

Preface by the Persian translator

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Ailment and remedy

1-Ailment

Intense fanaticism, blind following, undue respect shown to so-called pious individuals of the nation and lack of courage in investigating the life history, morals and mentality accompanied by a careful survey and discussion of all aspects of the period in which they lived, have been major factors for the Muslims' indigence, and the reason for the dispersion and retardation of the Islamic society.

Fourteen centuries of Islamic history have gone by, but not all the Muslims have heard of this history which is related to them, nor of the critical and important events which have been the main factor in the course of such a history for Islam. Various political factors, too, have had a significant role in this connection.

Today all are cognizant of the fact that in every society and nation, employment of self-interest and influence, and promotion of personal motives through religion facilitate the attainment of a decisive result for this reason, alteration of facts, fabrication and propagation of false stories and non-factual matters and creation of false subjects are the factors which have been employed in every period and country in order to promote personal motives and political aims. In this way, the basis of differences and dispersion among the Muslims has been greatly, reinforced and those who have held position and power have spared no effort in employing all methods to intensify these differences in order to attain their political designs.

With the passage of years and centuries, and concentration of misinterpreted and altered subjects and stories in minds, their penetration into the beliefs and thoughts and their transfer from one generation to another have eventually led to such conditions which have been faced by nations for many centuries. Hence there has come about a history which has perplexed all sound minds, wondering how to have access to true facts in this regard.

2-Remedy

This deviation from truth is not only in the history of Islam. Every nation and religion too has a similar history. But it is certain that truth does not perish, and however strong the means of deviation may be, it cannot generally be eliminated. But what is meanwhile important is the endeavor to discover and bring the truth out of thousands of false statements and announcing it decisively with acceptable arguments. What has been achieved by the lofty scholar Sayyid Murtada 'Askári in his famous book "Aḥadith of 'Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" has shown a new way for seekers of truth. The author has written the present book which describes the facts and events of early Islam, by means of perusing many books of history and tradition about the validity of which all world Muslims are unanimous, and he has set forth clear and decisive arguments and evidence about which no doubt or ambiguity remains and he has left it all for the public to judge.

On the suggestion of the author, I translated the said book entitled "The Role of 'A'ishah in the History of Islam" when I was on an official mission to Baghdad. But its printing was postponed for some years; this delay, however, proved to be fortunate, since the present book secured some advantages over the original text in several ways, and after a recent meeting with the author in Tehran, the following points were agreed to:

1-It contains the accounts and introduction written by scholar Hamid Hafnī Dawūd in praise of the book, together with its translation.

2-The reason for the plurality of the Prophet's wives, described by the author, has been added to the present book.

3-A more detailed account has been given of the personalities who were dealt with briefly earlier in the notes.

4-A more detailed account has been given of the great men of learning who played a significant role in the course of Islamic history, and this account has been transferred from the notes to the main text.

5-The Quranic chapter 'at-Tahrim" and the cause of its descent have been wholly included after the brief story of Mariyah.

In following up the admirable way adopted by the author, the translation into Persian has been carried out impartially and free from any prejudice and personal feelings, and without any alteration or expression of likes and dislikes.

May this minor contribution succeed in revealing the true facts and causes of the course taken by the present history of Islam, and be acceptable to Unique God, and approved by men of learning and research.

Now that the first volume of this book is offered for the general public for judgment, it is hoped that men of enlightenment, knowledge and discernment will offer their views, criticisms and suggestions impartially and without taking side with any particular sect, and thus guide and help the writer to remove any deficiencies, which may exist now, in his effort to produce a faultless edition in future. In this way, they may render a worthy service to the world of Islam.

In conclusion, I must express thanks to my learned friend Mr. Muhammad Husayn Mujahid for encouraging me to translate this book and for undertaking the labor of its collation.

'Ata Muhammad Sardar-Niya
Tehran, October 1967

**A part of the introduction by
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Facts

Ibn Mas'ud's method of guidance

"The truest of words is the Book of God, and the way of salvation is the one shown by our lord Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). The worst of deeds is innovation which causes deviation that ends with the fire of hell."

Thus spoke 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) to his companion peers and to his pupils and followers, describing the signs of the ways of religion.

When he spoke of knowledge, he meant the highest goal, which has been sought by religious scholars and seekers of truth in discovering the truth alone and avoiding deviation and wrong words. He said: Attainment of truth is not possible except through two fundamental principles of the noble religion of Islam, namely the Book of God and the utterances of His prophet, the former being the highest and noblest truth ever uttered in the past and present, which cannot be excelled in future, and whose validity will never be diminished.

Why should it not be so? The reason is that it has descended from God Almighty, and mankind has confessed his own weakness and inability before the eloquence of its phrases and its brilliant truth. It is the most decisive evidence for the prophet hood of Muhammad. Next are the utterances of an untaught and unlettered Prophet, an exalted personality through whom the heavenly Book has been communicated to the people all over the world; a person who has not offered anything on his own behalf, nor has he added anything on his own behalf, nor has he added anything of his own, nor given

any instructions except for the inspirations received from the source of divine revelation.

