

History of Islam

An encyclopedia of Islamic history

The Civil Wars

Contributed by Prof. Dr. Nazeer Ahmed, PhD

Just as a civilization advances by faith and knowledge, it is arrested and destroyed by ignorance and greed. Even as Muslim armies continued their advance towards the borders of India, China and the Atlantic Ocean, the seeds of greed and nepotism were being sown in the heartland of Islam. The booty from Persia was enormous. Untold amounts of gold, silver and jewels were captured from the Persians and transported to Madina. It is reported that Omar was distraught when the riches of Persia were presented to him. "When God grants riches to a nation", he said, "envy and jealousy grow in its people and as a result enmity and injustice is created in its ranks". With their spiritual insight, the Companions foresaw what these riches would do to the character of their people. They were opposed to the amassing of wealth that would detract them from the spiritual mission of Islam. For instance, one of the items of booty from Persia was an exquisite carpet called "*farsh-e-bahar*" (the carpet of spring). It was a possession of the Persian monarchs and was so large that it could accommodate a thousand guests at their drinking parties. Some people in Madina wanted to preserve it. Ali ibn Abu Talib (r) insisted that the carpet be torn up. Ali's (r) suggestion was adopted and the carpet was shredded.

Omar (r) saw to it that the treasury did not become a place for hoarding gold and silver. The gems and jewelry were sold and the proceeds were distributed so that all the people benefited. Capital in circulation grew and trade flourished. Chroniclers record that when Omar ibn al Khattab (r) was assassinated, there was only enough ration in the treasury to feed ten people. The firmness and wisdom that was required to manage the sudden infusion of wealth was gone with the passing of Omar (r). Within ten years of his passing, the Islamic community was at loggerheads and in the midst of a full-scale civil war.

Next to faith, wealth is the most important engine in the building of a civilization. Properly invested and managed, wealth, as the surplus energy of human effort, propels invention and civilizational advance. When it is hoarded, it leads to economic contraction, breeds jealousy, fosters intrigue, greed, infighting and ultimately destroys a civilization.

We find the origin of the civil wars in the gold of Persia. As long as the towering figure of Omar (r) was present, the pressures that inevitably accompany sudden wealth were held in check. Omar (r) managed the state with justice, firmness and equity. The slightest indication of nepotism was punished. Self-aggrandizement was publicly discouraged. Even a popular and successful general like Khalid bin Walid

did not escape chastisement when it was discovered that he had paid a poet for a lyric in praise of his own person (although Khalid was later exonerated when it was determined that he had paid the money from his own pocket).

As he lay on his deathbed, Omar (r) appointed a committee of six to select his successor with explicit instructions that they were not to select his own son, Abdullah bin Omar (r), or to nominate themselves. The committee consisted of Ali ibn Abu Talib (r), Uthman bin Affan (r), Zubair ibn al Awwam, Talha ibn Ubaidallah, Sa'ad ibn Waqqas and Abdur Rahman ibn Aus. Abdur Rahman ibn Aus was charged with taking the pulse of the community regarding the issue of succession. He did so and found that there was widespread support for both Ali (r) and Uthman (r). Before a large gathering in the Prophet's mosque, the question was put to the two finalists: "Will you discharge the responsibilities of this office in accordance with the Commandments of God, His Messenger and the example of the two Sheikhs (Abu Bakr (r) and Omar (r))?" Ali (r) was given the first choice. He replied that he would conduct the office in accordance with the commandments of God and His Messenger. The reply was taken to mean that Ali (r) was ambiguous about the legacy of Abu Bakr (r) and Omar (r). Uthman (r) was then asked the same question and he replied that indeed he would serve in accordance with the commandments of God, His Messenger and the example of the two Sheikhs. Uthman bin Affan(r) won the nomination and was elected the Caliph.

The question, though seemingly innocuous, was loaded in favor of Uthman (r). Unless one makes a strong case for historical continuity, some scholars argue that it was unnecessary to include the tradition of the two Sheikhs as a prerequisite to the Caliphate at that juncture. The issue, however, is much deeper than this simple argument. What was taking place was a historical unfolding of the differences among the Companions regarding the place of *ijma* in the application of the Shariah. Such differences were codified in later times in the different Schools of Fiqh. What is important is that the differences were not doctrinal; they were differences in emphasis.

