

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام) إلى معاوية

To Mu'āwiyah (ibn Abī Sufyān)

إِنَّهُ بَايَعَنِي الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ بَايَعُوا أَبَا بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ وَعُثْمَانَ عَلَيَّ مَا بَايَعُوهُمْ عَلَيَّ، فَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِلشَّاهِدِ أَنْ يَخْتَارَ، وَلَا لِلْغَائِبِ أَنْ يَرُدَّ، وَإِذَا مَا الشُّورَى لِلْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ، فَإِنْ اجْتَمَعُوا عَلَيَّ رَجُلٍ وَسَمَّوْهُ إِمَامًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ لِلَّهِ رِضًا، فَإِنْ خَرَجَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِمْ خَارِجٌ بَطَعَنَ أَوْ بَدَعَهُ رَدَّوهُ إِلَى مَا خَرَجَ مِنْهُ، فَإِنْ أَبِي قَاتَلُوهُ عَلَيَّ اتَّبَعَهُ غَيْرُ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَوَلَاهُ اللَّهُ مَا تَوَلَّى.

Verily, those who swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān have sworn allegiance [1] to me on the same basis on which they swore allegiance to them. (On this basis) he who was present has no choice (to consider), and he who was absent has no right to reject; and consultation is confined to the muhājirūn and the anṣār. If they agree on an individual and take him to be Caliph it will be deemed to mean Allāh's pleasure. If any one keeps away by way of objection or innovation they will return him to the position from where he kept away. If he refuses they will fight him for following a course other than that of the believers and Allāh will put him back from where he had run away.

وَلِعَمْرِي، يَا مُعَاوِيَةَ، لَنْ نَنْظُرَ بِعَقْلِكَ دُونَ هَوَاكَ لِتَجِدَنِي أَبْرَأَ النَّاسِ مِنْ دَمِ عُثْمَانَ، وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ أَذِي كُنْتُ فِي عَزْلَةٍ عَنْهُ، إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَجَنَّبَ فَتَجَنَّبَ مَا بَدَأَ لَكَ! وَالسَّلَامُ.

By my life, O Mu'āwiyah, if you see with your intellect without any passion you will find me the most innocent of all in respect of 'Uthmān's blood and you will surely know that I was in seclusion from him, unless you conceal what is quite open to you (and accuse me of a crime I have not committed). Then you may commit any outrage (on me) as you wish and that is an end to the matter.

Footnote :

[1] When all the people of Medina unanimously swore allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn, Mu'āwiyah refused to acquiesce apprehending danger for his own power, and in order to contest Amīr al-mu'minīn's caliphate he concocted the excuse that it had not been agreed to unanimously and that therefore after cancelling it there should be another general election, although the caliphate from which (the process of) election was started was the result of a timely situation. There was no question of the common vote therein so that it could be called the result of the people's election. However, it was imposed on the people and assumed to be their verdict. From then it became a principle that whomever the nobles of Medina elected would be deemed to represent the entire world of Islam

and no person would be allowed to question it, whether he was present at the time of election or not. In any case, after the establishment of the principle, Mu'āwiyah had no right to propose a reelection nor to refuse allegiance when he had in practice recognized these caliphates which, it was alleged, had been settled by the important people of Medina. That is why when he held this election to be invalid and refused allegiance, Amīr al-mu'minīn pointed out to him the (recognized) way of election and demolished his argument. It was a method known as arguing with the adversary on the basis of his wrong premises so as to demolish his argument, since Amīr al-mu'minīn never at any state regarded consultation (with chiefs) or the common vote to be the criterion of validity of the caliphate. Otherwise, in connection with the caliphate about which it is alleged that they were based on the unanimity of the muhājirūn and the anṣār, he would have regarded that unanimity of vote as a good authority and held them as valid; but his refusal for allegiance in the very first period, which cannot be denied by anyone, is a proof of the fact that he did not regard these self-concocted methods as the criterion of (validity of) the caliphate. That is why at all times he continued pressing his own case for the caliphate, which was also established on the basis of the Prophet's saying and deeds. However, to place it before Mu'āwiyah meant opening the door to questions and answers. He therefore attempted to convince him with his own premises and beliefs so that there could be no scope for interpretation or for confusing the matter, in fact Mu'āwiyah's real aim was to prolong the matter so that at some point his own authority might get support.