His words rose from the heart, and they were nothing but heavenly inspirations sent to him by Great God. In the Qur'an God has praised him and spoken well of his character, and said:

"And most surely you conform yourself to sublime morality."⁽¹⁾

Therefore what has come from these two valid sources must be a clear and absolute truth into which doubt or ambiguity cannot find its way, whereas anything that has not been derived from those two sources is exposed to evaluation and criticism, and is subject to changes and modifications, and also to the estimation of its beauty and ugliness.

An alert and clear-sighted reader may have understood our purpose in quoting the words of that exalted companion of the Prophet who began his remarks with such wise phrases. In his description of the ways of religion and the sacred laws of Islam, he draws the attention of the listener directly to the Book of God and His prophet's tradition, and advises him to follow those two principles, namely a book about whose words, phrases, and apparent form and arrangement all are unanimous and have no differences, and a tradition and lifestyle which have been handed down by the Prophet to chaste and virtuous individuals namely men who had no intention of attributing any falsehood or misconduct to the Prophet of Islam.

Let us know the truth and its supporters

Another point that we deduce from that sincere and wise utterance is that these two sources are immune from any questioning and safe from any criticism and alteration, whereas everything else is subject to evaluation, and about which a verdict is issued with the aid of intellect and knowledge, and is subject to analysis and criticism, in order to distinguish the difference between jewels and shells, and right and wrong. On this course, we have no fear in facing other sources and their authors even if they may possess a high rank in the Islamic society and dignity among the people and

may be among the Prophet's companions. The reason is that our purpose is to seek truth and right, and also because the Prophet's companions have not all possessed the same level of justice, knowledge and accuracy in preserving the exact words and phrases of the Prophet of God, and like many other human beings they may have been subject to forgetfulness, error and blunder. Some of them have followed the path of truth in elaborating on the Prophet's tradition, while others may have erred in it. Some of them possessed a strong memory, while some others had been forgetful; a number may have been steadfast in faith, while others were fickle and perplexed; some were sincere devotees, while others were hypocrites!

The Qur'an itself confirms this point where it says:

"And from among those who are round about you of the dwellers of the desert there are hypocrites, and from among the people of Medina also; they are stubborn in hypocrisy; you do not know them; We know them; We will chastise them twice, then shall they be turned back to a grievous chastisement."⁽²⁾

With this state of affairs in early days of Islam, we cannot consider all the companions to be on an equal footing and regard all the standard-bearers of Islam as being wholly chaste; for, since the appearance of man on the earth and formation of society, he has always shown his various aspects including the highest degrees of integrity and justice as well as the lowest level of hypocrisy and hindrance. Historical evidence and statistics, gained from the study of various peoples and societies since the creation of Adam, confirm this view. But the principle of change in religious communities and the manner of invitation towards the path of truth reached the height of perfection in the person of Muhammad and his friends, for, no other Prophet has brought such an exalted and steadfast law, and no friends of any other Prophet have equaled the friends of our Prophet in devotion to religion and immensity of number.

But the honor of companionship with the Prophet which have given a particular rank and dignity to his friends, have not checked some of them from causing derangement in his injunctions through self-interest and showing lack of devotion

to his laws and commands. Consequently, there is no reason why we should exempt the leaders and pioneers of Islam from the general law of investigation and criticism solely owing to their companionship with the Prophet; for, they have not been of equal weight from the viewpoint of justice. For instance, despite intense insistence and desire of the Prophet for the guidance of all human beings towards the path to perfection, there were some individuals in whose heart Islam did not easily find its way, and also there were some who had hidden infidelity and hypocrisy behind the mask of Islam.

The Qur'an clearly describes the lofty ideas of the Prophet and his deep and sincere interest in guiding people on to the path of truth, and it has, on several occasions, spoken of his attitude and sacred ideals. It says at one place:

"Therefore do remind, for, you are only a reminder. You are not a watcher over them"⁽³⁾

And elsewhere it says:

"Surely you cannot guide whom you love but Allah guides whom He pleases"⁽⁴⁾

And at another place it says:

"Therefore do remind, surely reminding does profit."⁽⁵⁾

There are also many such verses in the Qur'an which confirm the insistence of this great reformer of mankind, and his deep desire to guide all people, and especially his sympathy and kindness upon the order of God, towards those persons who are still wayward and have not had the privilege of finding the true path, having been separated from the followers of the divine path.

Support of Islam

All the above points show that the glory and greatness of Islam are based on its laws and teachings, not on its followers, and this greatness is not the product of the support and confirmation by its followers so as to expose it to annihilation

I myself believe that if the entire world rises to fight and joins hands to destroy it, there cannot be inflicted the slightest damage upon its glory and greatness. Similarly, if the whole world join hands to glorify and support it, nothing can be

added to that glory and greatness; for, the secret of Islam lies in its lofty principles, and the secret of those principles lies in themselves not in the visage of its followers. This is a point

which is understood only by true scholars and learned people. Therefore, if the pioneers of Islam and the Prophet's companions are subjected to discussion and criticism and their life, words and deeds are analyzed in detail in order to introduce the wicked and dishonest persons to the world of Islam, no damage will be done to Islam and its spiritual truth. On the contrary, an Islam, which Lays the foundation of justice through its injunctions, and declares the equality of all human beings in the eyes of the law, will allow such a survey and criticism, and particularly insist upon such an investigation and criticism for the sake of discovering truth and leading people towards their right destination.