Uthman (r) was more than seventy years old when elected Caliph. He was a man of piety, a scholar, a man of utmost integrity and humility and one of the earliest companions of the Prophet. He was a man of means and used his wealth with utmost generosity in the service of the Islamic community. He was married to Ruqaiyya, the Prophet's daughter and after her death to Umm Kulthum, another of the Prophet's daughters. But Uthman (r) was also extremely shy and indecisive. These qualities, which may be innocuous in an individual, were to prove fatal in Uthman (r) as a ruler. More significantly, Uthman (r) belonged to Banu Umayyah. In pre-Islamic times, the Banu Umayyah often competed for power and prestige with Bani Hashim, the tribe to which the Prophet and Ali ibn Abu Talib (r) belonged. These factors became increasingly important as the unity fostered by Islam cracked under the pressures generated during the period of Uthman (r).

The Caliphate of Uthman (r) lasted twelve years and it may be divided into two distinct phases. During the first six years, the momentum created by Omar ibn al Khattab (r) carried Muslim armies further into Azerbaijan, Kirman, Afghanistan, Khorasan and Kazakhstan in the east and Libya to the west. Several rebellions in Kurdistan and Persia were suppressed.

Two of the initiatives undertaken by Uthman (r) during this period had a lasting impact on Islamic history. It was at the initiative of Uthman (r) that the pronunciation of the Qur'an was standardized. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet as the Word of God and was memorized by hundreds of *hufaz*. After the Battle of Yamama when many *hufaz* perished, Abu Bakr as Siddiq (r), upon the advice of Omar ibn al Khattab (r), had the Qur'an written down exactly as the Prophet had arranged it. The book is called *Mushaf e Siddiqi*. The Arabic language, as it is normally written, does not show the vowels and pronunciation is deduced from the context. Accordingly, *Mushaf e Siddiqi* did not show any vowels. As

Islam spread beyond the borders of Arabia into non-Arabic speaking areas, there was the risk of mispronunciation with consequent misinterpretation. Uthman (r) ordered the preparation of a written copy showing both vowels and consonants, consistent with the recitations of the Prophet. Where the styles of recitation used by the Prophet varied, these styles were so noted.

The second initiative was the building of a navy. Omar (r) had resisted the idea as premature for an Arab army used to rapid movements in the desert. Upon the recommendation of Muawiya, Uthman (r) ordered the building of a powerful navy to check Byzantine power in the eastern Mediterranean. A naval force was built and Cyprus was captured. The continued expansion of the navy provided the capability ten years later for a naval assault on the Byzantine capital, Constantinople (modern Istanbul).

It was during the second half of the Caliphate of Uthman (r) that serious divisions arose in the Islamic community. The shy, retiring and indecisive nature of Uthman was an invitation to mischief-makers. Some among the Banu Umayyah tribe took advantage of this indecisiveness to create huge estates for themselves. Uthman (r) had removed some of the administrators appointed by Omar (r) and had replaced them with men from the Banu Umayyah tribe. Some of these appointees were unqualified for their positions. When the incompetence of these officers was brought to his attention, Uthman (r) often hesitated and corrective action was delayed. Since Uthman (r) himself belonged to the Banu Umayyah, he was vulnerable to charges of nepotism. Pre-Islamic tribal animosities between Bani Hashim and Banu Umayyah, which had been subdued since the time of the Prophet, surfaced once again.

The most important element in the ensuing political instability was the enormous wealth acquired from Persia. Mas'udi records (as related by Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddamah*, page 478, op. cit.), "On the day Caliph Uthman (r) was assassinated, the treasurer had in his personal collection, a sum of 150,000 dinars and 1,000,000 dirhams. In addition, he owned properties worth 200,000 dinars in the valleys of Qura and Hunain in which he kept a large number of camels and horses. One of the properties owned by Zubair was worth 50,000 dinars in which he kept 1,000 horses. Talha derived an income of 1,000 dinars from his properties in Iraq. Abdur Rahman bin Awf had 1,000 horses in his stable in addition to 1,000 camels and 10,000 heads of sheep. Upon his death, one fourth of his estate was valued at 84,000 dinars. Zaid bin Thabit owned bricks of gold and silver which required a large axe to cut. Zubair had constructed multiple houses in Basrah, Egypt, Kufa and Alexandria. Similarly, Talha owned a home in Kufa in addition to an old home in Madina, which he had renovated with bricks, mortar and oak timber. Sa'ad bin Waqqas had built a tall and expansive mansion made of red stone. Maqdad built a home in Madina which he had plastered inside and out."

