‘Alī and his supporters.

I said: There is no power of might except with Allah! Evil circulates in the people of whims and desires as the blood circulates in the veins. This leads them to twist every proof that does not agree with their desire. Allah says:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً ۖ فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you seen him who takes his own lust (vain desires) as his ilāh (god), and Allah knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight? Who then will guide him after Allah? Will you not then remember?¹

Brothers, the clear verses of the Qur’ān testifies to the sincerity and success of the Companions رضي الله عنهم that they would have the reward, that they would be given authority in this world and that they would have Allah’s pleasure on the Day of Resurrection.

Listen to Allah’s words:

وَالسَّبِقُونَ الْأَوْلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۗ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

1 Sūrah al-Jāthiyah: 23

And the forerunners of the Muhājirīn (those who migrated from Makkah to Madīnah) and the Anṣār (the citizens of Madīnah who helped and gave aid to the Muhājirīn) and also those who followed them exactly in virtue. Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.¹

Who are the foremost to embrace Islam if not Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, Abū ‘Ubaydah, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās and Sa‘id ibn Zayd رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ؟

Who are the foremost to embrace Islam if they are not the earlier emigrants to Abyssinia? Who are they if they are not the Muhājirīn to Madīnah, the veterans of Badr and the participants in the Pledge of Riqdāw?

Who are they if not the Anṣār about whom Allah says:

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّأُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

And (it is also for) those who, before them, had homes (in Madīnah) and had adopted imān, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given, and give them (the Muhājirīn) preference over themselves even though they were in need of that.²

Brothers, an unbiased reflection on these verses will allow us to realise that they attest to the faith and righteousness of the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ in general and that Allah is pleased with them and has promised them Paradise and great victory.

Brothers, is it then reasonable - in the light of the clear verses above - to think that all the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ with the exception of only five apostatised?

1 Sūrah al-Taubah: 100

Sūrah al-Ḥashr: 9

Then, is this outrageous belief a suitable reward for a people who fought in the way of Allah, conquered lands for Islam and hoisted up the standard of Tauhīd? Or should their reward be to love them, make invocations for them and ask Allah to forgive us and them and to make us join them in the Gardens of Bliss?

Listen to how Allah describes the Muhājirīn and Anṣār among them:

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا
وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۗ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّأُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۗ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(And there is also a share in this booty) for the poor Muhājirīn, who were expelled from their homes and their property, seeking Bounties from Allah and to please Him, and helping Allah (i.e. helping His religion) and His Messenger (Muḥammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Such are indeed the truthful (to what they say).

And (it is also for) those who, before them, had homes (in Madīnah) and had adopted the īmān, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given, and give them (Muhājirīn) preference over themselves even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful.

And those who came after them say: “O our Rabb! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in īmān, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful.”¹

In the first verse, Allah describes the generality of the Muhājirīn as truthful. Is it then reasonable to think that a people whom Allah describes as truthful would be liars, traitors or apostates - considering the fact that Allah knows all that is hidden and apparent and has the knowledge of the unseen?

1 Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr: 8-10

In the second verse, Allah describes the Anṣār as successful; and the real success is to die in the state of being a Muslim. Is it then reasonable to think that Allah would testify to the success of a people who would later renounce Islam and die as apostates?

In the third verse, Allah praises the Ahl al-Sunnah who seek forgiveness for themselves and for those who preceded them in faith and denounce those who insult and curse the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār and regard them as infidels.

Brothers, listen again to Allah's words in which He promises all the Companions. ﷺ an excellent reward:

وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنۢ أَنفَقَ
مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَتَلَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِنۢ بَعْدُ وَقَتَلُوا ۗ وَكَلَّا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ
الْحُسْنٰى ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And what is the matter with you that you spend not in the Cause of Allah? And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the conquering (of Makkah, with those among you who did so later). Such are higher in degree than those who spent and fought afterwards. But to all Allah has promised the best (reward). And Allah is well aware of what you do.¹

In the above verse, Allah promised all the Companions ﷺ, those who spent their wealth and fought in the way of Allah before and after the conquest of Makkah, an excellent reward.