Why should we go that far? The great reformer of humanity, Muhammad, has in his wise guidance, directly and indirectly encouraged us to follow truth alone and accept and support truth only because of its being right irrespective of individuals, even if it were in the interest of a poor and helpless person, and also to rise up against falsehood and corruption, even if it is to the detriment of a noble and distinguished individual, and to make no discrimination between the noble and ignoble for the enforcement of divine punishments.

Muhammad and enforcement of justice

It is narrated in the traditions of Sahih that Usamah ibn Zayd whose father and himself were respected by the Prophet, one day interceded with him to exempt a noble woman of Quraysh who had committed theft, from being given due punishment, but that great reformer and divine Prophet refused to accept this intercession and uttered his well-known and everlasting remark about this matter, saying: "O people! Your predecessors wasted away everything of theirs! They let alone a noble person, who had committed theft, whereas they punished a weak and unknown thief'. I swear to God that if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, committed theft, I would cut off her hand!"

It was with such final words that the Prophet, the founder of the principles of justice and equality, refused not to enforce the punishment prescribed, by heavenly laws upon that noble woman, of aL-Makhzumi tribe, despite her high rank and dignity among her own people. ⁽⁶⁾

In this way, the Prophet abolished class differences hundreds of years before theorists of communism tried to remove them. At a time when he declared the law of justice and equality, he made all people equal under that law, and gave personal help to abstemious, shelterless and distressed people against the powerful and infamous tyrants. This law has been clearly expressed in the Qur'an, and holy and prophetic traditions. The Qur'an says:

"O you men! Surely We have, created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other, surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful of his duty." ⁽⁷⁾

The holy tradition says: "Whoever puts into practice my order, will have heaven for his abode even, if he is an Abyssinian slave, and he who disobeys will have the fire of hell for his seat, even if he is a dignitary of the Quraysh." Most of the noble traditions of the Prophet are manifest examples of the height of humanity and justice.

The close and distant friends of Muhammad

Where the Prophet speaks of future and unveils occurrences, he describes his companions after his demise as follows: some of them will proceed worthily in the way of God, while some others will deviate; a number rise up against justice, while others will resort to mutiny and injustice.

He addressed 'Ammar and said: "O 'Ammar! You will be killed by a group of rebellious and tyrannical individuals!" And he said to 'Ali: "O 'Ali! Do you know the most miserable of past and future people?" 'All answered: "God and His prophet are more aware." The Prophet said: "The most miserable of past people was he who cut off the leg of the Thamud tribe's camel; and the most miserable of the future persons is he who kills you." ⁽⁸⁾

All these points show that without any doubt the Prophet's

companions differ from each other in terms of their rank and position like other people. Some of them have attained the highest degree of perfection, virtue and humanity, whereas some others have remained in the abyss of meanness and corruption, and not all of them have succeeded to gain honour as companions of the Prophet or to find the way leading to truth and perfection, and thus to win equality with others.

This being the case, would this law that believes the companions and other people are equal in the religion of Islam and makes dignity and superiority dependent upon the degree of chastity and performance of sacred injunctions of Islam, not be the most adequate reason for that group of people who have not yet abandoned the way of caution, to permit a discussion and a critical survey of the Prophet's companions? A companion who has not followed the path of truth and has not submitted to the sacred law of Islam, cannot claim a distinction only by being a companion of the Prophet, in the same way that the people of our own time who have been separated greatly from the era of the Prophet, but have fully understood his holy principles and have been deeply influenced by Islam, cannot be reproached for not having lived in the Prophet's time and not having had the good fortune of being his companions.

In fact, there are many individuals who are near in appearance, but far in reality, whereas there may be many who are far in appearance, and yet close in reality. In my opinion, we and the Prophet's companions are equal in our call for truth and the need for propagating the exalted laws of Islam.

Indeed, the greatest distinction gained by the Prophet's companions in benefiting from his association has been their opportunity to have personal contact with and received direct command from the master of the faith. It should be remembered that this distinction has no more than two aspects: Firstly, the great blessing of his companionship and receiving his direct command without intermediary, and secondly it is the most convincing sign and decisive argument for the companion himself.

If the companionship with the Prophet could, in itself,

provide the means for his intercession on the day of resurrection, and protect the companion from criticism, and keep him immune from hardships and upheaval of time, and prevent the issuance of a verdict by the Muslims for or against him, the Prophet would never have uttered these historical and everlasting words to his dearest child: "O Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet of God! Ask me whatever you wish, for before the threshold of divine justice, the fact of your being the daughter of the Prophet will be of no avail to you."⁽⁹⁾

This historical statement was uttered by the Prophet to his daughter on the day when the following verse descended to him: "Inform your close relations." Indeed, the lofty principles laid down by the Prophet about justice and equality consider all people equally in carrying out the punishments based on Islamic injunctions.