Masudi goes on to state that this wealth was acquired legitimately through booty and trade. While wealth, legitimately acquired, did not influence the Companions, many others in the community were less sanguine about how the wealth was acquired or how it was used. The new opulence of the community was in stark contrast to the simplicity with which the earlier Caliphs lived. Omar ibn al Khattab (r), while he was the Caliph, used to cover the holes in his tattered clothes with patches of goatskin. But times had changed. The infusion of Persian gold changed the character of some of the Arabs. Damascus, which was governed by Umayyad governors, became a city of palaces. An inexorable process of decay had begun wherein the decadence of luxury displaced the ruggedness of nomadic life and took men and women away from the transcendence of the spirit to the pleasures of the flesh.

The increasing corruption gave an opportunity for the propagation of rumors, innuendo and mischief. In this turbulent scenario, two characters stand out as particularly sinister. One was Abdullah bin Saba, a recent convert, who tried to pit Uthman (r) against Ali (r) and incited the people of Kufa (Iraq) and Egypt against Uthman (r). The other was Hakam bin Marwan, an Umayyad, whom Uthman (r) had appointed as his Chief Secretary. Hakam was responsible for official correspondence and abused this

privileged position to misrepresent Uthman (r) at critical moments. The dissatisfaction and disaffection finally erupted in open rebellion. Bands of rebels from Kufa and Egypt entered Madina, surrounded the residence of the Caliph and demanded his resignation. Uthman (r) could not comply with this demand because that would destroy the Caliphate as an institution. He was attacked and mercilessly executed in 655. The civil wars had begun.

Actions that are driven by passions generate similar passions with unforeseen consequences. The assassination of Uthman (r) unleashed chaos in Madina. There was no leadership, no order and no authority in the city. The body of Uthman (r) lay unclaimed for more than 24 hours when a group of Muslims mustered the courage to perform the final ablution and bury the assassinated Caliph in the darkness of night. Only seventeen men attended the funeral. Amidst this chaos, representations were made to Ali ibn Abu Talib (r) to accept the Caliphate. He hesitated, but relented upon the insistence of some of the prominent companions of the Prophet and became the fourth Caliph of Islam.

Ali (r) understood that the assassination of Uthman (r) was a symptom of a deeper malaise. The gold of Persia had created a powerful whirlwind in which the Islamic body politic was caught up. Some of this wealth had found its way to the provincial capitals where it financed an opulent life style. Those who had become accustomed to this life style were reluctant to change and revert to the simplicity enjoined by the Prophet.

Ali's (r) first priority was to establish order. He desired to achieve it in such a manner that the disease itself would be cured. Realizing that any reform must start from the top, Ali (r) demanded the resignation of the provincial governors. As we shall see, this proved to be a fateful decision. Some of the governors obliged; others refused as an open declaration of rebellion. Notable among the latter was Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan, the Umayyad governor of Syria.

Faith and wealth are two of the most powerful engines of history. We see for the first time after the assassination of Uthman (r) the opposing pull of these two elements. Wealth is like a wild horse. When it is tamed, it moves with grace and gives power to the rider. Untamed, it destroys itself and the rider alike. Faith is the harness that tames wealth. Without the discipline that comes with faith, wealth leads to greed and destroys all that builds a civilization. What was needed after the conquest of Persia was the firmness and decisiveness of someone like Omar (r). The shy and retiring nature of the third Caliph Uthman (r) was a recipe for disaster. In the latter half of the Caliphate of Uthman (r), we see how the newfound wealth bred corruption and nepotism, threatening to destroy the very faith that had enabled the Muslims to win the wealth.

Ali (r), trained as he was by Prophet Muhammed (p), wanted to re-establish Islamic life after the pristine example of the Prophet. But times had changed. The conquest of the Persian Empire had made some notables enormously wealthy. These notables would rather fight to keep their privileges than surrender. Islam was now a religion as much of this world as it was of the hereafter and had to compete with personal power and prestige for the fealty of people's hearts. The transcendence of the Prophet's example had to now come to terms with the worldly reality of gold and greed.