Now tell me: how could Allah promise these Companions ﷺ an excellent reward, and yet you base your religion upon insulting and cursing these Companions ﷺ and regarding them as apostates? Are you claiming that you know better than Allah?

1 Sūrah al-Ḥadīd: 10

Then listen to another verse:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا ﴿١٨﴾

Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their Bay'ah (pledge) to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Sakīnah (calmness and tranquillity) upon them, and He rewarded them with a close victory.¹

Do you know the name given to this “pledge”? It was called Bay'at al-Riḍwān (the Pledge of Pleasure) because Allah was pleased with those who participated in it and they were 1,400 Companions رضي الله عنهم.

How could Allah express His pleasure with a people and you still choose to regard them as apostates? Are you claiming to know better than Allah? Will you not listen to reason?

Listen to another verse:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۗ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۗ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

Allah has promised those among you who believe, and do righteous deeds that He will certainly grant them leadership on the earth, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the authority to establish the religion that He has chosen for them (i.e. Islam). And He will surely change their state of fear to a state of security, they will worship Me and not associate anything (in worship) with Me. And whoever displays ingratitude thereafter then they are open transgressors.²

1 Sūrah al-Faṭḥ: 18

2 Sūrah al-Nūr: 55

This verse shows that Allah promised the righteous believers - with whose religion He is pleased - authority on the earth.

A keen observer of the Prophet's ﷺ Companions ﷺ would realise that Allah gave them great authority on the earth. They spread Islam to all the corners of the earth and they ruled the land with the teachings of Islam. They worshipped Allah alone and hoisted high the banner of Tauḥīd. All this indicates that Allah was pleased with their religion, faith and righteous deeds. That is why he gave them authority in the land.

Brothers, many are the verses that start with “O you who have believed”. When these verses were being revealed, their first addressees were the Prophet's Companions. This implies that Allah attested to them being believers, then how could Allah call them believers and you call them disbelievers, relying on superstitious and spurious narrations?

As regard the ḥadīth of *Bukhārī* quoted above, I would like to add that understanding of a ḥadīth should be in the light of the general texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The Qur'ānic texts clearly indicate that the Companions ﷺ are the truthful and the successful ones, and that they were the ones whom Allah promised excellent reward and authority. Imām al-Bukhārī also reported aḥādīth on the merits of the Companions ﷺ both the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār- and their excellences. A quick glance at the Book of the Merits of the Companions in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* would show us the status of the Companions ﷺ in the estimation of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.¹

1 There are many aḥādīth that describe the excellent qualities of the Companions. A prominent ḥadīth in this regard is the Prophet's ﷺ saying: “The stars are a source of security for the sky and when the stars disappear the sky will meet its promised fate. I am a source of safety and security to my Companions and when I depart, my Companions will meet their promised fate. My Companions are a source of security for the ummah and when they depart, my ummah will meet its promised fate.” (*Muslim*)

This general belief concerning the uprightness and excellence of the Companions رضي الله عنهم is the only basis through which all other apparently contradicting texts should be viewed. And when a deep study is undertaken, it becomes clear that there is no contradiction at all.

Someone may ask: What then is the meaning of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم saying: "So I did not see anyone of them escaping except a few who were like camels without a shepherd"?

The answer is very easy. It is in many ways, the most significant of which is the following:

At the closer study of the clause "of them" and the entire context, we will realise that it refers to those who reneged. It follows then that those who reneged are a few individuals from among a large multitude of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم, and that from these renegades; only a very few will be forgiven and saved.

And if one asks: who are those who "would renounce their religion", according to the ḥadīth?

The answer is: They are definitely not the Companions رضي الله عنهم whom the Qur'ān and the Sunnah has commended as pure, righteous and successful and who were promised excellent reward and Allah's pleasure. They are rather Musaylamah the Liar and his cohorts who renounced Islam after the death of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and whom Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه fought.

