

Letter of Imam al-Hasan (a) to Mu'awiyah

The below letter has been taken from the book Sulh al-Hasan of Shaykh Radi al-Yasin, who in turn quotes it from primary sources such as the Ibn Abi al-Hadid's Sharh of Nahj al-Balaghah, and Maqatil al-Talibiyyin of Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani.

Read the below letter and then try to answer the following questions

- How does the Imam (a) display his strength in this letter? Why was this strength necessary to display at this time?
- What logical proof does Imam al-Hasan (a) present to Mu'awiyah to illustrate his right to the caliphate?
- One may think that it is not worthy of writing and admonishing someone like Mu'awiyah. Why does Imam al-Hasan (a) say that he wrote this letter?

From al-Hasan the son of 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, to Mu'awiyah the son of Abu Sufyan.

Peace be upon you. I thank Allah, whom there is no god save Him. Verily, Allah the Almighty appointed Muhammad as a mercy for the worlds, a favour upon the believers, and a messenger unto all mankind. [He did so] to warn those who are living [of His punishment], and so that the proof is rendered final upon the unbelievers. Then he propagated the messages of his Lord and carried out the order of Allah, until Allah caused him to die whilst he was in a state where he had not fallen short nor neglected anything. And this was only after Allah had manifested the truth through him, and destroyed polytheism.

He singled out the Quraysh through him [the noble prophet]. He said to him, "And it is a reminder for you and for your people."¹ Then when he died, the Arabs disputed over his reign. The Quraysh said, "We are his tribe, his family, and the protectors of his creed!"² You have no right to dispute with us over the authority of Muhammad and his reign." At this point the Arabs accepted this argument of the Quraysh and considered the truth to be with them with regards to those who

¹ وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ - 43:44

² "Protectors of his creed" is how the word **أَوْلِيَاءُ** has been translated. Undoubtedly, the word as used in the Noble Qur'an has a deep and beautiful meaning and is not easy to render into English. To summarize the meaning, **أَوْلِيَاءُ** are those who have a bond of **وَلَايَة** between them. They are one force united under the leadership of one **وَلِي** and as opposed to other forces. Pondering upon the verses 8:72-73, and 5:51-55 can God-willing help one to get a deeper understanding of this term.

disputed with them over the matter of Muhammad. Thus, they submitted to them and surrendered the matter.

Thereafter we argued with the Quraysh just as the Arabs had argued. However, Quraysh did not treat us fairly as the Arabs had treated them. They took over this matter from the other Arabs through presenting arguments and being treated fairly. But when we, the members of the House of Muhammad and the protectors of his creed, began disputing with them and seeking that they treat us fairly, they turned away from us and seized power by uniting to oppress, cut off and afflict us. Verily, the promised return for us and them is with Allah, and He is our Protector and Helper.

We became astonished at those who pounced upon us with regards to our right and the reign of our family. However, because they were men of merit and precedence in Islam, we refrained from disputing with them out of fear for the religion, lest the hypocrites and enemies find a weakness to breach and penetrate the religion or find a means to the corruption they desire.

But today O Mu'awiya, it is only appropriate that one be astonished that you have pounced upon a matter that you are in no means worthy for. Neither are you known for any merit in the religion, nor have you left behind any praiseworthy act in Islam. Moreover, you are the offspring of a party from the enemies, you are the son of the most hostile of all Quraysh towards the Apostle of Allah (may Allah bless him and his family) and His book. Allah alone is sufficient [to repel your evil], and you shall soon return to Him and know to whom the final outcome belongs. By Allah, you shall meet your Lord soon, and He will duly recompense you because of what your hands have wrought. For Allah is not unjust towards His servants.

Indeed, when 'Ali passed away -- may the mercy of Allah be upon him on the day that died, on the day when Allah bestowed a favour on Islam through him, and on the day when he will be raised alive -- the Muslims appointed me as their leader after him. I ask Allah to not give us in this transient world anything with which He decreases our share of His favour in the hereafter. The only thing that has made me write to you is that I should have an excuse before Allah the Almighty, concerning your affair. If you obey [my command], you will enjoy in a great share, and therein lies the advantage of the Muslims.

Therefore leave aside this persistence in error, and join in pledging allegiance to me as the people have done. You know that I am worthier of this matter than you

in the eyes of Allah, in the eyes of every penitent and dutiful servant, and in the eyes of one with a penitent heart.³ Fear Allah, leave aside oppression, and spare the blood of the Muslims. For by Allah, there is no benefit for you in meeting Allah with even more of their blood on your hands than you have already shed! Enter into submission and obedience, and do not dispute with one who is deserving of this matter and worthier of it than you. With that Allah will extinguish the flames of war, unite the Muslims, and settle their differences.

If you insist upon continuing in your error, I will advance against you with the Muslims and take you severely to task until Allah judges between us, for verily He is the best of all judges.

³ An indication to the verses 50:32-33.