The author as viewed by Dr. Hamid Hafni Dawud

Some time ago, research scholar Mr. Murtada 'Askari presented his book 'Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" to men of learning and scholars, especially to two groups of readers who fervently sought truth, heartily desired to discern the philosophy of Islamic history, and comprehend the reasons and history of the canon law and its principles. He engaged himself in this research at a time when he came across undeniable documents concerning the life of Umm al Mu'minin 'A'ishah, and he made use of them to present the truth, and express his views freely. However telling the truth and seeking it are regarded as an unforgivable offence by the short sighted and by those who think it improper to criticize and issue a verdict of any kind against each of the Prophet's companions, since they themselves have enforced a limit for this survey and investigations about those companions.

Mr. 'Askari has, in his book, fully adopted the method of critics and researchers by employing scientific sequence and scrutiny, and explained in his introduction the difficulties and obstacles which existed in the way of investigation for all seekers of truth. One of these obstacles may be a scholar's attachment to his own feelings and partiality, causing him to prefer one group or personality to another, due to his

prejudice, while this may be contrary to truth. Or owing to self-interest and adverse motive, he may resort to every trick in order to conceal truth. This is the way of some writers who try to establish some concordance between two opposite views. This concordance may seem agreeable, but it is obvious that two contrary views and aspects cannot be brought together to create harmony.

Mr. 'Askari has succeeded in removing in his own discussion such defects, which exist in the way of every scholar's investigation. He pursues a definite goal from which he has not deviated, and he has not made personalities and authorities the axis of his task, since his aim has been to discover truth.

Moreover, he has been able to lay aside his own feelings and inclinations, and allow perfect freedom to intellect alone in issuing verdicts, avoiding all blind and misleading prejudices, and showing no preference to one group over another, even if that group belongs to his own sect. It would be no exaggeration to say that Mr. 'Askari has laid down a firm and steadfast rule in the method of his investigation. What mostly attracts scholars apart from the apparent form of this book and wins their praise and admiration is the fact that he has been able to observe the general law in his scientific discussion, and analyze the traditions of Umm alMu'minin with perfect care and caution, and thus reveal the truth with all its manifestations.

'Ali's assassination and 'A'ishah's praise of God

Historical evidence compels us to express doubt about some of the traditions of Umm al-Mu'minin such as the traditions which speak of the caliphate of the two elders (Abu Bakr and 'Umar) without a mention of 'Ali and also the traditions related to the qualities of the two elder caliphs and 'Uthman and 'A'ishah's ways, since in these traditions, feeling and interest have played an important role, for, her relationship with Abu Bakr was one between a daughter and father. Similarly, her words about 'Umar are very different from her expressions about 'Ali who was considered a rival of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Also, her rise against 'Uthman and her incitement of people to

shed his blood, and then her uprising, for the sake of avenging his death, are other arguments, which make us, doubt the truth of her words.

In the same way, her actions against 'Ali her aids to his enemies and her alliance with Talhah and az-Zubayr who had broken their vow with 'Ali and her starting the fire of the battle of al-Jamal, are all clear examples of her rancor and long-standing hostility towards such a chaste Imam as 'Ali using those acts as a means to create division and dispersion among the Muslims. She felt such a pain in her heart about 'Ali that it gave her no tranquility. Even when she heard the news of the Imam's assassination, she prostrated herself to thank God, and recited a couplet expressing her feeling.

Each of her traditions is related to one of such important historical events, which should be treated with caution, and discovery of truth gives her a higher position than her personality and one's own inclinations.

Moreover, a companion of the Prophet may, like other people, err in his verdict and judgment, since so long as a human being, whoever he may be, acts upon his own opinion and taste, he may be right or wrong. But an investigator has no right to lay aside wisdom and intelligence, humble himself before great personalities, and conceal the truth. He is not permitted in his evaluation, to place right and wrong views on the same level. His duty is to state the truth in its full sense.

In addition, when we agree that every authority may err and blunder and hence will be called to account at the threshold of divine justice, Umm al-Mu'minin will not be exempted from this rule, and no injustice is done to her. From the viewpoint of scientific and research method, injustice occurs when we give a prejudiced judgment about 'Ali and 'A'ishah and consider them to be equal from the viewpoint of justice, or when we regard 'Ali, who proceeded in the right path, as an authority to be at par with those who had gone astray, such as 'A'ishah, Mu'awiyah and other companions who rose in opposition to and dispute with 'Ali.

'Ali regarded God as his governor

'Ali, not in his capacity as the "Gate of the City of Knowledge"

and the Guardian appointed by Muhammad, not only because he uttered the truth strongly and explicitly and defended it staunchly and thus gave religion strength and consistency, and not because of all the above qualities, but on account of the fact that he has been the possessor of all the attributes of perfection in its full sense, has attained his status.