This is in addition to the fact that there were some individuals who pretended to be Muslims during the lifetime of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم but were actually hypocrites unknown to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. This clause might also apply to them.

(After I finished this clarification, their speaker closed *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, feeling dejected and sad. A sense of defeat could be vividly seen on the faces of his colleagues who were there.) And Allah's word fit them exactly,

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۗ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

And say: "The truth has come and falsehood has perished. Surely, falsehood is ever bound to perish."¹

This reminded me of another verse of the Qur'ān:

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَلَا يُزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

And We send down from the Qur'ān that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers, and it increases the oppressors nothing but loss.²

(Their speaker then rose up to return the *Bukhārī* into the library while the others remained silent.)

A commoner from among them suddenly broke the silence and mockingly said: Allah is pleased with all the Companions including even Mu'āwiyah?

I said: I would like to ask you a question.

The commoner: What is the question?

I said: Will you be pleased if your father is insulted?

The commoner: No.

I said: Will you be pleased if your paternal uncle is insulted?

1 Sūrah al-Isrā: 81

2 Sūrah al-Isrā: 82

The commoner: No.

I said: Will you be pleased if your maternal uncle, your mother's brother is insulted?

The commoner: No.

I then faced the audience and said: None of us would be pleased to hear his maternal uncle being insulted, and Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه, who this man is mocking is the maternal uncle of the believers because he is the brother of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم wife, mother of the faithful, Umm Ḥabībah Ramlah رضي الله عنها.

In addition to this, Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه was one of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم scribes. He was famous for his deliberateness, magnanimity, intelligence and resoluteness. He is deservedly the best of all of the Muslim kings.

It was during his reign that Allah gave honour and power to this ummah. He established the first Muslim navy, Allah's Word prevailed and the religion of Islam triumphed over other religions.

The commoner (angrily): We cannot keep quiet while Allah's pleasure is being invoked on Mu'āwiyah! (He faced me). You can then invoke Allah's pleasure upon Yazeed (son of Mu'āwiyah) also! Invoke Allah's pleasure upon Yazeed now!

I said: The truth must be followed.

The commoner: Which truth? You have actually rejected the truth!

I said: Wait a minute and let me finish my word. You can thereafter contradict me with your proofs if you have any. The truth must be followed.

As regards the row that happened between 'Alī رضي الله عنه and Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه, 'Alī رضي الله عنه was the nearest of the two parties to the truth and he was supported by

the truth. There were, however, some unclear issues that led to opposition from Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه, Zubair رضي الله عنه and the mother of the faithful ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها. If not for the evil machinations of the vicious crisis-mongers, no Companion would have raised his sword against another Companion.

I am saying this to affirm some facts:

One: The fourth khalifah after ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. He was supported by the Islamic rules and he was on the correct side in the conflict.¹ If the crisis were to repeat itself today, I would proudly be on the side of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

This does not necessarily mean that those who opposed him among the Companions رضي الله عنهم were absolutely wrong. There were strong unclear issues that make the opposition of some Companions رضي الله عنهم to him - in some way - justified. But we do not malign them for that or disparage them, for their actions were due to some *ijtihād* they made. And if a Muslim makes *ijtihād* (jurisprudential deduction) and arrives at a wrong decision, he would still have a reward.

Two: The strongest of all these unclear matters was the existence of the leaders of evil and mischief who endeavoured to create crisis in ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه camp. They were the masterminds of murders and dissension.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه was excused for their existence in his camp because they were so powerful and resilient. They did not give him time to deal with them.

Three: All those who opposed ‘Alī رضي الله عنه -from among the Companions رضي الله عنهم- only exercised their *ijtihād*, though they were mistaken. We therefore beseech Allah to give them their reward and to give ‘Alī رضي الله عنه his double reward, in accordance with the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم saying.