Faith and greed were locked in mortal combat. Against this background, the assassination of Uthman (r) was an event that provided fuel for the combatants. Ali's (r) priority was to establish order. But many of the Companions desired to settle the issue of Uthman's (r) assassination as the first priority. They demanded *qisas* (the apprehension and due punishment for the assassins as prescribed by the Qur'an). To them, justice had to take precedence over order.

So shocked was the Islamic community at the assassination of Uthman (r) that no less a person than Aisha binte Abu Bakr (r), wife of the Prophet, took up the issue of *qisas*. Notable Companions like Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam joined the fray. In the year 656, Aisha (r) set out from Mecca towards Basra (Iraq) with a force of 3,000 men. This was a grave moment indeed. Here was *Ummul-Momineen* herself, marching forth to capture and punish the assassins of Uthman (r) and in the process undermine the authority of the Caliphate. A sense of sadness and helplessness overtook the Meccan community. Some joined the fray, including the well known Companions of the Prophet Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam. A large number sensed the gravity of the situation and stayed neutral.

The position of Aisha (r), motivated though it was by a fervent desire to reform the community and punish the guilty, had the effect of creating an armed force independent of the Caliphate and weakening its authority. There cannot be two independent armed forces within one political state. Justice, as demanded by Aisha (r), was bound to come into conflict with the order that was desired by Ali (r). The two positions collided at the Battle of Jamal (Camel).

Ali (r) was at first preparing to march on Syria to bring Muawiya under control. But the movement of the Meccan force under Aisha (r) towards Iraq was a disturbance that could not be overlooked. Accordingly, Ali (r) marched towards Iraq at the head of a force of 700 men. This was another fateful decision, for Ali (r) was never able to return to Madina. The wheels of destiny were set in motion. As it approached Kufa (Iraq), Ali's (r) force was reinforced by a strong contingent of several thousand Iraqis. It was only a matter of time before the combined forces of Madina and Iraq under Ali (r) would confront the Meccan force under Aisha (r).

Dedicated attempts were made to bring the positions of the two sides together to avoid armed conflict. An understanding was indeed reached between the two sides to avoid war and reconcile the community. But there were determined troublemakers among the parties as well. The factions who were responsible for the assassination of Uthman (r) were determined to sabotage the agreement because a peaceful reconciliation would expose them to harsh punishment from both sides. One of these factions, led by a recent convert Abdulla bin Saba, was particularly active in Iraq and Egypt. Determined to scuttle a peace agreement by any means, the Sabaiites attacked both camps in the darkness of night. In the ensuing confusion each side thought that the other had tricked them. When Aisha (r) mounted her camel to bring the situation under control, her group assumed she had done so to personally lead the charge. General warfare erupted. Thousands perished in a matter of hours. Among the casualties of the conflict was the noted companion Talha ibn Ubaidallah. Another well-known Companion Zubair ibn al Awwam withdrew from the fray but was assassinated on his way from the battlefield. Realizing that as long as Aisha (r) was visible on her camel, the battle would continue, Ali (r) ordered her camel to be brought down. When the camel fell, Aisha's (r) side fell into disarray. Ali (r) decisively won the battle. Aisha (r) was treated with utmost courtesy and was sent back to Mecca under military escort.

The Battle of the Camel was a disaster for the Muslims. It destroyed the cohesiveness of the Islamic community that had been so painstakingly forged by the Prophet. Aisha (r) herself expressed her regret over this battle towards the end of her life. It was the first round in a civil war that rocked Islam and culminated in Karbala. Although Ali (r) decisively won the battle, it weakened his political position and encouraged his opponents to persist in their demands for *qisas*. The assassins of Uthman (r) could rest assured that they could hide behind one faction or the other and escape punishment. Indeed, Ali (r) was never able to appoint a tribunal to bring the murderers of Uthman (r) to justice.