What has placed 'Ali above everyone else is the fact that in all his words and deeds, he regarded God as his supervisor and a watchful governor, and was strict upon himself in the interest of the Muslims, preferring public and Muslim society's interests to his own and worldly gains. During his Caliphate, the noblest stage of humanity and perfection of a human being is distinguished in such a rank and position. He, in this period in particular, was a perfect model in his food, dress, justice of his verdicts, and avoidance of the deceptive manifestation of the world.

While others exerted great efforts to secure Caliphate, in the case of 'Au it was caliphate itself, which hastened towards him. Others preferred their interests and -those of their relatives to public interests, but 'Ali placed public interests before those of his own and his kinsmen.

At the time 'Ali was in Kufah, his brother 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib joined him. 'Ali welcomed and asked him why he had come to Kufah. 'Aqil said: "My salary is not adequate for, our livelihood, and the high cost of living in Medina has put me heavily in debt. I have come to ask for your help to save me from this situation."

'Mi said: "I swear to God that I have nothing but my own salary. So you must wait until the due time of payment so that you may receive it instead of me."

'Aqil said: "Do you think that I have come so far from Hejaz in the hope of receiving your salary? Of what worth is your share of salary to me? How can it solve my problem?"

The chaste Imam answered: "Do you know of any worldly goods belonging to me? Or do you expect God to burn time in the fire of hell for offering Muslims' funds to a relative?"

Thus 'Aqil who could not tolerate the justice of a chaste Imam as 'Mi, turned to and joined Mu'awiyah who made no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate acts, and

regarded public funds as his personal property.

This event acquaints us with `Ali's personality and the extent of his chastity and degree of preferring public interests to those of himself and his kinsmen.

It can be claimed without any doubt that none of the Prophet's companions but `Ali had attained such a height of humanity and perfection; or, he himself has, in all sincerity, uttered his famous and immortal phrase saying: "O world, deceive others but not me!"

`Ali and the Caliphate

I do not think there is any companion of the Prophet whose verdict and authority may not be subject to comments except `Ali about whose authority there does not exist the slightest room for criticism. I make this statement with full courage since it is confirmed by all the political events that have occurred in Islam.

`Umar interfered in the matter of caliphate with the result that Abu Bakr succeeded to get that position. In his decree he argued that he had checked riot and sedition, and after Abu Bakr he shouldered that heavy responsibility, and on many occasions, confessed his own mistake in giving his verdict in favor of Abu Bakr's caliphate. At that time when some of the companions spoke to him about the allegiance to his son `Abd Allah he answered: "It is enough for `Umar's household to have one person responsible and to be called to account at the threshold of divine justice about Muhammad's ummah." But `Ali explained, contrary to the two elders and concerning the matter of caliphate, that he was engaged in a more important task, namely preparing the body of the Prophet for burial.⁽¹⁰⁾

This was the greatest criticism leveled always against Abu Bakr and `Umar, showing, `Ali to be entitled against those two.

In the election of the caliph after `Umar, `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf gave his verdict upon `Ali and `Uthman who were two of the six candidates for the Caliphate nominated by `Umar, and notified to those two the duty of the caliph in relation to his own verdict. Although he knew that `Ali would not submit to his authority, he began first by proposing to `Ali the

acceptance of the terms of caliphate.

'Ali accepted that duty to the extent of his power and ability, and assurance of his conscience before God and His prophet. But 'Uthman in order not to let the chance of caliphate escape him, accepted unconditionally all those I conditions, irrespective of his power and ability.

In accepting the terms of the son of 'Awf, 'Ali was more eager to win the consent of God and His prophet, and Muslims' interests than to gain the position of caliph and command, whereas 'Uthman cherished that position rather than anything else. God knows whether, at the outset, 'Uthman possessed perfect discernment of the task faced by him, or whether he realized it, later on, since this is an internal matter about which we cannot issue a verdict and we can only judge by appearance.

Historical verdicts of 'A'ishah

At first 'A'ishah agreed to 'Uthman's caliphate and confirmed it. Then she turned against him and gave an opposite verdict. For that reason, her authority is not reliable. But 'Ali, despite establishing the reasons for his rivalry with 'Uthman on the issue of caliphate, did not, unlike 'A'ishah, rise in conflict with Uthman.

After 'Uthman was killed, 'Ali refused to accept allegiance of Talhah and az-Zubayr except in the mosque and in the presence of all people, and when they forced him to accept caliphate, he rose in the mosque and said: "I was weary of becoming your caliph, but you favored only my command. Remember that I shall take no step except with your approval and advice. I hold the keys to your public funds, but I shall never take one drachma of it without your approval." Then he asked: "Do you agree to this?" The people shouted their agreement, and 'Ali said: "O God! Be their witness," and then he accepted the caliphate.

'Ali had made the right decision and thus he left no excuse for people, since it was they who forced him to accept that position and not because he himself desired it. Therefore, anyone who shirked his duty and opposed 'Ali, would be a traitor and guilty, and he who remained loyal would be a true

believer.