1 The Ahl al-Sunnah are of the view that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was on the right in this conflict, but many of the scholars believe that maintaining neutrality and not joining any of the two sides in fighting is the safest stand.

Four: The Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ never wanted to fight one another. They were too great to do that. They rather maintained cordial relationship among themselves. However, the mischief-makers and the killers of 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ would not allow them to cordiality abide. The Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ were as innocent in that crisis as the wolf was in the blood of Prophet Yusuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. This is the reality which we believe in.

Five: The foundations of evil and mischief in this crisis were the followers of 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba', who started the crisis by murdering 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and after him Zubayr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and Ṭalḥah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. They then sowed two poisonous seeds:

Tashayyu' (Partisanship) and *Khurūj* (Revolt). The Shī'ah (who claim to be 'Alī's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ supporters) exaggerated in their respect for 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, while the *Khawārij* (those who revolted against the authority of 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) killed him.

Six: The Ahl al-Sunnah believe that 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was the nearest to the truth of the two warring sides and that his disagreement with some of his fellow Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ did not make them impious - as opposed to the opinions of the erroneous groups.

Seven: The Ahl al-Sunnah invoke Allah's pleasure on all the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ with no exception. They believe that they are all excellent and noble people and that they will be forgiven and shown mercy on the Day of Resurrection. All the followers of the Sunnah bear no ill-feeling against any of the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. We beseech Allah to resurrect us in their group.

The commoner: What do you have to say about Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah? Invoke Allah's pleasure upon him so that we can know your true picture!

I said: I can neither wade into the issue of Yazīd nor endorse him being insulted. The scholars of his time had different opinions about him. Some of them like Ibn 'Abbās and Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah) praised him. Some scholars attested to his uprightness and refuted all the injustices attributed to him. And some others did not say anything about him, adhering to Allah's saying:

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

*That was a nation which has passed, they shall receive the reward of what they earned and you of what you earn, and you will not be asked of what they used to do.*¹

As far as I know, none of those who criticised him did endorse him being insulted or cursed,

The same man: I don't know how I can endure this. This man (Yazīd) killed Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ!

I said: Allah honoured Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with martyrdom. But who killed him? His killers were those who deceived him and invited him to come to the so-called well-armed army. They sent him tens of thousands of letters. They then killed him for a paltry sum.

As for Yazīd, he did not order the killing of Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, as far as I know. Rather, he was very distressed by his murder. It was a criminal called 'Ibn Joushan' who killed him because he hated members of the Prophet's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ family. He killed him in order to gain the favour of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, Yazīd's governor in Kūfah.

Those who set out to fight Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ did so in their own interpretation of the saying of his grandfather صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "Different evils will make their appearance in the near future. Anyone who tries to disrupt the affairs of this ummah while they are united you should strike him with the sword whoever he be."²

And his صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ saying: "When oath of allegiance has been taken for two caliphs; kill the one for whom the oath was taken later."³

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 134

2 Muslim

3 Muslim

So they set out to prevent him from claiming the Khilāfah, though in his own estimation, that was an act of martyrdom. He shall, therefore, be with his grandfather in Paradise as one of the two leaders of the youth.

What I can only say regarding the crisis of that time is Allah's word:

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

That was a nation who has passed away, they shall receive the reward of what they earned and you of what you earn, and you will not be asked of what they used to do.¹

Allah knows better about them and their intentions. It is only the people of desire and error who live off lies woven around these crises and regard them as the fundamentals of their belief.

Brothers, let me ask you a question: What is the benefit of recalling those pains and crises that we did not witness? Allah did not command us to delve into them. He only commanded us to worship Him alone, obey His Messenger ﷺ and follow the path of the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. And He commanded us to love members of the Prophet's ﷺ household. Couldn't we allow ourselves to be united by these commandments instead of delving in differences and crises that brings us no good?

One of them: This is not correct! Allegiance to members of the Prophet's ﷺ family necessitates renouncing their enemies, and their enemies are the Prophet's ﷺ Companions upon whom you are invoking Allah's pleasure!