The Battle of the Camel gave Muawiya added time to prepare for the coming struggle against Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib (r). The blood stained shirt of Uthman (r) was hung at the door of the Great Mosque in Damascus. People from far and wide would visit the mosque and seeing the blood of Uthman (r), would weep and take an oath to avenge the blood of the third Caliph. Complicity of Ali (r) in the murder of Uthman (r) was alleged, first covertly and then openly. Muawiya enlisted the support of a well-known orator, Shurahbeel bin Samat Kindi, to spread this accusation far and wide in Syria. By such means, Muawiya succeeded in uniting the Syrians against Ali (r) and built up a solid military force of 70,000 men to face him.

The struggle between Ali (r) and Muawiya was a classic example of a battle between principle and politics. Some Muslims have looked upon it as a struggle between *Tareeqah* and *Shariah*. Others have shied away from examining the conflict at all citing the honor and respect that is due to all Companions of the Prophet. Yet others have maintained that the *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) of both Ali (r) and Muawiya was correct but that of Ali (r) was of a higher order than that of Muawiya. We have taken no position regarding the issue except to cite the historical facts as they unfolded. Ali (r), whom the Prophet had called "gateway to my knowledge", was a fountainhead of spirituality, a man of principle, a great scholar, a noble soldier, but was caught up in the political storms generated by the Caliphate of Uthman (r) and his assassination. Muawiya was an accomplished administrator, a superb politician and a determined foe. The two proved to be true to their positions till the end of their lives. Ali (r), as the legitimate Caliph, desired to establish order first and then attend to other matters of state including the assassination of Uthman (r). Ali (r) did not succeed in this endeavor and the struggle consumed his Caliphate and his person. Muawiya demanded *qisas* first, before he would accept the Caliphate of Ali (r).

On his part, Ali (r) moved the capital of the Islamic state from Madina to Kufa (656) and consolidated his position. He raised an army of 80,000 for the march on Syria. This army was mostly composed of Iraqis, with contingents of Madinites and Persians. Seeing the storms gathering on the horizon, some notable Companions tried to make peace. Abu Muslim Khorasani convinced Muawiya to write to Ali (r). In his letter, Muawiya offered to take his oath of fealty to Ali (r) if he surrendered the assassins of Uthman (r). But by now positions had hardened on both sides. Muawiya knew that Ali (r) was politically too weak at the time to fulfill this demand. When the issue was raised before a large gathering at the mosque in Kufa, over 10,000 Iraqis raised their hands and declared that each of them was an assassin of Uthman (r). The messenger from Syria returned empty handed.

Muawiya, with his Syrian army, was the first to move towards Iraq and occupy the waters of the Euphrates near the plains of Siffin. When the army of Ali (r) arrived at the scene, they were denied water. Ali (r) promptly ordered the Syrians to be expelled and to control the water resources. The Battle of Siffin had begun. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the age. For three months, the Syrians and the Iraqis went at each other with full fury, convinced that their respective positions were correct. Over 40,000 people lost their lives. So great was the bloodbath that many on both sides wondered aloud if the Muslims would survive if this carnage were to continue.

For a long time, the battle was a stalemate with neither side gaining a decisive advantage. But on the night of *Laitul-Hareer* (the Night of the Battle), the supporters of Ali (r) attacked with such determined force that the Syrians realized they were on the verge of defeat. It was here that Muawiya played one more ruse. Upon the advice of Amr bin al-As, to whom Muawiya had promised the governorship of Egypt, the Syrians hoisted copies of the Qur'an on their lances and declared that they would accept the *hakam* (arbitration) of the Qur'an between the contesting parties. Ali (r) saw through this ruse but was helpless in the face of the determined demand from both sides.

This was one more of the fateful decisions for Caliph Ali (r). The acceptance of arbitration established Muawiya as a legitimate contender for power with Ali (r). The two sides established a tribunal of two persons, one from each party, to decide between Muawiya and Ali (r). Abu Musa Aashari, a pious elderly Companion of the Prophet, was selected to represent Ali (r). Amr bin al As, an avowed partisan, was the representative for Muawiya.

It was at this juncture that a group from Ali's (r) army walked away. They were called the Al Khwarij (those who walked away, also called *Kharijites*). The Kharijites were furious because in their view, Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib (r) had committed *shirk* by accepting the arbitration of men as opposed to the *hakam* (arbitration) of the Qur'an. And unless he repented, they vowed to oppose Ali (r).