'A'ishah resorted to a verdict once again, namely when she rose to oppose the murderers of 'Uthman and avenge his murder, and formally collaborated with Talhah and az-Zubayr who had broken their pact with 'Ali and trampled upon their allegiance with him. This motivated action showed that it was not free from spite and grudge so that the people accused her of having risen, not to avenge 'Uthman's blood, but intending to cause division and dispersion among the Muslims and scattering people from around 'Ali. Had there been anyone else in 'Ali's place, she would not have resorted to such an action.

Umm Salamah's historical letter to 'A'ishah

'A'ishah's action in fighting 'Ali was the second split that occurred in the foundation of Islam after 'Umar's move with regard to caliphate. This statement is not a personal opinion expressed for a particular motive. They are undeniable acts about which just leaders of nations and well-known impartial historians are unanimous.

The action of 'A'ishah has been despised by supporters of justice and truth since the time of the Prophet's companions. A witness to this claim is Umm Salamah, another consort of the Prophet. She wrote a Letter of counsel to 'A'ishah, asking her to abstain from this action, and warned her against the Creation of division and dispersion among the Muslims. The letter goes Like this:

"From Umm Salamah, wife of the Prophet of God, to 'A'ishah, Umm al-Mu'minin.

I praise Unique God and confess His uniqueness. But now, you have, with your action, torn the veil of respect between the Prophet of God (p.b.u.h.) and his nation, and desecrated it. The Qur'an has gathered 'up your skirt; so do not obstinately drag it along. Your rank and position are secure; so do not lose them in a futile manner. Fear Unique God Who is the guardian of this ummah!

If the Prophet of God had considered it worthy of women to fight, he would certainly have issued a command in this connection. Do you not know that he has forbidden you from

challenging others. For, if any deviation takes place in the pillar of religion, it will never be corrected by the force of women, and not repaired by them. The holy war of women is to observe self-control, chastity and contentment.

If the exalted Prophet sees you driving your camel in the desert from one watering place to another, what will you say to him? You are bound to hasten towards him sooner or later. I dare say that if they tell me: 'O Umm Salamah, enter heaven', I would feel ashamed in meeting the Prophet while I have shown disrespect to him.

Therefore, veil yourself and remain peacefully in your house. You will be doing the greatest service to this nation if you do nothing for them. I know also that if I were to inform you of a remark I have from the holy Prophet, you will writhe like one bitten by a snake! That is all."

This letter is another evidence that 'A'ishah had erred in her judgment, and confirms this point that the reason for her uprising had not really been others' interest in society and solidarity of the Muslims. Moreover, none of the consorts of the Prophet assisted her in this uprising.

The author's goal in this book

Mr. 'Askari, may God reward him for his truthfulness, has never intended, in his precise scientific discussion, to rouse people against 'A'ishah despite her errors in issuing a verdict in her uprising. During his discussion, he has tried to correct the ideas on historical events in the minds of most people who have not been able to understand the Prophet's companions, and have failed to distinguish right and wrong from their utterances, and have consequently been deprived of understanding proper history and its basis and also Islamic canon laws. By his efforts in this regard he has also sought that people understand the Prophet's traditions without being affected by feelings and minor interests and prejudice towards the narrators of tradition, but with the use of their knowledge.

The reason is that if the people understand the whole or a part of the Prophet's traditions they will easily become aware of the secret behind differences between Islamic sects and jurisprudentially creeds, and will realize to what extent these

differences are artificial and a product of those rulers who, because of particular motives, preferred one party over another, and fabricated any tradition that they desired in order to reinforce the foundation of their rule and strengthen their own group. Or they may have compelled some companions of the Prophet to alter or misinterpret some of those traditions. It was preferable for them to depict a companion as liar and deduce something from his statement that would serve their own interest and thus strengthen their rule.

Before ending my scientific discussion which has been undertaken to please God, I wish to advise Mr. 'Askari to make use of his scientific subject of this discussion for a higher purpose, namely bringing various Islamic sects closer and lay a firmer foundation as desired by learned and enlightened people, in order to bring about unity and solidarity among the Muslims. It is quite possible that he, while deeply involved with research, may follow this suggestion in practice since there does not exist an inherent basic difference between a moderate Shi'ah and an intelligent Sunni, and there is no doubt that each of these two sects, so long as they pursue a single goal and are sincere in their purpose, will make utmost efforts to remove defects and refine one another.

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23 March 1962***

The motive for writing this book

*"And if Allah pleases He would certainly make you a single nation."
The Qur'an, chapter an-Nahl, Verse 93*

Many researchers in noble traditions of the Prophet of Islam have, since long ago, realized that there exist wide differences between some of these traditions themselves, and also between them and the verses of the divine Book. The result was that some of the past scholars decided to account for and interpret these differences in order to remove objections to the Prophet and his traditions, and they wrote books entitled: "Ta'wil mukhtalif al-hadith"⁽¹¹⁾, "Bayan mushkil al-hadith"⁽¹²⁾ "Bayn mushkilat al-athar"⁽¹³⁾ etc., which roused the hostility of such critics as atheists and Christian- missionaries, and a group of orientalist so that by reliance on the contradictions and differences of these traditions, they could reproach the Prophet of Islam and deride and criticize his religion. But both groups were ignorant of the fact that the great collection of traditions, especially those which contradict each other, have not been written in the same style to make them confident that all of them have come from and have been stated exactly by the Prophet so that these could be subjected to a single general survey. They are a collection of several different traditions, which have reached us from various narrators. A researcher must first classify them in connection with the type of narrators. For example, the traditions related to 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin Anas⁽¹⁴⁾ Abu Hurayrah⁽¹⁵⁾ 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar⁽¹⁶⁾ must each be collected separately and compared in conjunction with the traditions of other narrators who have quoted from the

Prophet (with due attention to the life story, views and ideas of each of them) in order to discover truth.