I said: Do you know their real enemies? They are those who exaggerate in their respect for them; they were those who inconvenienced 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ; they were those who set a trap for Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and invited him to come and then sold him off for a paltry sum.

1 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 134

Do you know their enemies? They are those who abuse the most favourite members of the Prophet's family: 'Ā'ishah and Hafsa رضي الله عنهما, who are his wives. They are those who insult the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم who, together with members of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم household, built the glory of Islam.

These are their real enemies; and I am absolve myself from these enemies who pretend to love members of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم household while they engage in vices such as deception, hypocrisy, abuse and cursing.

One of them: We have arrived at a closed way at which there is no more benefit in the debate. We can endure anything from you except your invoking pleasure on Mu'āwiyah, Yazīd and Banī Umayyah. The matters have now become clear. There is no further need for debate!

I said (after noticing that the time for Fajr prayer was close): The issue is not about Yazīd, but your stand in respect to the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم makes me doubt your adherence to Islam as a religion.

What is successively narrated according to your authority and ours is that the Qur'ān was collected by Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, yet you regard these men as leaders of disbelief and misguidance. We now have before us two absolute issues:

One: Our stand concerning the Companions.

Two: Our stand concerning the Qur'ān.

The two are intertwined. We should either declare that the Companions رضي الله عنهم apostatised and - at the same time - believe that the Qur'ān had been altered because it was compiled by the Companions رضي الله عنهم, and apostates could not be entrusted with preserving the Book of Allah; or we should clearly state that the Qur'ān was intact and guarded against any alteration, thereby showing gratitude to those who compiled it and acknowledging their due honour and leadership,

especially since the Qur'ān itself has praised them. That is how we can find a sound harmony that all people of intellect would agree to.

Therefore, you should make one of the above two declarations. If you make the first declaration, then it becomes clear that you have nothing to do with our religion, as it is clear to every sensible person.

And if you make the second declaration, then you are among the Muslims, and consequently, that erroneous foundation - including regarding the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم Companions رضي الله عنهم as disbelievers and apostates - upon which your predecessors built the religion of the Imamiyyah, is then destroyed.

One of them (who appeared to be on the verge of exhaustion): There is no correlation between the two things. Allah has undertaken the protection of the Qur'ān by Himself. The Companions had done nothing in this regard. They rather apostatised after the Qur'ān had been revealed after the death of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The Qur'ān had been compiled during the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم life. It is narrated in the ḥadīth that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم raised up the Qur'ān at Ghadīr al-Khum and said: "I am leaving for you two things; you will never go astray as long as you hold unto them- The Book of Allah and my family."

I said: The speaker's statement reminds me of the saying of one of our righteous predecessors: If I engage in debate with one thousand scholars, I would defeat them, but if one ignorant person argues with me, he will exhaust me." He said this because you will be at your wits end in finding intellectual means to convince an ignorant person but he will understand nothing.

I am really sad that our debate can descend to this level of triviality and ignorance.

Be that as it may, I would like to tell the speaker in unequivocal terms: The successive, and indisputable narrations in your books and ours indicate that the Qur'ān was compiled by the Companions رضي الله عنهم.

It is also indisputably reported, according to our sources and yours, that it was Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who compiled it following the advice of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, and that it was compiled on objects such as palm leaves, planks and stone plates.

During the Khilāfah of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, he ordered that it be written in a book form. He then made four copies thereof and sent each to major Muslim regions. He ordered that whatever was left in people’s hand should be burnt so that there would no discrepancies in the Qur’ān.

Thus did the three leaders of the Companions رضي الله عنهم compile the Qur’ān and get their reward in doing so.

It is also indisputable according to your sources and ours that the Qur’ān that we have today is the complete one compiled by ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. We believe that no letter is added or omitted. And it is also a copy that all the Companions رضي الله عنهم agreed upon.

And back to the brother who spoke without knowledge, none of the authentic narrations of the ḥadīth you quoted ever mentioned that Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم held the Qur’ān, that was still being revealed, up in his hand.

By making the claim you just made now, you are destroying a very significant part of the narrations and beliefs of the Imāmiyyah Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah which you follow. As your books were filled with narrations which claim that after the death of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه spent six months in seclusion compiling the Qur’ān in Fāṭimah’s رضي الله عنها room.

There were other narrations also from your books that claim that once he completed it, he presented it to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه for endorsement and both of them refused. He then vowed that it would never be seen again until the advent of ‘Al-Qā’im’ - who shall be one of the descendants of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه - at the end of time. That is what your books claim.

Which claim then shall we accept?

Shall we accept the clearly mischievous claim of your scholars which casts a great doubt on the authenticity and divine protection of the Qur'ān and cancels the wisdom for which it was revealed or the obviously ignorant and spurious claim of this brother that contradicts all the authentic narrations from our sources and yours?

Or we shall follow the clear truth that those who compiled the Qur'ān were the Prophet's ﷺ noble, pious, righteous and successful Companions led by Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ؟

In short, we are at crossroads: the road of Islam, which is the path of guidance and truth; and the road of disbelief, which is the path of falsehood

With all praise due to Allah, I have explained to you the two opposing paths. It is now up to you to take the one you like.

The path of the truth and guidance is clearly defined and the path of falsehood and error is also clearly defined so that those who were to be destroyed for rejecting the truth might be destroyed after clear evidence has been shown to them; and those who were to live as believers might live after clear evidence has been shown to them.

After saying this, I got up to leave because the time of the commencement of the fajr ṣalāh was near. It was then that my friend who convinced me to come, rose up and said: May Allah reward you with good, Abū 'Abd Allāh (that is my nickname). All praise is due to Allah who revealed the truth and made the falsehood vanish through you.

He then faced the gathering and said: I have been with you for four months and listened to you throughout that period. You also should listen to me now:

For these months that I had been with you, I discovered that you are devils in human skin, who create misgivings in a person mind concerning his religion.

Your way is to remove ones certainty of his belief in Allah, His Messenger ﷺ and his Companions رضي الله عنهم and replace it with uncertainty.

I know you as a group who removes a person from a good opinion about the sincere servants of Allah into having ill-feelings about them. I know you as a group who changes a well-mannered individual into a person whose main character is to curse and abuse others.

Throughout the period in which I was with you- and I wish I had never met you- I wished I was never born to this world because of the doubt, confusion and error you made me live in. But now, that heavy darkness has been removed from my heart and eyes and I have realised your true colours.

I feel obliged to tell you this:

- Our religion is about worship and good manners, and not cursing and abusing others.
- Our religion is about clarity and transparency and not falsehood, hypocrisy and deception.
- Our religion is about worship, courage and gallantry and not cowardice and deceit.
- Our religion is about the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and not myths, superstitions and spurious narrations.

The place where you are now is the farthest place from the guidance of Allah's houses, in which He permits that His Name should be remembered and elevated. You have filled it with images, thereby making it look like churches.

(He then turned to one of those sitting there and said): Allah has removed all my doubts and replaced them with certainty and īmān. I wish for you the same of Allah's favour that I wish for myself. So save your soul and come with us, and do not stay with the disbelievers.

(He turned to them again and said): I do not know you and you do not know me. I will never stay with you and you should never stay with me!

(He then offered me his hand and said): O you through whom Allah resurrected me from death and saved me from an imminent destruction, let us leave this 'church'.

(At the door, when he saw the sky he said): All praise is due to Allah Who removed me from darkness to light!

We went to the Masjid together and performed the fajr ṣalāh and after that he asked me: What is your view about these people? Are they disbelievers or apostates?

I replied: They are rather disbelievers whose disbelief is very complex. The Imāmiyyah Shī'ah were keen to be a composite of all kinds of disbelief professed by all the disbelieving peoples, all kinds of polytheism of the polytheists, all kinds of exaggerations of the Jews and the Christians and all kinds of heresy and errors professed by all erroneous sects.

They emulate the Jews in their meanness and the Christians in their error and excessiveness. Most of their beliefs are borrowed from the Zoroastrians, and their taqiyyah and hypocrisy are 'cloned' from the heretics.

My brother, if you want me to give you a thousand proofs then each one of their teachings is enough to declare them as disbelievers, I can do so, with all praise due to Allah. However, it is enough for you to know that their disbelief revolves around the following fundamentals:

One: Their excessive veneration of their so-called A'imma and their claim that these A'imma have knowledge of the unseen and that they have the power to benefit and harm and to give life and death.

Your mere glancing through the table of contents of their books such as *Al- Kāfi* or *Biḥār al-Anwār* will convince you of this.

Two: Their disbelief that manifests in their polytheistic and pagan activities. Just observe them at their Mashads and at the graves of their A'imma to see how they call on the dead and seek their help.

Three: Their disbelief that manifests in their having doubt about the Qur'ān and their claim that there are alterations in it. Glance through their books of tafsīr such as the ones written by al-Qummī, al-'Ayyāshī, Al-Ṣāfi and Al-Burhān, and see how they are dead sure that the Qur'ān had been altered, and how they changed and omitted words of the Qur'ān and added their own words.

Four: They disbelieved by rejecting the Prophet's ﷺ authentic Sunnah. They proudly and publicly declare that they reject all the authentic Sunnah conveyed to us by the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ.

Five: They disbelieved by regarding the Prophet's ﷺ Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ as disbelievers.

Six: They disbelieved by declaring some of the most favourite members of the Prophet's ﷺ family - 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا and Ḥafsa رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا, who are our mothers, as disbelievers. They are disbelievers by every curse and abuse they utter against these pious women.

Seven: They disbelieved because of the wrong beliefs they hold about Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and the Pre-decree. It suffices you to know that they attribute weakness, ignorance and indecisiveness to Allah. They actually took this belief from their Jewish leaders. It also suffices you to know that they distorted the reality of the Day of Resurrection. And this they took from their Zoroastrian and Jewish leaders.

Eight: They disbelieved because they regard the entire Muslim ummah and the followers of the pure truth and the straight path - the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l- Jamā'ah as infidels. Therefore, they disbelieved with every Muslim they called infidel and with the blood, wealth and honour of every Muslim they violated.

At this point, my friend showed his consternation and said: Where do the advocates of reconciliation from among the Ahl al-Sunnah stand in regard to these firmly-established facts?

I said: Do not say “advocates of reconciliation” but say “victims of deception” perfected by these liars and hypocrites.

He said: But knowledge is the weapon of these scholars. How strange that they could be entranced by these misguided people through ignorance?

I said: I think they should not be excused for failing to know about the reality of these people, but the hypocrites have perfected their taqiyyah. If not, hardly will you find a scholar or student of knowledge who would not declare them to be disbelievers.”

He said: How could they then be informed of the disbelieving ideologies that the Imamiyyah Shī'ah hold?

I said: It is your obligation and that of every Muslim who knows the truth to expose these people publicly and to show that they are disbelievers. This is one of the greatest acts of Jihād of our age and of the greatest acts of worship. It is also a way of spreading correct knowledge.

He said: I shall then proceed with Allah's blessing, seeking His help.

I said: Go on. The sun has already risen.

He said (rather confidently): The sunrise of this world is not what is important. It is rather the sunrise of faith in our hearts and minds.

He then raised up his hands in supplication saying: All praise and thanks be to Allah, Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allah had guided us!

(We then got up and hugged each other.)

He asked me where I was going and I said: I am going home to write this glorious and memorable battle, with Allah's permission.



Compiled at the time of 'asr on the day of Jumu'ah, the 8th of Rabī al-Ākhir 1417, 22 August 1996.