This was a classic illustration of how the transcendence of divine revelation is compromised when people of limited understanding apply it in mundane affairs. The Kharijites juxtaposed two *ayats* from the Qur'an and extracted a justification for their ruthless activities. Initially, they forced Ali (r) to accept arbitration on the basis of the *Ayat*: "If any do fail to judge by what God has revealed, they are wrongdoers" (Qur'an, 5:47). Then they walked away when a tribunal was appointed, basing their position on another *Ayat*: " Yet those who reject faith hold (others) as equal with their Lord." (Qur'an, 6:1). It was their position that the Qur'an alone was the arbitrator; the arbitration of men was not acceptable.

The arbitrators decided that both Ali (r) and Muawiya were to resign and that a replacement was to be elected by the community. When it was time to make this announcement public, another trick was played. Abu Musa Aashari was asked to speak first and he faithfully announced the joint decision. But when Amr bin al-As followed, he changed the story. "O people, you have heard the decision of Abu Musa. He has deposed his own man and now I too depose him. But I do not depose my own man Muawiya. He is the inheritor of Emir ul Momineen Uthman (r) and wants lawful revenge for his blood. Therefore, he is more entitled to take the seat of the late Caliph". There was pandemonium in the gathering. Accusations flew. But it was too late. When news of this episode reached Ali (r), he was sad. Amr bin al-As returned to Damascus where Muawiya was declared the Caliph (658). Thus it was that during the years 658-661, there were two centers of Caliphate, one in Kufa and the other in Damascus.

This chicanery was unacceptable to followers of Ali (r) and the war resumed. For three years various provinces were contested between Muawiya and Ali (r), including Madina, Mecca, Jazira, Anbar, Madain, Badya, Waqusa, Talbia, Qataqtana, Doumatul Jandal and Tadammur. At long last both sides seemed to have tired and a truce was declared in 660. Under the terms, Ali (r) retained control of Mecca, Madina, Iraq, Persia and the provinces to the east. Muawiya retained control over Syria and Egypt.

The de-facto partition re-established the historic geopolitical boundary between Byzantium and Persia at the borders of the Euphrates. As we shall see again and again in our exposition of Islamic history, this boundary was re-affirmed by many of the Caliphs and sultans, so much so that the historical experience of the Persians, Central Asians, Indians and Pakistanis of today is significantly different from the historical experience of Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Egyptians and North Africans. Syria and Egypt did not accept the Caliphate of Ali (r) until the Abbasid period (750), whereas Ali (r) was for all times the Caliph, the "Lion of God", the teacher and mentor for Persians and Persianized Muslims in the east.

The Kharijites were not content to walk away from Ali (r). They sought to alter the status quo through assassination, murder and mayhem and resolved to simultaneously assassinate Ali (r), Muawiya and Amr bin al As, blaming these three for the civil wars. As fate would have it, the assassination of Ali (r) was successful. Muawiya escaped with a minor wound. Amr bin al As did not show up for prayer on the

day he was to be assassinated and his designee was killed in his place. Ali ibn Abu Talib (r), the fourth Caliph of Islam and the last in the line of those illustrious men who strove to rule in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, died on the 20th of Ramadan, in the year 661.

The storms created by the assassination of Uthman bin Affan (r) swept aside the unity in the Islamic community. Ali ibn Abu Talib (r) tried to steer the ship of state in the stormy waters; in the effort, he himself became a casualty. It is said that he is buried in Kufa. But a close scrutiny of the chronicles reveals that his gravesite is not known. It may be in Kufa, or in the desert, or his body might have been shipped to Madina for burial lest the Kharijites destroy it. The enduring tribute that is paid by history to this great man is that all Muslims, whether they call themselves Shi'a or Sunni, Zaidi or Fatimid, accept him as the Caliph of Islam. He is the *Qutub*, the spiritual pole for the Sufis. He was a consummate orator, a tower of steadfastness, a pillar of courage, fountain of spirituality. He was the originator of classical Arabic grammar. The Prophet called him, "my brother . . . door to my knowledge". His eloquent sayings, collected under the title *Nahjul Balaga*, have a universal appeal and a global following. No other person in Islamic history is accorded this honor.

Comments are closed.

[Create a free website or blog at WordPress.com.](#)