I realized this matter when I was investigating the historical events of early Islam through traditions. I was particularly attracted by the traditions quoted from 'Aishah Umm al-Mu'minin and I was convinced that the history of Islam from the beginning of the Prophet's ordainment until the allegiance with Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah will not be understood properly unless Umm al-Mu'minin's traditions which are one of the most important source of the history of early Islam, are studied and evaluated impartially, and solely for the sake of finding the truth.

I believe also that understanding some verses of the heavenly Book as well as Islamic jurisprudence for whose explanation reference is made to the Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'ninin depends on a previous study of these traditions.

As I intended to discuss and organize the history of the critical Islamic period, I was obliged to give priority to the evaluation of these traditions before dealing with other topics. A discussion of such matters especially concerning the leaders of early Islam involves certain difficulties, which are not very easy for a Muslim scholar to remove.

Let us investigate impartially

The first difficulty for an oriental Muslim writer is to deal with views with which he has been accustomed and brought up, and which have influenced his life and mentality and taken deep roots in all aspects of his existence, as well as the beliefs possessed by his society.

He regards the personalities of early Islam to be superior to other human beings, and considers their time and the people of their time more holy, and his belief about them and their time is different from that about others and their time.

If such a writer is unable to remove this difficulty in his discussion and research, his subject will become just the defense of his beliefs instead of seeking truth.

As I realized this fact, I decided especially in this connection, not to give attention to my feelings concerning the respect I felt for 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin as a consort of the Prophet,

observe no discrimination between revered Islamic personalities and others who happened to enter the discussion, and attribute to them various feelings and motives that all people have, so that after analyzing the events which have occurred during the life of Umm al-Mu'minin I would be able to discuss and survey her words and traditions for the discovery of truth alone.

Although I do not claim complete success in this determination, I have used my utmost endeavor for this purpose, and I leave it to others to judge. But I take God as my witness in saying that only the hope of assisting the scholars to investigate the true story of early Islam and the Quranic injunctions has been my motive in the study and survey of this subject.

Islam or faith and belief

Secondly, if he succeeds in removing the above difficulty in his investigation, there figures another problem, namely the effect of the publication of such topics on coordination and unity among the Muslims. Now this question arises that since with the efforts of the strivers and reformers of Islam, the hopes and expectations of various groups of Muslims have, to some extent, been fulfilled and they are brought close to each other and the means of their brotherhood and solidarity have been provided, will it be proper to describe in detail the past events and publish matters which not only produce violent refutation and criticism but also rouse dormant feelings and produce aversion and hatred?

But opposed to this question, the following matter must be brought up which cannot be easily disregarded. If on the excuse of the futility of benevolent reformers' effort, such a discussion and investigation would not be acceptable, in that case, no one will engage in scientific research, and this would be an unpardonable injustice to knowledge, consequently, the facts of Islam would, as in former centuries, remain hidden behind the veil of mental rigidity and futile fanaticism, and as a result the discord and differences among various Islamic sects would manifest themselves more intensely. This is certainly not something to be approved by reformers and those who are interested in Islamic solidarity.

Consequently, while we sincerely desire the success of our Muslim brethren in laying aside all differences and uprooting dispersion, in response to the call of the benevolent reformers of Islam, we feel a particular respect for learning and knowledge and regard them as belonging to a different category; for, those who have endeavored constantly to lay the foundations of Muslim unity and solidarity, proclaim that solidarity under the sacred banner of Islam, while Islam, in itself, has no international political motivation. But it is a faith and belief in a set of realities born only out of a perfectly scientific criticism, discussion and research, and in concealing those facts under such excuses and pretexts, no single and firm faith, or belief would be produced, and the proper and direct course of Islam would not be distinguished from the pitfall of perdition and aberration.

I beg God Almighty to grant us success in following the right path, for, it is He who guides all to the right path.

Deep Islamic solidarity

The third difficulty that arises is the outcry that is the main stimulant of that faith and rises from the heart. It is a faith in the fact that only Islam should govern the Muslim society and serve as the foundation of our social solidarity. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to make constant efforts for reviving Islamic life and give it a solid foundation.

O strivers in the way of truth, may God grant you success! Do you not invite all the Muslims to return to Islam, and submit to its principles and enforce its laws? What is the way of understanding Islamic principles and injunctions? Is it other than a survey and research, from the beginning of its history, and discovery of the true traditions of the great Prophet as well as a study of the life and ideas of their narrators, so that by this means, we may comprehend the cause of descent of the Quranic verses and thereby understand the Islamic injunctions which we should obey and call on others to act upon?

As we are bound to act upon the injunctions of Islam, we must first obtain a knowledge about them, since action is not possible without knowledge.

It can be stated with complete confidence that the effort for

Islamic solidarity, and steadfastness in bringing back Islam to the Muslim society, are not incompatible with the discussion and investigation of the history of Islam and a careful survey of the traditions of its Prophet. On the contrary, it serves as its basis and both subjects serve as complements to one another, for, bringing Islam back to the Muslim society would not be possible without creating harmony among the Muslims, and understanding the meaning of the Quranic verses and the Prophet's utterances as well as history of Islam.

Similarly, so long as there exists no faith in the necessity of bringing Islam back to the Muslim society, no friendship and proper brotherhood will be established among the Muslims, since if this were not so, what would be the basis of harmony among the Muslims? What would give them unity and the common direction? Moreover, creation of brotherhood is not possible except through making the Muslims understand each other's views, and take to proper criticism in order to discover and follow the truth. In that case, these words of God in the Qur'an would be applicable to them:

"Give good news to those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided and those it is who are the men of understanding."⁽¹⁷⁾

This is our call and we beg God to enable us and all our Muslim brethren to follow these noble words. The difficulties mentioned above have been peculiar to the Muslims.

Worship of ancestors

In the history of Islam, like the history of other nations and religions of the world, in addition to what we have already mentioned, there have always been three other great obstacles which have acted as barriers to many seekers of truth and historians, checking them from following truth and knowledge.

The first and the foremost difficulty have been the habit of excessive respect for and even worship of ancestors. Since history was written, man has always been accustomed to show unnecessary and undue reverence to those who have gone by. This led to idolatry, and thus Nasr, Yaghuth Wadd, Ya'uq and Suwa',⁽¹⁸⁾ who were good and virtuous men were respected greatly by their contemporaries, but after their death, this

respect took the form of worship.

Surprisingly, we see our good people of the past who, in various periods of their lives, go so far in their rejection and criticism that they issue verdicts of death for each other and consider legitimate shedding the blood of their rivals and followers. But after the passage of long years, the present generation has gone to this in its reverence and respect for them that they do not even allow any survey and investigation of their words and deeds to themselves and to others, thus preventing discovery of truth altogether.

Blind prejudice

The second barrier is improper, indecent and, at the same time, comic prejudice, which serves as a barrier keeping man, confined within the wall of darkness and ignorance. This is an altar of sacrifice where we have witnessed many victims throughout human history in every country and every period.

Religious fanaticism twice turned the city of Rayy into ruins at the beginning of the seventh century AH.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Hanafites and Shafi'ites rose first against the Shi'ites and cruelly massacred them. Then the Shafi'ites attacked the Hanafi sect and shed their blood, with the result that houses were demolished and the city was destroyed. This is an example of the altar of sacrifice due to fanaticism. We can easily find thousands of victims in history as a result of ugly, ill-omened, touching and funny prejudice.

Demagogues

The third obstacle is the most hateful of them, namely the influence exerted by those in power in various periods of history. It was they who by using bayonets and their position did whatever they desired, and forcefully and by means of demagoguery and affectation blocked the way of discussion and investigation, and since the year 655 formally barred the nation's jurisprudence from practicing jurisprudence.⁽²⁰⁾

I do not know whether now that after eight centuries preliminary steps have been taken to prove the way of practicing jurisprudence, and some progress has been made in this respect, the time has not come to permit the Muslims to

resort to discussion and investigation, too, or whether they would do nothing but imitate their predecessors.

No! the situation would not continue to remain so, since owing to the constant efforts of reformers, the light of knowledge has made truth evident to an undeniable extent, and the time will arrive very soon when people will laugh at our suffering for not being allowed any discussion and investigation, in the same way that we are now laughing at the indecent obstinacy and fanaticism of the people of Rayy in that period.

Beside these obstacles, on hearing the praise of someone we have got into the habit of closing our ears to a criticism of him, or when we resort to fault-finding and criticism, we cannot afford to hear a praise of him.

But I will introduce 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin on the basis of what I have found in traditions and history, whether this introduction takes the form of criticism or praise. If someone is not content with this description and cannot bear the difficulties already mentioned (which are mutually felt by both the writer and reader), then he can hand over the book to another person who is able to remove those obstacles out of this way.

Indeed, anyone who wishes to recognize Umm al-Mu'minin through history and traditions and analyze her personality so far as it is possible through the study of traditions, the following pages which describe various periods of this lady of early Islam are at his disposal. It is worthier to follow truth. May the right spirit be blessed!

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Chapter al-Ahzab of the Qur'an

Verses 28 to 33:

"O Prophet! Say your wives: If you desire this worlds life and its nature, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing;

And if you desire Allah and His Apostle and the latter abode, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward.

O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy to Allah.

And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and does good, We will give to her reward doubly, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance.

O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other of the women; if you will be on your guard, then be not soft in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a good word.

And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore."