

NAHJ
AL-BALĀGHĀH

SELECTION FROM SERMONS, LETTERS AND SAYINGS

OF

AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN, 'ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB

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W O F I S

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تصدير

والحمد لله الذي وفقنا لنشر الجزء الثالث والآخر من الترجمة الانجليزية هذه (لنهج البلاغة) بعد ان نشرنا - بحول الله وقوته - الجزئين الاول والثاني منه . ونرى من الضروري ان ننبه الى أننا قد وضعنا مدخلا لهذه الطبعة يستوعب اهمّ البحوث حول خطب الامام امير المؤمنين عليه السلام ، وحول كتاب (نهج البلاغة) خاصة ، وترجمة مؤلفه الشريف الرضي (رضي الله عنه وأرضاه) ، وقد استعرضنا فيه تفاصيل عملنا في هذه الترجمة : من اعادة للنظر فيها ومقابلتها مع النصّ العربي ، ومن اعادة النظر في الشروح والهوامش وحذف ما لا حاجة اليه واطافة ما لا بد منه . وحيث انّ هذا المدخل لم يتهيأ بعد للطبع ، وحيث اننا لم نشأ - لاعتبارات لا مجال لذكرها - تأخير طبع الترجمة ، بعد ان تمّ العمل فيها الى حين اكتمال النصّ العربي للمدخل واكتمال ترجمته الانجليزية ، سارعنا الى نشر الترجمة ، وقد صدرت - والحمد لله - تباعا في اجزاء ثلاثة على ان يلحق بها المدخل في القريب العاجل ، باذن الله . وقد الحقنا بهذا الجزء الفهارس الفنية للكتاب .

ومن الله سبحانه نستمدّ الهداية والتوفيق ، والعون والتّسديد ، اثمّ نعم المولى ونعم النصير .

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طهران - ايران

FOREWORD

Praise be to Allāh Who has caused us to succeed in the publication of the third and last part of the English translation of *Nahj al-balāghah*, after the publication, by the power and strength of Allāh, of the first and second parts.

However, we deem it necessary to bring to the kind attention of our readers the fact that we were preparing a special introduction for this translation containing a most important study of the sermons of Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, and a special reference to the book (*Nahj al-balāghah*) and the biography of its compiler as-Sayyid ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī, may Allāh be pleased with him and make him pleased too.

In the said introduction we were to explain, in detail, our policy concerning this translation as to how we have repeatedly checked and compared it with the original text in Arabic, how we have edited and revised the commentary and how we have deleted what was not necessary and added what is necessary.

Since the above mentioned introduction (in Arabic) and its English translation is not ready (for printing) and we did not want to delay any further in the printing of this first part of *Nahj al-balāghah* after it has undergone a long process of checking and rechecking, we have speeded up the publication of the translation, and have issued it in three parts, with praise to Allāh, consecutively. By the will of Allāh, the introduction will be completed in the near future and will be added to these three parts. We have appended to this third part the technical indexes.

Finally, we seek guidance and success from Allāh, the Al-mighty, the Exalted, and to Him we pray to pave the way for us for further services in His cause since He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services
(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

10/2/1401

18/12/1980

Tehran — IRAN.

***In the Name of Allāh,
The All-compassionate, The All-merciful***

*Praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of all being;
the All-compassionate, the All-merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgement;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray
for succour;
Guide us in the straight path;
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.*

* * * * *

*O' Allāh! send your blessings to the head of
your messengers and the last of
your prophets.
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your
prophets and envoys.*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى
سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ وَخَاتَمِ أَنْبِيَائِكَ
مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ
وَصَلِّ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالرُّسُلِ

TRANSLITERATION

Symbol	Transliteration
ء	'
ب	B
ت	T
ث	Th
ج	J
ح	Ḥ
خ	Kh
د	D
ذ	Dh
ر	R
ز	Z
س	S
ش	Sh
ص	Ṣ
ض	Ḍ
ط	Ṭ
ظ	Ẓ
ع	'
غ	Gh
ف	F
ق	Q

Symbol	Transliteration
ك	K
ل	L
م	M
ن	N
ه	H
و	W
ي	Y
ة	ah, at (construct state)
ال	article al- and 'l (even before the antepalatals)
Long Vowels	
آ	ā
و	ū
ي	ī
Short Vowels	
ـَ	a
ـُ	u
ـِ	i

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PART THREE

NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

PART THREE

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF OUR MASTER
AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN, 'ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB AND HIS
LETTERS TO HIS ENEMIES, AND THE GOVERNORS OF
HIS PROVINCES, INCLUDING SELECTIONS OF HIS
LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT TO HIS ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICERS, AND HIS INJUNCTIONS TO MEMBERS OF
HIS FAMILY AND HIS COMPANIONS

LETTER 1

Addressed to the people of Kūfah at the time of his march from Medina to Baṣrah¹

From the servant of Allāh, ‘Alī, the Commander of the faithful, to the people of Kūfah who are foremost among the supporters and chiefs of the Arabs.

Now, I am apprising you of what befell ‘Uthmān so (correctly) that its hearing may be like its seeing. People criticised him, and I was the only man from among the *muhājirūn* (immigrants) who asked him to seek to satisfy (the Muslims) most and to offend them the least. As for Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, their lightest step about him was hard and their softest voice was strong. ‘Ā’ishah too was in a rage with him. Consequently, a group overpowered him and killed him. Then, people swore allegiance to me, not by force or compulsion, but obediently and out of free will.

¹ Ibn Maythman writes (in *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.4, p.338) that when on hearing about the mischief-mongering of Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, Amīr al-mu’minīn set off for Baṣrah, he sent this letter to the people of

You should know that Medina has been vacated by its residents and they have abandoned it. It is boiling like a huge cooking pot and rebellion

Kūfah through Imām al-Ḥasan and ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir from al-Mā’ al-‘Adhb, while Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd has written (in *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.14, pp.8, 16; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, p.3139; and Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, p.223) that when Amīr al-mu’minīn camped at ar-Rabadhah, he sent this letter through Muḥammad ibn Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. In this letter Amīr al-mu’minīn has clearly thrown light on the point that the assassination of ‘Uthmān was the result of the efforts of ‘Ā’ishah, Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, and that it was they who took a prominent part in it. In fact, ‘Ā’ishah went beyond her bounds and exposed his shortcomings in public meetings and ordered that he should be killed. Thus, ash-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh has written :

Once ‘Uthmān was on the pulpit when Umm al-mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah took out the shoes and the shirt of the Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) from under her veil and said: “These are the shoes of the Messenger of Allāh and his shirt, not yet decayed, while you have altered his religion and changed his *sunnah*.” Upon this, hot words followed between them when she said, “Kill this *Na’tal*,” symbolising him as a long bearded Jew (of that name). (*Nahj al-balāghah*, printed in Egypt, vol.2, p.3; also see *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol.5, p.88; Abu’l-Fidā’, vol.1, p.172).

People were already displeased with ‘Uthmān, so this event increased their boldness and they surrounded him so that he might mend his ways or abdicate from the caliphate. In these circumstances, there was serious apprehension that if he did not accept either of the two alternatives he would be killed. All this was observed by ‘Ā’ishah, but she paid no heed to it and, leaving him in the siege, decided to leave for Mecca, although on this occasion Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam and ‘Attāb ibn Asīd did say to her, “If you postpone your departure it is possible his life may be saved and this crowd may disperse” whereupon she said that she had decided to go for *ḥajj* (pilgrimage) and that that could not be changed. Then Marwān recited this couplet by way of a proverb :

Qays set fire to my cities, and when they came into flames he slipped away saving himself clear of it.

Similarly, Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr were (also) in rage against him and they were ever forward in fanning this fire and intensifying the opposition. From this angle they were, to a great extent, taking part in his assassination

is fixed on its axis moving with full force. So, hasten towards your *amīr* (commander) and proceed forward to fight your enemy, if so wills Allāh to Whom belongs Might and Majesty.

* * * * *

and responsible for his blood. Other people also knew them in this perspective and regarded them as his murderers, while their supporters too were not able to offer any explanation (for absolving them). Thus, Ibn Qutaybah writes that when al-Mughirah ibn Shu‘bah met ‘Ā’ishah at Awṭās he asked her :

“ ‘O’ Umm al-mu’minīn, where are you bound for.” She replied, “I am going to Baṣrah” He inquired for what purpose and she replied, “To avenge ‘Uthmān’s blood.” He said, “But his assassins are with you.” Then he turned to Marwān and enquired where he was going. He replied that he too was going to Baṣrah. He enquired the purpose and the reply was “to avenge ‘Uthmān’s blood.” Then he said, “ ‘Uthmān’s assassins are with you. These Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr have killed him.” (*al-Imāmah was’siyāsāh*, vol.1, p.60)

In any case, when, after laying the blame on Amīr al-mu’minīn, this group who had killed ‘Uthmān reached Baṣrah, Amīr al-mu’minīn also rose to quell this mischief and wrote this letter to the people of Kūfah to seek their support. Upon this their combatants and warriors rose in large numbers and enlisted in his army. They faced the enemy with full courage which Amīr al-mu’minīn also acknowledged. Thus, the letter hereafter is in acknowledgement of this very fact.

LETTER 2

**Written to the people of Kūfah
after the victory of Baṣrah**

May Allāh reward you, townsmen (of Kūfah), on behalf of a member of your Prophet's family, with the best reward that He bestows on those who act in obedience to Him, and on those who thank Him for His bounties. Surely, you heard (me) and obeyed, and when you were called you promptly responded.

DOCUMENT 3

**Written for Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith (al-Kindī)
Qāḍī (judge) (at Kūfah).**

It is related that Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith (al-Kindī) who was Amīr al-mu'minīn's Qāḍī (judge) at Kūfah during his tenure, purchased a house for eighty Dinars. When it became known to Amīr al-mu'minīn he sent for him and said to him: I have come to know that you have purchased a house for eighty Dinars, and that you have written a document for it and put witnessing on it. **Shurayḥ replied:** Yes, Amīr al-mu'minīn, it is so. **Amīr al-mu'minīn cast an angry look at him and said to him:**

O' Shurayḥ, beware, shortly one body (the angel of death) will come to you who will not look at the document, nor question you about your evidence but take you out of it far away and deposit you in your grave quite alone. Look! O' Shurayḥ, if you have purchased this house from money other than yours or paid the price from unlawful source, you have incurred loss of this world as well as of the next. If you had come to me at the time of purchase I would have written for you a document on this paper and then you would not have liked to purchase the house even for

one Dirham, not to speak of more. That document is this : —

This is about a purchase made by a humble slave (of Allāh) from another slave ready to depart (for the next world). He has purchased a house out of houses of deceit in the area of mortals and the place of those liable to perish. This house has four boundaries as follows: The first boundary is contiguous to sources of calamities; the second boundary adjoins the sources of distress; the third boundary adjoins devastating desire; and the fourth boundary adjoins deceitful Satan and towards this opens the door of this house.

This house has been purchased by one who has been waylaid by desires from one who is being driven by death at the price of leaving the honour of contentment and entering into the humility of want and submissiveness. If the purchaser encounters some (evil) consequences of this transaction then it is for him who dismantles the bodies of monarchs, snatches the lives of despots, destroys the domain of Pharaoh like Kisrās,¹ Caesars,² Tubba‘³ and Ḥimyar⁴ and all those who amass wealth upon wealth and

¹ **Kisrā**, is the Arabicised form of “Khusraw” which means a King whose domain of rule extends to a vast area. This was the title of the rulers of Iran.

² **Cesar**, was the title of the rulers of Rome, which in Latin means that child whose mother dies before delivery and who is extracted by cutting open her body. Since among the Kings of Rome, Augustus was born like this he was known by this name and after that this word was adopted as the title of every ruler.

³ **Tubba‘**, is an appellation of each of the Kings of Yemen who possessed Ḥimyar and Ḥaḍramawt. Their names have been mentioned in the holy Qur’ān in chaps.44:37 and 50:14.

⁴ **Ḥimyar**, originally, an important tribe in the ancient Sabaeen kingdom of south-western Arabia; later the powerful rulers of much of southern Arabia from c. 115 BC to c. AD 525. The Ḥimyarites were concentrated in the area known as Dhū Raydan (later called Qatabān) on the coast of present-day Yemen; thus they were probably aided in the overthrow of their Sabaeen

go on increasing it, build high houses and decorate them and collect treasures and preserve them, as they claimed according to their own thinking, for children to take them to the place of accounting and judgement and the position of reward and punishment. When the verdict will be passed *those who stood on falsehood would then be the losers.* (Qur'ān, 40:78)

This document is witnessed by intelligence when it is free from the shackles of desires and away from the adornments of this world.

* * * * *

LETTER 4

To one of the officer of his army

If they¹ return to the umbrella of obedience then this is all that

kinsmen by the discovery of a sea route from Egypt to India, which deprived the inland Sabaeen kingdom of its former importance as a centre for overland trade. The Ḥimyarites (classical Homeritae) inherited the Sabaeen language and culture, and from their capital at Zafār their power at times extended eastward as far as the Persian Gulf and northward into the Arabian Desert. At the beginning of the 4th century AD the Ḥimyar capital was moved northward to San'a, and later in that century both Christianity and Judaism gained firm footholds in the area. Internal disorders and changing trade routes caused the kingdom to decline, and in 525, after several unsuccessful attempts, Abyssinian invaders finally crushed the Ḥimyarites. A Ḥimyar appeal to Persia for aid led to Persian control in 575. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Micropaedia], vol.5, p.49, ed. 1973 -1974).

¹ When 'Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf, the Governor of Baṣrah informed Amīr al-mu'minīn of the arrival of Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr in Baṣrah and of their intentions, Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote this letter to him, wherein he has instructed him that in case the enemy was bent on fighting, when facing him he should not enlist on his side those who on the one hand showed consideration for the personalities of 'Ā'ishah, Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr and who on the other hand had agreed to fight against them merely by persuasion, because such people could not be expected to fight steadfastly nor could they be depended upon. Rather, such people would try to

we want. But if the condition of these people points out towards disruption and disobedience then, taking with you those who obey you, rush upon those who disobey you, and while you have those with you who follow you do not worry about those who hold back from you, because the absence of a halfhearted man is better than his presence, and his sitting down is better than his rising up.

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LETTER 5

To al-Ash‘ath ibn Qays (al-Kindī), the Governor of Āzarbāyjān

Certainly, your assignment¹ is not a morsel for you, but it is a trust round your neck, and you have been charged with the protection (of the people) on behalf of your superiors. It is not for you to be oppressive towards the ruled, nor to risk yourself save on strong grounds. You have in your hands the funds which is the property of Allāh, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, and you hold its charge till you pass it on to me. Probably, I will not be one of the bad rulers for you, and that is an end to

dishearten others too. Therefore, it was only good to leave aside such people.

¹ When Amīr al-mu‘minīn was free from the battle of Jamal he wrote to al-Ash‘ath ibn Qays (al-Kindī) who had been the Governor of Āzarbāyjān from the days of ‘Uthmān, to send the revenue and levies of his province. But since he had fears about the future of his position and assignment, he intended to swallow all this money like other officers of ‘Uthmān. Therefore, when this letter reached him he sent for his chief associates and after mentioning this letter to them said: ‘I fear that this money will be taken away from me; I therefore intend to join Mu‘āwiyah.’ Whereupon those people said that it was a matter of shame to leave kith and kin and seek refuge with Mu‘āwiyah. Consequently, on the advice of these people he postponed his idea to run away but did not agree to part with the money. On getting this information Amīr al-mu‘minīn sent Ḥūjr ibn ‘Adī al-Kindī to bring him to Kūfah. He persuaded him and brought him to Kūfah. On reaching there his kit was found to contain four hundred thousand Dirhams out of which Amīr al-mu‘minīn left thirty thousand for him and deposited the rest in the public treasury.

the matter.

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LETTER 6

To Mu‘āwiyah (ibn Abī Sufyān)

Verily, those who swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān have sworn allegiance¹ to me on the same basis on which

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 re-election 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

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 *ansār*. 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. By my life, O' Mu'āwiyah, if you see with your brain 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. Then you may commit an outrage (on me) as you like and that is an end to the matter.

* * * * *

LETTER 7

To Mu'āwiyah

I have received from you the packet of unconnected advices and the embellished letter. You have written it because of your misguidance, and despatched it because of lack of wisdom. This is the letter of a man who has neither light to show him the way nor a leader to guide him on the right path. Passion prompted him and he responded to it. Misguidance led him and he followed it. Consequently, he began to speak nonsense and became recklessly astray.

A part of the same letter

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.

Because allegiance is once and for all. It is not open to reconsidered nor is there any scope for fresh proceedings of election. He who remains out of it is deemed to be critical of Islam while he who prevaricates upon it is a hypocrite.

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LETTER 8

To Jarīr ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Bajalī when Amīr al-mu‘minīn sent him to Mu‘āwiyah (and there was delay in his return)

Now then, when you receive this letter of mine ask Mu‘āwiyah to take a final decision and to follow a determined course. Then ask him to choose either war that exiles him from home or ignoble peace. If he chooses war leave him alone, but if he chooses peace secure his allegiance; and that is an end to the matter.

* * * * *

LETTER 9

To Mu‘āwiyah

Our people¹ (the Quraysh) decided to kill our Prophet and to

¹ When the Messenger of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) was commanded (by Allāh) to call people to (believe in) the Unity of Allāh, the powers of unbelief and disobedience stood up to block the way of Truthfulness and the tribes of Quraysh decided to quell this voice through pressure and force. The love of their idols was so staunch in the hearts of these unbelievers that they were not prepared to hear a single word against them. The idea of one God was enough to rouse their passions. In addition, they were made to hear such epithets about their gods that gave them no better position than lifeless stones. When they saw

their principles and beliefs in danger they prepared themselves to trouble the Prophet and got ready to try every means to that end. They adopted such pain-inflicting devices (against the Prophet) that it was impossible for him to step out of his house. Those who had accepted Islam in this period too had to face continuous tribulations. For example, these adherents of belief were often laid prostrate on the ground under the sun and beaten with straps and stones till they lost their senses. When the atrocities of the Quraysh rose to this extent the Prophet permitted them to leave Mecca and immigrate towards Abyssinia, in the fifth year of his call to Prophethood. The Quraysh followed them there as well, but the ruler of Abyssinia refused to hand them over to them, and by his fairness and justice did not allow any trouble to befall them.

On the other side the Prophet's preaching was continuing and the magnetism and influence of Truth was producing its effect. People were impressed by his teachings and personality and coming into his fold as a result of which the Quraysh felt much perturbed and tried to stop this increasing influence and power. When they could not do anything they decided to sever all connections with Banū Hāshim and Banū 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, to have no social contacts with them and to have no transactions with them, so that they might be forced to give up supporting the Prophet and then they would deal with him as they wished. Consequently, they concluded a mutual agreement about it and a document was written on the subject and kept in deposit. After this agreement, although the locality was the same and the inhabitants too were the same yet for Banū Hāshim every nook and corner became strange and well-known faces turned as if they had never known each other. All of them turned their faces and stopped mutual meeting and contacts. In these circumstances, there was also apprehension that the Prophet might be attacked suddenly in a valley outside the city. For this reason, they were forced to take refuge in a place called '*shi'b* (quarter) of Abī Ṭ ālib.'

At this stage those Banū Hāshim who had not yet accepted Islam shared these privations on account of lineal unity and offered defence at the hour of need, while those who had accepted Islam like Ḥamzah and Abū Ṭ ālib, were active in protecting the Prophet by way of a religious obligation. In particular, Abū Ṭ ālib had given up all his personal ease and comfort. He spent his days in consoling the Prophet and his nights in changing his bed, in this way, that if the Prophet used a bed one night the next night 'Alī was made to sleep in it, so that in case someone attacked, then 'Alī should suffer the brunt.

This was a period of great privation and trouble for Banū Hāshim. If

annihilate our root. They created worries for us, behaved with us harshly, denied us ease of life, exposed us to fear, forced us to take refuge in a rugged mountain and ignited for us the flames of war.

they could get leaves of trees to eat that was enough, otherwise they had to starve. After the lapse of three years in these hardships Zuhayr ibn Abī Umayyah (whose mother was ‘Ātikah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib), Hishām ibn ‘Amr ibn Rabī‘ah (who had family relationship with Banū Hāshim through his mother), al-Muṭ‘im ibn ‘Adī ibn Nawfal ibn ‘Abd Manāf, Abu’l-Bakhtarī al-‘Āṣ ibn Hishām ibn al-Mughīrah and Zama‘ah ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib proposed that this agreement should be abrogated. For a discussion of this issue, the Chiefs among the Quraysh assembled in the Ka‘bah. No decision has yet been taken when Abū Ṭālib also came out of the Valley and joined them. He said to them, “My nephew Muḥammad has told me that the paper on which this agreement was written has been eaten by white-ants and nothing in it has remained save the name of Allāh. So, you should send for the document and see it. If he is correct then you should give up animosity to him; and if he is wrong I am ready to hand him over to you.” Consequently, the document was sent for and seen. It was a fact that except the words “with Your name, O’ my Allāh” which was written on the top of all documents in those days the rest of it had been eaten away by white-ants. Seeing this al-Muṭ‘im ibn ‘Adī tore off the writing and thus this agreement was abrogated. At last Banū Hāshim got rid of the life of oppression and helplessness; but even after this there was no change in the unbelievers’ behaviour towards the Prophet; rather they were so keen in their enmity and malice against him that they started thinking of taking his life, as a consequence of which the great event of *hijrah* (immigration of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina) took place. Although on this occasion Abū Ṭālib was no longer alive, ‘Alī represented him by lying down on the Prophet’s bed, because it was the lesson taught by Abū Ṭālib through which he managed to protect the Holy Prophet’s life.

Although these events were not unknown to Mu‘āwiyah yet by recounting to him the deeds of his predecessors, the intention was to awaken his malicious spirit. Therefore, his attention has been drawn to the hardships inflicted (on the Holy Prophet and his adherents) by the Quraysh and especially Banū ‘Abd Shams so that he might see the conduct of each of the followers of truth and the followers of wrong and realize whether he himself was treading on the right path or just following his forefathers.

Allāh then gave us determination to protect His religion and defend His honour. The believers among us expected (heavenly) reward from it, and the unbelievers among us gave their support because of kinship. Those who accepted Islam from among the Quraysh were away from the distresses in which we were involved either because of a pledge that protected them or because of the tribe that would rise to support them. They were therefore safe from killing. The way with the Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) was that when fighting became fierce and people began to loose ground he would send forward members of his family and through them protect his companions from the attacks of swords and spears. In this way ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith was killed on the day of Badr, Ḥamzah (ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib) on the day of Uḥud and Ja‘far (ibn Abī Ṭālib) on the day of Mu‘tah. One more person, whom I can name if I wish, desired to seek martyrdom as they did; but their deaths approached, while his death had not yet approached.

How strange it is that I am being grouped with him who never evinced briskness of pace like me nor had he to his credit any achievement like mine unless he claims something of which I do not know and which I think Allāh too does not know. In any case, all praise belongs to Allāh.

As regards your request to hand over to you the murderers of ‘Uthmān, I have thought over this matter and I do not find their handing over to you or to someone else possible for me. By my life, if you do not give up your wrong ways and disruptive acts you will surely know them. They will shortly be seeking you and will not give you the trouble of seeking them in land, sea, mountains or plain. But this search will be painful for you and their visit will not give you happiness. Peace be on those who deserve it.

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LETTER 10

To Mu‘āwiyah

What will you do when the coverings of this world in which you are wrapped are removed from you. The world attracted you with its embellishment and deceived you with its pleasure. It called you and you responded to it. It led you and you followed it. It commanded you and you obeyed it. Shortly an informer will inform you of things against which there will be no shield (to protect you). Therefore, keep off from this affair, take heed of the accounting (on the Day of Judgement), get ready for death that will soon overtake you and do not give your ears to those who have gone astray. If you do not do so I shall recall to you whatever you have forgotten, because you are a man living in ease and luxury.¹ Satan has taken you in his clutches, has secured his wishes in you and has taken complete control of you like your soul and blood.

O' Mu'āwiyah, when were you all protectors of the ruled and guardians of the affairs of the people? Without any forward step or conspicuous distinction? We seek Allāh's protection against the befalling of previous misfortunes, and I warn you lest you continue being deceived by desires and your appearance becomes different from your innerself.

You have called me to war. Better to leave the people on one side, come out to me and spare both the parties from fighting so that it may be known who of us has a rusted heart, and covered eyes. I am Abu'l-Ḥasan who killed your granfather² your brother³ and your uncle⁴ by cutting them to pieces on the day of Badr. The same sword is with me and I meet my adversary with the same heart. I have not altered the religion nor put up any new prophet. I am surely (treading) on that very highway which

¹ This is in reference to the verse :

We sent no warner into any city except its man who lived at ease said, "We disbelieve in the Message you have been sent with." (Qur'ān, 34:34)

² 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah.

³ Ḥanzalah ibn Abī Sufyān.

⁴ al-Walīd ibn 'Utbah.

you had willingly foresaken (in the beginning) and then adopted per force. You think you have come out seeking to revenge ‘Uthmān’s blood. Certainly, you know how ‘Uthmān’s blood was shed. If you want to avenge it, avenge it there. It is as though I see that when war is cutting you with its teeth you cry like camels crying under a heavy load. And it is as though I see your party bewildered by the incessant striking of swords, occurrence of death and falling of bodies after bodies, calling me towards the Qur’ān¹ although they would themselves be either unbelievers, deniers of truth or breakers of allegiance after swearing it.

* * * * *

INSTRUCTION 11

Given to the contingent sent to

¹ This prophecy of Amīr al-mu’minīn is about the battle of Şifīn. Herein he has depicted the whole picture in very few words. Thus, on one side Mu‘āwiyah was bewildered on account of the attacks of the Iraqis and was thinking to run away, and on the other, his army was crying under the constant onslaught of death, and, eventually, when there was no way of escape, they raised the Qur’ān on spears and shouted for peace. By this device, the remaining persons saved their lives.

“This prophecy” as Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī says, “is either true prophetic keen eye of Amīr al-mu’minīn which is really a significant power, or it is an information through knowledge of the unknown (*‘ilmul-ghayb*) which is too most significant and wonderful. However, both cases are in the state of extreme significance and wonderfulness.”

Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd has further quoted the same prophecy from other letters of Amīr al-mu’minīn to Mu‘āwiyah. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.15, pp.83-85)

This prophecy cannot be attributed to imagination, guessing or the drawing of inference from events, nor can these details be ascertained by wit or far-reaching intelligence. Only he can disclose them whose source of information is either the Prophet’s own revelation-bearing tongue or Divine inspiration.

confront the enemy.¹

¹ When Amīr al-mu'minīn put Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī and Shurayḥ ibn Hānī al-Ḥārithī in command of contingents of eight thousand and four thousand strong at the camp of an-Nukhaylah and ordered them to advance towards Syria (ash-Shām), some dispute arose between them about their ranks, of which they apprised Amīr al-mu'minīn and wrote letters of complaints about each other. In reply, Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote to them that when they marched jointly the command of the whole force would be with Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī and when they marched separately each would be in command of the force over which he had been placed.

In this letter Amīr al-mu'minīn also wrote for them certain instructions. Here as-Sayyid ar-Radī has taken down only the portion containing the instructions. These instructions are not only useful as concerns the strategies of fighting of those days, but their utility and importance in bringing out the principles of fighting in these days also is undeniable. These instructions are that at the time of encounter with the enemy the forces should be encamped on the tops of mountains and turns of rivers, because in this way the low areas of the rivers would serve as trenches and the peaks of mountains as the walls of the fortress and thus it would be possible to feel secure and face the enemy from the other side. Secondly, that the attack should be from one side or at the most from two sides, because by distribution of the entire force on several fronts weakness would inevitably arise. Thirdly, that the watchers should be put in position on the tops of high ground and the peaks of mountains so that they may give warning before the attack. Sometimes it happens that instead of attacking from the expected side the enemy attacks from a different side. Therefore, if watchers are in position in high places they will detect the enemy from the cloud of dust seen from a distance.

To clarify the useful aspect of these instructions Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has recorded (in vol.15, p.91) a historical incident that when Qaḥṭabah (ibn Shabīb at-Ṭā'ī) encamped in a village after leaving Khurāsān, he and Khālīd ibn Barmak went and sat on the top of a nearby hill. No sooner had they sat down than Khālīd noticed flocks of deer coming running from the forest. On seeing this he said to Qaḥṭabah, ‘‘O’ commander, get up and announce to the army that they should at once fall in line and take up arms.’’ Hearing this, Qaḥṭabah was startled and stood up but looking hither and thither said, ‘‘I do not see the enemy’s men anywhere.’’ He replied, ‘‘O’ Amīr, this is not the time that should be lost in conversation. You see these deer which are proceeding towards the people, leaving their abodes. This means that the

When you proceed towards the enemy or he proceeds towards you, the position of your force should be on the approaches high ground or on the edges of mountains or the bends of rivers, so that it may serve you as a help and a place to return to. Your encounter should be from one side or two sides. Place watchers on the peaks of mountains and the raised sides of the high ground so that the enemy may not approach you from any place, whether of danger or safety. And know that the vanguard of an army serves as their eyes, and the eyes of the vanguard are their informers. Beware of dispersal. When you halt do so together and when you move you should move together. When night comes fix your spears in a circle and do not sleep except for dosing or napping.

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INSTRUCTION 12

**Given to Ma'qil ibn Qays ar-Riyāhī when he was
dispatched to Syria at the head of a vanguard contingent
three thousand strong.**

army of the enemy is marching from their rear.’’ Consequently, he ordered his army to get ready. As soon as the army got ready the noise of horses’ hoofs was heard and within moments the enemy was on them. Since they had prepared themselves for defence in time, they defended themselves against the enemy thoroughly. Now, if Khālid had not been at such a height and had not acted with such sagacity, the enemy would have attacked them unawares and annihilated them. Fourthly, that the reconnaissance should be spread here and there, so that they can be aware of the movements and intentions of the enemy, and thereby foil his plans. Fifthly, that when the army camps it should camp together and when it moves it should move together so that the enemy does not attack you in a state of dispersal and overpower you easily. Sixthly, that at night the guard should be formed by fixing spears in a circle in the ground so that if the enemy attacks in the night, it is possible to prepare for defence by taking up arms at once and if the enemy showers arrows that too can be defied. Seventhly, that deep sleep should be avoided lest you remain unaware of the enemy’s approach and he succeed in attacking you before you get ready.

Fear Allāh before Whom attendance is inevitable, and with other than Whom there is no meeting. Do not fight except with those who fight you. Travel in the two cool periods (i.e., morning and evening). Let the men have a midday sleep. March easily and do not travel during the early night for Allāh has made it for resting and has ordained it for staying, nor for journeying. Therefore, give rest to your body in the night and let your carrier-beasts also rest. When you are sure that morning has appeared and when dawn has dawned, commence your journey with Allāh's blessings. If and when you face the enemy stand in the midst of your comrades. Do not get too near the foe like one who wants to commence the fighting, nor remain too distant like one who is afraid of action, till you receive my orders. Hatred for them should not lead you to fight before inviting them (to guidance) and exhausting your pleas before them.

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LETTER 13

To two of the officers in his army

I have placed Mālik¹ ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar in command over you and over all those under you. Therefore, follow his commands and take him as the armour and shield for yourselves, because he is one of those from whom I have no fear of weakness nor any mistake, nor laziness where haste is more appropriate, nor haste where slackness is expected of him.

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¹ When Amīr al-mu'minīn sent a vanguard contingent twelve thousand strong under Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī and Shurayḥ ibn Hānī al-Ḥārithī to Syria, on the way, near Sūr ar-Rūm, they encountered with Abu'l-A'war ('Amr ibn Sulaymān) as-Sulamī who was camping there with a contingent of the Syrians. Both of them informed Amīr al-mu'minīn of this through al-Ḥārith ibn Jumhān al-Ju'fī, whereupon he sent Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar as the Officer-in-command and wrote this letter to inform them. The brief but comprehensive words in which Amīr al-mu'minīn has mentioned Mālik al-Ashtar in this letter gives an indication of his intelligence, sagacity, courage, daring, expanse and versatility in the art of war and his personal greatness and importance.

INSTRUCTION 14
Given to the army before the encounter
with the enemy at Şiffin.¹

¹ The responsibility for the war and fighting that took place between Amīr al-mu'minīn and Mu'āwiyah lies solely on Mu'āwiyah because he brought about the war by laying the wrong blame for 'Uthmān's blood on Amīr al-mu'minīn, although the real facts about the causes of 'Uthmān's killing and by whom he was killed were not unknown to him. But since there was no way for him to achieve his end save by creating an occasion for war, he entered into war to retain his authority which was evidently offensive and which cannot by any means be considered as permissible, because revolt and rebellion against the rightful Imām is unlawful according to the general consensus of Muslims. Thus, Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf an-Nawāwī (631/1233 -676/1277) writes:

Do not fight against those in authority in matters of governance, nor raise objections against them except when you observe them committing things which you know are definitely against Islam. If you see them doing such things regard it bad for them and speak the truth wherever you may be, but rising against them or fighting is prohibited by the consensus of Muslims. (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.2, p.125. In agreement with this view, see also, al-Qādī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī [338/950 — 403/1013], the Ash'arite great scholar, in *at-Tamhīd*, p.186; and Sa'du'd-Dīn Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar at-Taftāzānī [712/1312 -793/1390] in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, vol.2, p.272)

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ash-Shahrastānī writes :

Whoever rises against the true Imām, by the unanimity of opinion of the (Muslim) community, is known as a Khārijite, the deviator. The same is the case of rising, during the days of the companions, against the rightful Imams, or even after them against those who followed them in virtue. (*al-Milal wa'n-niḥal*, vol.1, p.114)

There is no doubt that Mu'āwiyah's action was the result of uprising and revolt, and to take up arms for the purpose of stopping the advance of the one who revolts is not to be regarded as being against any code of peacefulness or peace-loving. Rather, it is a natural right of the oppressed; and if he is deprived of this right then there will remain no way of

preventing oppression and tyranny or of safeguarding rights in the world. That is why Allāh has permitted taking up arms against rebels. Thus, Allāh says :

And if two parties of the believers fall into a quarrel (among themselves), restore ye peace between them two; but if one of the two transgresseth against the other, (then) fight ye (all against) that which transgresseth until it complieth with the command of Allāh; and if it complieth then restore ye peace between the two with justice, and act ye justly; Verily, Allāh loveth the just ones. (Qur’ān, 49:9)

It was the first plea to which Amīr al-mu’minīn pointed out by saying, “By the Grace of Allāh you are in the right,” but even after exhaustion of this plea he prevented his army from taking the initiative in fighting, because he wished that the initiative should not be from his side and that he should take up the sword only in defence. Consequently, when all his effort for peace and tranquility proved futile and the enemy took the step towards war, this was the second argument in their favour, after which Amīr al-mu’minīn could not be blamed for getting ready to fight, nor accused of aggressive action. It was rather an obligation to stop oppression and tyranny that he had to discharge and which Allāh has permitted in plain words. Thus, Allāh’s command is that :

And fight in the cause of Allāh (against) those who fight you but be not aggressive; for verily Allāh loveth not the aggressors. (Qur’ān, 2:190)

Besides, fighting against Amīr al-mu’minīn means fighting against the Prophet, as the Prophet’s saying: “O’ ‘Alī, your peace is my peace and your war is my war” (Ibn al-Maghāzilī, *al-Manāqib*, p.5; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.18, p.24). In this way whatever punishment should be for fighting against the Prophet should be for fighting against Amīr al-mu’minīn. For him who wages war against the Prophet, Allāh has laid down the following punishment.

To recompense of those who war against Allāh and His Apostle, and strive in the land, spreading mischief (therein), is only that they be slain or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off, from the opposite sides, or be banished from the land; This for them shall be the disgrace in this world, and for them, in the hereafter, shall be a great torment. (Qur’ān, 5:33)

Do not fight them unless they initiate the fighting, because, by the grace of Allāh, you are in the right and to leave them till they begin fighting will be another point from your side against them. If, by the will of Allāh, the enemy is defeated then do not kill the runner away, do not strike a helpless person, do not finish off the wounded, and do not inflict pain on women even though they may attack your honour with filthy words and abuse your officers, because they are weak in character, mind and intelligence. We have been ordered to desist from them although they may be unbelievers. Even in pre-Islamic (*al-jāhiliyyah*) period if a man struck a woman with a stone or a stick he was rebuked along with his posteriors after him.

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INVOCATION 15

Made by Amīr al-mu'minīn when

Apart from this, the instructions that Amīr al-mu'minīn issued in connection with the war, namely that no runner away or wounded should be molested, are so high from the moral point of view that they can be regarded as a sublime specimen of moral values and the high standard of Islamic fighting. Then, these instructions were not confined to mere words but Amīr al-mu'minīn followed them to the letter, and ordered others also to follow them strictly. He did not, on any occasion, tolerate the chasing of a runner away, attack the helpless or molest women, in fact, on the battlefield of Jamal, where the command of the opposite force was with a woman, he did not change his principle. After the defeat and vanquishment of the foe he gave proof of his high character and sent 'Ā'ishah to Medina under guard. Had there been someone other than Amīr al-mu'minīn he would have proposed the same punishment as that which ought to be awarded for such a step ! Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written :

What she did with Amīr al-mu'minīn, if she had done the same with (Caliph) 'Umar and had spread rebellion against him among the people, he would , after securing victory over her, have killed her and cut her into pieces, but Amīr al-mu'minīn was very fore-bearing and largehearted. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.17, p.254)

he used to face the enemy.

O' my Allāh ! hearts are getting drawn to You, necks are stretching (towards You), eyes are fixed (on You), steps are in motion and bodies have turned lean. O' my Allāh! hidden animosity has become manifest and the pots of malice are boiling.

O' my Allāh ! we complain to You of the absence of our Prophet, the numerousness of our enemy and the diffusion of our passions.

Our Lord! Decide between us and between our people with truth, and You are the Best of Deciders. (Qur'ān, 7:89)

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INSTRUCTION 16

**He used to give to his followers
at the time of battle.**

The retreat after which return is intended and the withdrawal after which attack is in view should not make you unhappy. Do justice with the swords (allow your swords to do their duties). Keep ready a place for the falling of bodies (of your foe) ; prepare yourselves for hurling strong spears and striking swords with full force, and keep your voices down as that keeps off cowardice.

By Him Who broke open the seed (for growing) and created living beings, they had not accepted Islam but they had secured safety (by verbally professing it) and had hidden their misbelief. Consequently, when they found helpers for their misbelief they disclosed it.

* * * * *

LETTER 17

In reply to a letter from Mu‘āwiyah.¹

¹ During the battle of Şiffīn, Mu‘āwiyah thought of again demanding the province of Syria from Amīr al-mu‘minīn and to play such a trick as to succeed in his designs. In this connection, he consulted ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. But the latter did not agree with this idea and said, “O’ Mu‘āwiyah, think a little, what effect will this writing of yours have on ‘Alī? How can he fall in this trap by your persuasion.” On this Mu‘āwiyah said, “We are all descendants of ‘Abd Manāf. What difference is there between ‘Alī and me that he may score over me and I may not succeed in deceiving him? ” ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ said, “If you think so, then write and see (the outcome).” Mu‘āwiyah therefore wrote a letter to Amīr al-mu‘minīn wherein he made a demand for Syria and also wrote: “We are descendants of ‘Abd Manāf. There is no distinction of one over the other among us.” Then, Amīr al-mu‘minīn wrote this letter in reply and mentioning his own predecessors along with those of Mu‘āwiyah disproved his contention of equality. Although the origin of both was the same and the paternal chain of both joined at ‘Abd Manāf, the progeny of ‘Abd Shams was the source of all evil in morality and character and was involved in heresy and vice whereas the house of Hashim was the worshipper of one God and kept aloof from idolatory. If the branches growing out of the same root bear both flowers as well as thorns, then both cannot be deemed equal. Consequently, it does not need any detailed explanation to show that Umayyah and Hāshim, Ḥarb and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Abū Sufyān and Abū Ṭālib were not match of each other from any angle. This is not denied by any historian nor by any biographer. In fact, after this reply even Mu‘āwiyah did not dare refute it, because the fact could be concealed that after ‘Abd Manāf it was Hāshim alone who possessed conspicuous prestige among the Quraysh, and the most important positions with relation to the Ka‘bah namely *siqāyah* (i.e., the superintendence of the water-supply, especially with a view to the needs of pilgrims) and *rifādah* (provisioning of pilgrims) was assigned to him. As such, at the time of *ḥajj*, caravan after caravan used to come and stay with him and he was such a generous host to them that those who partook of his generosity and benevolence would praise him for long thereafter.

The worthy son of this very large-hearted and courageous father was ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib whose name was Shaybah and surname was Sayyidu’l-Baṭḥā’ (the Chief of the Valley of Mecca). He was the successor to the distinction of Abraham’s line and owner of the greatness and chiefdom of Quraysh. The high courage and far-sightedness showed by him before Abraham is a shining

star of the family of ‘Abd Manāf. ‘Abd Manāf was a pearl and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the lustre of the pearl.

‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s son was Abū Ṭālib whose lap served as the cradle for ‘Abdullāh’s orphan child and the training place of the Prophet. He brought up the Prophet in his care, and shielded him against his enemies. To compare Abū Sufyān, Ḥarb and Umayyah with them or to regard them as their matches is the same as to close one’s eyes to the lustre of light and to regard it as darkness.

After recounting this geneological difference the next point of distinction that Amīr al-mu’minīn has described is that he himself is a *muhājir* (immigrant from Mecca) while Mu‘āwiyah is a *ṭalīq* (i.e., one of those whom the Prophet had spared on the day of fall of Mecca). Therefore, when the Prophet entered Mecca victorious he enquired from the Quraysh how they thought he would deal with them, and all said that being a generous son of a generous father they expected only good from him, whereupon the Prophet said, “Go away, you have all been spared.” That is, “you did deserve to be detained as slaves but as a mark of obligation you have been left free.” These spared ones included Mu‘āwiyah and Abū Sufyān also. Thus, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd and ash-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh have recorded the following note in their annotations to this letter “Abū Sufyān and Mu‘āwiyah both were among the spared ones.” (Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.17, p.119; ‘Abduh, vol.3, p.17)

The third point of distinction is that Amīr al-mu’minīn’s lineage is pure and clear and there is no doubtful point anywhere. As against this, for Mu‘āwiyah he has used to the word “*lasīq*”. Men of letters have given *lasīq* to mean “One who is attributed to other than his father.” In this connection, the first doubt that is entertained about Umayyah is whether he was the son of ‘Abd Shams or only his slave who began to be known as his son because of having been brought up by him. Thus, al-‘Allāmah al-Majlisī has related from Kāmil al-Bahā’ī that:

Umayyah was a Byzantian slave of ‘Abd Shams. When he found him intelligent and sagacious he freed him and adopted him as his son, as a result of which he began to be called Umayyah son of ‘Abd Shams, as Zayd (ibn al-Hārithah) was called Zayd ibn Muḥammad before the verse was revealed (to prohibit it). (*Biḥār al-anwār*, 1st ed., vol.8, p.383)

The second doubt in the Umayyad lineage is whether Ḥarb who is known as the son of Umayyah was really his son or a slave brought up by him. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has quoted from Abu'l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's book that :

Mu'āwiyah enquired from the lineage expert Daghfal (Ibn Ḥanzalah) whether he had seen 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and he replied in the affirmative. He further enquired how he found him and Daghfal replied, "He was prestigious, handsome and a man of open forehead, while his face bore the brightness of Prophethood." Then, Mu'āwiyah enquired whether he had seen Umayyah ibn 'Abd Shams also, and he replied that he had seen him too. He enquired how he found him and he replied, "Weak bodied, bent stature and blind in the eyes. In front of him was his slave Dhakwān who led here and there." Mu'āwiyah said it was his son Abū 'Amr (Ḥarb) whereupon he said, "You say so but the Quraysh only know that he was his slave." (*al-Aghānī*, vol.1, p.12; *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.17, pp.231-232)

In this connection, the third doubt is about Mu'āwiyah himself. Thus Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written that :

Mu'āwiyah's mother Hind led a life of vileness and immorality. az-Zamakhsharī (Abu'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar [467/1075 — 538/1144]) has written in his book *Rabī'u'l-abrār* that Mu'āwiyah's parentage was traced back to four persons who were: Musāfir ibn Abī 'Amr, 'Umārah ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ (a singer for 'Umārah). (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.1, p.336)

The fourth point of distinction that Amīr al-mu'minīn has stated is that he himself was the devotee of right while Mu'āwiyah was the devotee of wrong and this fact needs no proof, for the whole life of Mu'āwiyah was spent in suppressing right and hankering after wrong. No where is his step seen advancing towards right.

The fifth distinction that Amīr al-mu'minīn has mentioned is that he himself was a believer whereas Mu'āwiyah was a mischief-monger and a hypocrite. Just as there can be no doubt about Amīr al-mu'minīn's belief, there can be no doubt about Mu'āwiyah's mischief-mongering and hypocrisy. Thus, Amīr al-mu'minīn has exposed his hypocrisy in the earlier writing in these words.

As for your demand to me to (hand over) Syria, I cannot give you today what I denied you yesterday. As regards your saying that the war has eaten up Arabia save its last breath, you should know that he whom right has eaten up goes to Paradise and he whom wrong has eaten up goes to Hell. As for our equality in (the art of) war and in (numbers of) men, certainly you cannot be more penetrating in doubtfulness (of belief) than I am in certainty (of belief), and the people of Syria are not more greedy for this world than the people of Iraq are for the next world.

As for your saying that both of us are sons of ‘Abd Manāf, it is no doubt so, but Umayyah cannot be like Hāshim, nor Ḥarb like ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, nor can Abū Sufyān be like Abū Ṭālib. The *muhājir* (immigrant) cannot be a match for him who was set free (on the day of fall of Mecca), nor can one of pure descent be a match for him who has been adopted, nor the pursuer of truth be a match of the adherent to wrong, nor a believer be a match for a hypocrite. How bad are the successors who go on following their predecessors who have fallen in the fire of Hell !

Besides that, we also have the distinction of prophethood among us, by virtue of which we subdued the strong and raised up the down-trodden. When Allāh made Arabia enter (the fold of) His religion, and the people submitted to it willingly or unwillingly, you were among those who entered the religion either from greed or from fear, at a time when those who had gone first had preceded and the first *muhājirūn* had acquired their (peculiar) distinction.

Now, do not allow Satan have a share with you nor let him have his sway over you ; and that is an end to the matter.

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These people had not accepted Islam but they had secured safety by verbally professing it and had hidden their misbelief. Consequently, when they found helpers for their mischief they disclosed it.

LETTER 18

To ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās, his Governor of Baṣrah

You should know that Baṣrah is the place where Satan descends and mischiefs happen. Keep the people of this place pleased with good treatment and remove the knots of fear from their hearts.

I have come to know of your strictness with Banū Tamīm¹ and your harshness over them. Banū Tamīm are those that if one star sets another one rises for them. They were never exceeded in (the art of) war in pre-Islamic times or after Islam. They have a special kinship with us and a particular relationship. We shall be rewarded if we pay heed to the kinship and be deemed sinful if we disregard it. O’ Abu’l-‘Abbās, may Allāh have mercy on you, keep yourself restrained in whatever you say or do, good or bad about your people, as we are both partners in this (responsibility) . Prove yourself according to my good impressions about you, and do not prove my opinion (about you) wrong; and that is an end to the matter.

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¹ When Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr reached Baṣrah it was Banū Tamīm who took active part in the movement to avenge ‘Uthmān’s blood and were foremost in fanning this mischief. Therefore, when ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās took over as the Governor of Baṣrah, in view of their breach of faith and animosity, he thought they deserved harsh treatment and was to some extent severe with them. But in this tribe there were also a few sincere followers of Amīr al-mu’minīn. When they saw this behaviour of Ibn ‘Abbās with their tribe they sent a letter to Amīr al-mu’minīn through Jāriyah ibn Qadāmah wherein they complained of Ibn ‘Abbās’s harsh treatment. Thereupon, Amīr al-mu’minīn wrote this letter to Ibn ‘Abbās in which he instructed him to change his ways and to behave well with them, and has drawn his attention to the kinship existing between Banū Hāshim and Banū Tamīm. That kinship was this that Banū Hāshim and Banū Tamīm join the lineal line at Ilyās ibn Muḍar because Hāshim is the descendant of Mudrikah ibn Ilyās, while Tamīm is the descendant of Ṭābikhah ibn Ilyās.

LETTER 19

To one of his officers

Now, the cultivators¹ (*dahāqīn*, plural of *dīhqān*) of your city have complained of your strictness, hard heartedness, humiliating treatment and harshness. I thought over it and found that since they are unbelievers they cannot be brought near nor kept away or treated severely because of the pledge with them. Behave with them in between strictness and softness and adopt for them a mingling or remoteness and aloofness with nearness and closeness if Allāh so wills.

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LETTER 20

**To Ziyād ibn Abī (son of his [unknown] father),
when ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās was the Governor of
Başrah, the suburbs of Ahwāz, Firs and Kirmān
while Ziyād was his deputy in Başrah.**

I truthfully swear by Allāh that if I come to know that you have misappropriated the funds of the Muslims, small or big, I shall inflict upon you such punishment which will leave you empty handed, heavy backed

¹ These people were Magians (*majūs*). That is why the treatment of Amīr al-mu’minīn’s officer with them was not the same as with Muslims. Disgusted with this they wrote a letter of complaint to Amīr al-mu’minīn and spoke of the Officer’s harshness. In reply, Amīr al-mu’minīn wrote to his officer that he should meet out treatment to them in which there should be neither harshness nor such leniency which they may exploit to create mischief because if they are let loose they get involved in machinations against the government and disturb the country’s administration by creating one mischief or the other, while a wholly repressive policy cannot be justified because they are counted among the subjects and their rights as such cannot be ignored.

and humiliated; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 21

Also to Ziyād

Give up lavishness and be moderate. Every day remember the coming day. Hold back from the funds what you need and send forward the balance for the day of your need.

Do you expect that Allāh may give you the reward of the humble while you yourself remain vain in His view? And do you covet that He may give you the reward of those practising charity while you enjoy comforts and deny them to the weak and the widows? Certainly, a man is awarded according as he acts and meets what he has sent forward; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 22

To ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās. ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās used to say, “Apart from the Prophet’s sayings I did not derive greater benefit from any saying than this one.”

Let it be known to you that sometimes a man gets pleased at securing a thing which he was not going to miss at all and gets displeased at missing a thing which he would not in any case get. Your pleasure should be about what you secure in respect of your next life and your grief should be for what you miss in respect thereof. Do not be much pleased on what you secure from this world, nor get extremely grieved over what you miss out of it. Your worry should be about what is to come after death.

WILL 23

Made shortly before his death when he had been fatally wounded by a blow from the sword of (‘Abd ar-Raḥmān) Ibn Muljam (the curse of Allāh be upon him).

I enjoin upon you as my dying wish not to regard anything by way of partner with Allāh, not to disregard the *sunnah* of Muḥammad (may Allāh bless him and his descendants), establish these two pillars and light these two lamps. You will then be free from evil. Yesterday I was your companion and today I am (just) a lesson for you, while tomorrow I shall be leaving you. If I survive I shall be the master of my blood (to avenge or not to avenge it), and if I die then death is a promised event. If I forgive, it is for me a means of nearness (to Allāh) and for you a good act. Therefore, do forgive. *What! Love you not that Allāh should forgive you?* (Qur’ān, 24:22)

By Allāh, this sudden death is not an event that I dislike, nor is it an accident that I hate. I am just like a night traveller who reaches the spring (in the morning) or like or seeker who secures (his aim): *And whatever is with Allāh is the best for the righteous ones.* (Qur’ān, 3:198)

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: A part of this utterance has already appeared in the sermons but it was found necessary to record it again because of some additional matter.

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WILL 24

Amīr al-mu’minīn’s will as to how his property should be dealt with. He wrote it on return from Ṣiffin.

This is what ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the slave of Allāh has laid down about his property, in pursuance of seeking Allāh’s pleasure so that He may by virtue of it give him entry into Paradise and accord him peace.

A part of the same

It will be administered by Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī He will take from it a suitable portion for his livelihood and spend it on charity. If something happens to Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn survives he will administer it after Ḥasan, and deal with it accordingly. In the charitable estate of the two sons of Fatimah they have the same rights as the all (other) sons of ‘Alī. I have laid down the (functions of) administration of the two sons of Fāṭimah in order to seek the pleasure of Allāh and nearness to the Messenger of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) with due regard for his honour and consideration of his kinship.

It is obligatory on him who administers it that he retains the estate as it is, and spends the usufruct as he has been ordered and instructed. He should not sell the seedlings in the plantations of these villages till the land changes its face by turning them into plants. As for those of my slave girls who were under me, if any one of them has a child or is pregnant, she will be retained for the sake of the child and will form part of his share. If the child dies and she survives, then she is free, bondage is removed from her and liberty, is given to her.¹

as-Sayyid ar- Raḍī says: In this will in Amīr al-mu’minīn’s phrase ‘*allā yabī’a min nakhlihā wadiyyatan*’, the word ‘*wadiyyah*’ means

¹ The life of Amīr al-mu’minīn was that of a labourer or a cultivator. He worked in fields of other persons, cultivated barren and untilled lands, providing means of irrigating them, made them cultivable and planted orchards therein. Since these lands were cultivated by him they were his property but he never paid heed to property, and, declaring them a trust, gave up his proprietorship; but in consideration of the Prophet's kinship he assigned the management rights of this trust to Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn one after the other. Yet he did not tolerate any additional rights for them but like other children gave them merely the right to take from it only for their livelihood, while the balance he ordered to be spent for the common good of the Muslims and for charitable purposes. Thus, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd writes: Everyone knows that in Medina, Yanbu‘ and Suwayqah, Amīr al-mu’minīn had dug several springs from under the land and brought under cultivation many barren and uncultivable lands. Thereafter, he gave up rights over them and declared them as trusts for the Muslims. When he left the world, nothing was owned by him. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.15, p.146)

seedling of date-palm and its plural is ‘*wadiyy*’ And his words ‘*ḥattā tushkila arḍuhā ghirāsan*’, is one of the most eloquent form of expression and it means that when a number of date plants grow on the land then he who had seen it before the growth would regard it as a different land.

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INSTRUCTION 25

Amīr al-mu’minīn used to write to whoever he appointed for the the collection of zakāt and charities.

ash-Sharīf says: We have recorded a few portions of it here to show that he always erected the pillars of right and created examples of justice in all matters, small or big, delicate or serious.

Move on with the fear of Allāh Who is One and has no partner. Do not frighten any Muslim. Do not pass over his lands so as to make him feel unhappy. Do not take from him more than Allāh’s share in his property. When you go to a tribe, you should get down at their watering place instead of entering their houses. Then proceed towards them with peace and dignity till you stand among them. Then salute them and do not be remiss in greeting them, then say to them, ‘‘O’ servants of Allāh, the vicegerent of Allāh and His caliph has sent me to you to collect from you Allāh’s share in your properties. Is there anything of His share in your properties? If so, give it to His vicegerent.’’

If someone among them says ‘‘No’’, then do not repeat the demand. If someone speaks to you in the affirmative, then go with him without frightening him, threatening him, pressuring him or oppressing him. Take what he gives you such as gold or silver (coins). If he has cattle or camels do not enter upon them save with his permission, because their major part is his. Therefore, when you get there do not enter upon them like one who has full control over them or in a violent manner. Do not scare any animal, do not tease anyone and do not let the owner feel grieved about anyone.

Divide the property into two parts and let the owner choose one. When he has chosen do not object to it. Then divide the remaining into two parts and let him choose one and when he has chosen do not raise any objection. Continue like this till only that much remains which is enough to satisfy Allāh's dues. Then take Allāh's due from it. If he disputes your action allow his views, then mix the two (separated) parts and repeat what you had done before till you take Allāh's due from his property. Do not take an old, decrepit, broken-limbed, sick or unsound animal. Do not entrust the animals (for custody) except to one whom you trust to take care of Muslims' property till he hands it over to their chief who will distribute it. Do not entrust it to anyone except he who is a well wisher, God-fearing, trustworthy and watchful, and who is not harsh on Muslims' property, nor makes them run too much, nor tires them, nor labours them. Then send to us all that you have collected and we shall deal with it as Allāh has ordered.

When your trustee takes over (the animal) tell him that he should not separate the she-camel from its young and should not milk all its milk because that would affect its young, and also that he should not exert it in riding. In this matter, he should behave justly between it and all its companions. He should allow rest to camels (who are tired), and drive with ease those whose hoofs have been rubbed off. When you pass a water spring stay the camels there for drinking and do not take them away from vegetated land to barren paths. He should allow them rest now and then, and give them time near water and grass. In this way, when they reach us by leave of Allāh, they will be fat with plenty of marrow and would not be fatigued or distressed. We will then distribute them according to the (commands of) the Book of Allāh and the *sunnah* of His Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Certainly, this will be a great source of reward for you and a means to secure guidance, if Allāh so wills.

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INSTRUCTION 26

Given to one of his officers whom he sent for the collection of zakāt and charities.

He (Amīr al-mu'minīn) ordered him to fear Allāh in his secret matters and hidden actions, where there is no witness except He and no one watches save He. He also orders him that whatever he does in obedience to Allāh openly should not be different from what he does secretly. He whose hidden position is not different from his open position, and whose action is not different from his words, has discharged his obligation and his worship is pure.

He also ordered him that he should not harass them, should not be harsh on them and should not turn away from them because of superiority of official position over them, because they are brethren in faith and help in the recovery of levies.

Certainly, you have a fixed share and a known right in this levy, and there are other sharers who are poor, weak and starving. We shall discharge your rights. So, you should discharge their rights. If you do not do so you will have the largest number of enemies on the Day of Judgement. How wretched is the man whose enemies in the view of Allāh are the needy, the destitute, the beggars, the turned away, the indebted and (penniless) travellers. He who treats the trust lightly and indulges in treachery and does not keep himself and his faith untarnished by it has certainly secured humiliation in this world, and his humiliation and disgrace in the next world will be greater. Surely, the greatest treachery is the treachery against the Muslim community, and the most ugly deceit is the deceit towards the Muslim leaders; and that is an end to the matter.

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INSTRUCTION 27

**Given to Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him),
when Amīr al-mu'minīn appointed him as the Governor of Egypt.**

Behave humbly with the people, keep yourself lenient, meet them large-heartedly, accord them equal treatment so that the big should not expect injustice from you in their favour and the low should not be despondent of your justice to them. Allāh, the Sublime, will certainly question you, O' community of His creatures, about your actions, small or big, open or concealed. If He punishes you it is because you have been oppressive, and if He forgives, then it is because He is the Most Generous.

Know, O' creatures of Allāh, that the God-fearing have shared the joys of this transient world as well as the next coming world, for they shared with the people of this world in their worldly matters while their people did not share with them in the matters of the next world. They lived in this world in the best manner of living and ate the choicest food and consequently they enjoyed herein all that the people with ease of life enjoyed, and secured from it what the haughty and the vain secured. Then, they departed from it after taking provision enough to take them to the end of their journey and after doing a profitable transaction. They tasted the pleasure of renouncing the world in this world, and they firmly believed that on the coming day in their next life they would be neighbours of Allāh, where their call would not be repulsed nor would their share of pleasure be small.

Therefore, O' creatures of Allāh, be afraid of death and its measures and keep ready all that is needed for it. It will come as a big event and a great affair, either as a good in which there will never be any evil, or an evil in which there will never be any good. Who is nearer to Paradise than he who works towards it, and who is nearer to Hell than he who works for it? You are being chased by death. If you stop, it will catch you, and if you run away from it, it will grip you. It is more attached to

you than your reflection. Death is tied to your fore-locks while the world is being wrapped up from behind you. Therefore, fear the Fire whose hollow is deep, whose flames are severe and whose punishment is novel. It is a place wherein there is no mercy. No call is heard in it. No pain is healed in it. If it is possible for you to have severe fear of Allāh and to rest hope in Him, then do both these things because every individual can have hope in His Lord to the extent of his fear of His Lord. Certainly, the most hopeful person with Allāh is he who fears Him most.

O' Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, know that I have given you charge of Egypt which is my biggest force. So you are duty-bound to oppose your passions and serve as a shield against your religion even though you may get only an hour in the world; and do not enrage Allāh for pleasing others because (Allāh) is such that He may take the place of others, but others cannot take the place of Allāh. Say prayers at the appointed time. Do not say it earlier for the sake of (available) leisure nor delay it on account of pre-occupation. Remember that every act of yours is dependent on your prayer.

* * * * *

A part of the same

The leader of guidance and the leader of destruction cannot be equal, nor the friend of the Prophet and the enemy of the Prophet. The Messenger of Allāh (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) has told me that: "In respect of my people I am afraid neither of a believer nor of an unbeliever. As for the believer Allāh will afford him protection because of his belief and as for the unbeliever, Allāh will humiliate him because of his unbelief. But I am afraid about everyone of you who is a hypocrite in his heart and learned of speech. He speaks what you hold good but does what you dislike."

* * * * *

LETTER 28

In reply to Mu‘āwiyah, and it is one of his most elegant writings

Now, your letter¹ has reached me wherein you recall that Allāh chose

¹ This letter of Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s is in reply to Mu‘āwiyah’s letter which he sent to Kūfah through Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī, and it also contains replies to some points which Mu‘āwiyah had written in the letter sent through Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī.

In Abū Umāmah’s letter, Mu‘āwiyah had mentioned the deputation of the Prophet and his ascension to the position of revelation and wrote in such a manner as though it was a matter not known to or not understood by Amīr al-mu‘minīn and that he was in need of being informed and told of it. This is just like a stranger who may draw the map of a house for the guidance of those who dwell in it and apprise them of things already known to them. That is why Amīr al-mu‘minīn has compared him to the man who carried dates to Hajar which was itself noted for abundant growth of dates.

This is a proverb employed when someone beings to tell a person matters which he already knows better. The basis of this proverb is that a man of Hajar, which is a town near Bahrain (Persian Gulf), went to Baṣrah to sell goods and make purchases. After finishing the sale, he looked about the market to make his purchases and found nothing cheaper than dates. He therefore decided to purchase dates, and when he reached Hajar with his load of dates their plenty and cheapness there did not leave him any alternative but to store them so as to sell them later when their price had risen. The price however continued to fall day by day till all of them became rotten leaving to him nothing except their stones. In short, after referring to the Prophet’s ascension to prophethood Mu‘āwiyah recounted the distinction and merits of the three Caliphs according to his view and wrote:

The most distinguished among the companions and the most high ranking in the view of the Muslims was the first Caliph who collected all the Muslims under one voice, removed their disunity and fought those who were forsaking Islam. After him is the second Caliph who won victories, founded cities and humiliated the unbelievers. Then comes the third Caliph who was the victim of oppression. He propagated religion and spread the word of Allāh far and wide. (*Ṣiffīn*, al-Minqarī, pp.86-87; *al-*

Iqd al-farīd, vol.4, pp.334-335; *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.15, p.186)

Mu‘āwiyah’s purpose behind in bringing up these pointless warblings was to injur Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s feelings and to rouse his temper so as to make him produce such words through his tongue or pen which would so disparage the caliphs that he would instigate the people of Syria and Iraq against him by exploiting them. In fact, he had already set it in the minds of these people that Amīr al-mu‘minīn had instigated the people against ‘Uthmān, had got Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr killed, had turned ‘Ā’ishah out from her house and had shed the blood of thousands of Muslims. Being unaware of the real facts they were convinced of these baseless allegations, yet to strengthen the opposition, he thought it advisable to make them believe that Amīr al-mu‘minīn did not recognize the achievements of the three caliphs and bore enmity and malice towards them, and to produce Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s writing in evidence, and also to use it for rousing the people of Iraq, because their majority was much impressed with the environment created by the caliphs and with their greatness. But Amīr al-mu‘minīn guessed his intention and gave him such a reply which put a knot in his tongue and which he could not dare show to anyone. So, Amīr al-mu‘minīn exposed his lowness by referring to his enmity towards Islam and his accepting subjugation under force, and advised him to keep within his bounds, and warned him against fixing grades of distinction among those *muhājirūn* who were in any case superior to him in so far as they had been the preceders in *hijrah* (immigration from Mecca). Whereas since Mu‘āwiyah himself was only one of those whose life had been spared (on the day of fall of Mecca), he had not the remotest connection with the *muhājirūn*. Consequently, in the matter under discussion Amīr al-mu‘minīn has put Mu‘āwiyah’s position as that of a false arrow among real arrows. This is a proverb which is employed when a man boasts over persons with whom he has no connection. As regards his statement that so-and-so is greater in distinction, Amīr al-mu‘minīn has, by using the word ‘‘you think’’, shown that it is his personal opinion which has not the remotest connection with fact, because this word is used when a false or unreal statement is made.

After refuting this claim of being the most distinguished, Amīr al-mu‘minīn has referred to these qualities and distinctions of Banū Hāshim which show conspicuously the high degree of their attainments. Thus, the people who took part in *jihād* with the Prophet and secured martyrdom attained high positions but the distinction that fell to Ḥamzah by virtue of his high performance was not secured by anyone else. The Prophet gave him the title of Master of the Martyrs and said his funeral prayer fourteen times whereby the number of *takbīr* (*Allāhu akbar*) rose to seventy. Similarly, in

various battles the hands of the fighters were cut off. For example, in the battle of Badr the hands of Khubayb ibn Isāf al-Anṣārī and Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal and in the battle of Uḥud those of ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūh as-Salamī and ‘Ubayd (‘Atik) ibn at-Tayyihān (brother of Abu’l-Haytham at-Tayyihān) were cut off, but when in the battle of Mu’tah the hands of Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib were cut off, the Prophet singled him out by naming him “the flier in Paradise” and the “two-winged”. After recounting the peculiar achievements of Banū Hāshim, Amīr al-mu’minīn has referred to his own attainments with which the histories and traditions are replete and which could not be tarnished with doubts and misgivings. Thus, traditionists like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164/780 - 241/855), Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī an-Nasā’ī (215/830 — 303/915) and others say that :

The number of traditions that have been related through reliable sources in regard to the distinctions of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib have not been related about any other companion of the Prophet. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.107; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1115; *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*, vol.1, p.319; *al-Kāmil*, vol.3, p.399; *Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb*, vol.7, p.339; *Fath al-bārī*, vol.7, p.57)

An important distinction out of these particular distinctions of *Ahlu’l-bayt* (the Household of the Holy Prophet) is the one to which Amīr al-mu’minīn has referred in these words that “We are the direct recipients of Allāh’s favours while others receive favours from us.” This is the height of distinction that even the highest personality cannot reach its sublimity and every other distinction looks small before it. Acknowledging the greatness and supremacy of this sentence, Ibn Abi’l-Hadīd writes:

Amīr al-mu’minīn intends to convey that we are not under obligation of any person since Allāh has bestowed all blessings on us directly, there being no intermediary between us and Allāh, while all other people are under our obligation and protection, being the intermediary between them and Allāh, the Glorified; this is a high position indeed. Its apparent meaning is what the words show but its real sense is that the *Ahlu’l-bayt* are the obedient servants of Allāh and the people must be their obedient followers. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.15, p.194)

Now, since these people are the first recipients of the bounties of Allāh and the source of bounties for the rest of the people, no one from among the people can be compared with them, nor can anyone be regarded as their equal on the basis of social contacts with them, much less than those individuals who were in direct contrast to the attainments and characteristics

of these people, and used to oppose truth and right on every occasion. Amīr al-mu'minīn places both the sides of the picture before Mu'āwiyah and says:

The Prophet was from us while your father Abū Sufyān was foremost in opposing him. Ḥamzah was from us and the Prophet gave him the title of "Lion of Allāh" while your maternal grandfather, 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah was proud of being the "lion of swearers (against the Prophet)."

When in the battle of Badr, Ḥamzah and 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah came face to face, Ḥamzah said, "I am Ḥamzah son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; I am the lion of Allāh and the lion of His Prophet," whereupon 'Utbah said, "I am the lion of swearers (against the Prophet)." In another version, the word "*Asadu'l-ahlāf*" has been recorded. The meaning is that he was the Chief of the allying parties. The story of swearing is that when Banū 'Abd Manāf acquired a distinct position among the Arab tribes they thought they should take over from Banū 'Abdi'd-Dār the offices relating to the Ka'bah and to depose them from these offices. In this connection, Banū 'Abd Manāf allied with themselves the tribes of Banū Asad ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzzā, Banū Taym, Banū Zuhrah and Banū al-Ḥārith, and concluded an agreement with them. In order to solemnize this agreement they drenched their hands in *īb* (perfume) and swore that they would help each other. For this reason, these tribes were called: "Tribes of sworn chaste parties". On the other side the tribes of Banū 'Abdi'd-Dār, Banū Makhzūm, Banū Sahm and Banū 'Adī also swore that they would resist Banū 'Abd Manāf and their allies. These tribes are called the "allies". 'Utbah has deemed himself the head of the allying parties. Some commentators have taken the word *Asadu'l-ahlāf* to mean Abū Sufyān, because he made different tribes swear against the Prophet in the battle of the Trench, while some commentators take it to mean Asad ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzzah, but this interpretation does not carry weight because here Amīr al-mu'minīn is addressing Mu'āwiyah and this interpretation does not hit Mu'āwiyah since Banū 'Abd Manāf were a party to this alliance. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn says, "they have among themselves the masters of the youth of Paradise". Referring to the Prophet's saying, "al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the masters of the youth of Paradise", while the boys of the other side are in Hell. This reference is to the sons of 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayt, about whom the Prophet has said, "For you and your sons is Hell". Then Amīr al-mu'minīn says that among them is the chief of all the women of the worlds, namely Fāṭimatu'z-Zahrā' (p . b . u . h .), while in the other party is the bearer of the wood which refers to Umm Jamīl, the sister of Abū Sufyān. This woman used to spread thorns in the path of the Prophet. She has been mentioned in the Qur'ān along with Abū Lahab, in these words:

Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) for His religion and helped him through those companions who helped him. Strange things about you have remained concealed (by the irony of fate) from us, since you have started telling us of Allāh's trials for us and His bounties to us through our Prophet. In this matter, you are like the person who carries dates to Hajar, or who challenges his own master to a duel in archery.

You think that so - and - so are the most distinguished persons in Islam. You have said such a thing which if it be true, you have nothing to do with it, but if it be not so, then its defect will not affect you. And what are you to do with the question of who is better and who is worse, or who is the ruler and who is the ruled. What have the freed ones and their sons to do with distinguishing between the first *muhājirūn* and determining their position or defining their ranks. What a pity! the sound of an arrow is being produced by what is not a real arrow, and he against whom the judgement is to be passed is sitting in judgement. O' man, why do you not see your own lameness and remain within bounds, and why do not you realize the shortness of your measure and stay back where destiny has placed you. You have no concern with the defeat of the defeated or the victory of the victor.

You are wandering in bewilderment and straying from the right path. Do you not realize it? I am not giving you any news: I am just recounting Allāh's bounty, namely that a number of people from among the *muhājirūn* (immigrants from Mecca) and *anṣār* (helpers) fell as martyrs in the way of Allāh the Sublime, and that each of them is distinguished (on that account), but when one of us secured martyrdom he was named the Chief of all martyrs, and the Messenger of Allāh (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) gave him the peculiar honour of saying seventy *takbīr* (*Allāhu akbar*) during his funeral prayer. Do you not know that a number of people lost their hands in the way of Allāh, and that everyone is distinguished (on that account), but when the same thing occurred to one of us he was given the name

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

May perish both the hands of Abū Lahab, may perish (he himself); Shall avail him not his wealth nor what he earneth; Soon shall he burn in the flaming fire; And his wife, the bearer of the firewood; Upon her neck shall be a halter of twisted rope. (Qur'ān, 111)

“the flier in Paradise”; and “the two winged”. If Allāh had not forbidden selfpraise, the writer would have mentioned numerous distinctions which the believer knows full well and which the ears of hearers do not wish to forget.

Better leave those whose arrows miss the mark. We are the direct recipients of our Lord’s favours while others receive favours from us after that. In spite of our old established honour and our well-known superiority over your people, we did not stay away from mixing with you and married and got married (among you) like equals although you were not so. And how could you be so when (the position is that) among us is the Prophet while among you is the opposer, among us is the lion of Allāh while among you is the lion of the opposing groups, among us are the two masters of the youth of Paradise¹ while among you are the children of Hell, among us is the choicest of all the women of the worlds² while among you is the bearer of firewood, and many more

¹ It is narrated from Amīr al-mu’minīn, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān, Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī, Abū Hurayrah, etc., that the Holy Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) said :

Verily, Fāṭimah is the Supreme Lady of the women of Paradise, and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the two Supreme Youth of Paradise. But their father (‘Alī) is Superior to them. (*al-Jāmi‘aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, at-Tirmidhi, vol.5, pp.656, 661; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.3, pp.3, 62, 64, 82; vol.5, pp.391, 392; *as-Sunan*, Ibn Mājah, vol.1, p.56; *al-Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim vol.3, p.167; *Majma‘ az-zawā‘id*, vol.9, pp.183, 184, 201; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, al-Muttaqī, vol.13, pp.127, 128; *al-Isṭī‘āb*, vol.4, p.1895; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.574; *Tārīkh Baghdad*, vol.1, p.140; vol.6, p.372; vol.10, p.230; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn ‘Asākir, vol.7, p.365).

² It is narrated from ‘Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn and Abū Tha‘labah al-Khushnī that the Holy Prophet (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) said to Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h):

‘‘O’ my little daughter, are you not satisfied that you are verily the Supreme Lady of all women in the worlds?’’ She said, ‘‘O’ father, then what about Maryam (Mary) daughter of ‘Imrān?’’ He said, ‘‘She was the Supreme Lady of her age, and you are the Supreme Lady of your age. Truly, by Allāh, I married you to one who is the Master in this world and

distinctions on our side and shortcomings on your side.

Our Islam is well-known and our (greatness in the) pre-Islamic period too cannot be denied. Whatever remains has been mentioned in the words of Allāh the Glorified, the Sublime:

. . . And blood relations have the better claim in respect of one to the other, according to the Book of Allāh . . . (Qur'ān, 33:6)

He (Allāh) the Sublime, also says:

Verily, of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muḥammad) and those who believe; and verily, Allāh, is the Guardian of the faithful. (Qur'ān, 3:68)

Thus, we are superior firstly because of kinship and secondly because of obedience. When at Saqīfah (of Banū Sā'idah) the *muhājirūn* contended kinship with the Messenger of Allāh (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) against the *anṣār*, they scored over them. If that success was based on kinship then the right would be ours better than yours. Otherwise, the *anṣār*'s contention stands.

You think that I have been jealous of every caliph and have revolted against them. Even if this be so, it is not an offence against you and therefore no explanation is due to you.

the hereafter. No one hates him save a hypocrite.' (Hilyah al-awliyā' vol.2, p.92; al-Isṭī'āb, vol.4, p.1895; al-Iṣābah, vol.4, p.275)

Also, 'Ā'ishah narrated that the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) said:

O' Fāṭimah, will you not be satisfied to be the Supreme Lady of the women of the worlds (or) to be the Supreme Lady of all women of this *ummah* (community) or of the women believers? (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, vol.8, p.79; *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim, vol.7, pp.142-144; *as-Sunan*, Ibn Mājah, vol.1, p.518; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.6, p.282; *al-Mustadrak 'alā aṣ-ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Ḥākim, vol.3, p.156)

This is a matter for which no blame comes to you.

You have said that I was dragged like a camel with a nose string to swear allegiance (to Abū Bakr at Saqīfah). By the Eternal Allāh, you had intended to revile me but you have praised me, and to humiliate me but have yourself been humiliated. What humiliation does it mean for a Muslim to be the victim of oppression so long as he does not entertain any doubt in his religion, nor any misgiving in his firm belief ! This argument of mine is intended for others, but I have stated it to you only in so far as it was appropriate.

Then you have recalled my position vis-a-vis ‘Uthmān, and in this matter an answer is due to you because of your kinship with him. So (now tell me), which of us was more inimical towards ‘Uthmān and who did more to bring about his killing; or who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him; or who was he whom he called for help but who turned his face from him and drew his death near him till his fate overtook him? No, no; by Allāh:

Indeed knoweth Allāh those who hinder others among you and those who say unto their brethren ‘‘Come hither unto us ’’, and they come not to fight but a little. (Qur’ān, 33;18)

I am not going to offer my excuse for reproving him for (some of) his innovations, for if my good counsel and guidance to him was a sin then very often a person who is blamed has no sin *and sometimes the only reward a counsellor¹ reaps is suspicion* (of evil). *I desired naught but reform what I am able to (do); and my guidance is not but with Allāh; On Him (alone) do I rely, and unto Him (alone) do I turn. (Qur’ān, 11:88)*

¹ The meaning is that the person who goes too far in counselling others will be thought to have his personal ends in so doing, even though his counsel may well be based on sincerity of intention and selflessness. This line is used as a proverb on such occasions. The whole couplet runs as follows:

How often a good counsel I offered you, but sometimes the only reward a counsellor reaps is suspicion.

You have mentioned that for me and for my followers you have only the sword. This makes even a weeping person laugh. Did you ever see the descendants of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib running away from battle, or being frightened by swords, “*Wait a little till Ḥamal¹ joins the battle*” shortly, then he whom you are seeking will seek you and he whom you think to be far away will approach near you. I am (shortly) speeding towards you with a force of *muhājirūn* and *anṣār* and those who follow them in virtue. Their number will be great and their dust will spread all round. They will be wearing their shrouds and their most coveted desire is to meet Allāh. They will be accompanied by the descendants of those who took part in the battle of Badr, and they will have Hāshimite swords whose cut you have already seen in the case of your brother, maternal uncle, your grandfather and your kinsmen. *Nor are they far distant from the unjust ones.* (Qur’ān, 11:83)

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LETTER 29

To the People of Baṣrah

Whatever disunity and schism you have is not hidden to you. I have

¹ This line is of Ḥamal ibn Badr. The full couplet runs thus:

Wait a bit till Ḥamal reaches the battlefield; How pretty is death when it comes.

The story behind it is that Mālīk ibn Zuhayr threatened Ḥamal ibn Badr with battle and in reply he recited this couplet and then attacked Mālīk and killed him. When Mālīk’s brother saw this, he killed Ḥamal and his brother Ḥudhayfah in revenge. Then, he described this in his following couplet:

I appeased my heart by killing Ḥamal ibn Badr and my sword appeased me by killing Ḥudhayfah.

forgiven your wrong-doers and held back my sword from those who ran away. I received everyone who came to me from among you. If devastating matters and wrong and silly views are prompting you to break the pledge with me and to oppose me then. (listen) I have kept ready my horses and put saddles (on my riding camels) , and if you force me to advance towards you I shall come down in such a manner that before it the battle of Jamal too would appear like the last licking of the tongue. At the same time I know the high position of the obedient among you and the right of the sincere without confusing the sinless with the offenders or the faithful with the pledge-breakers.

LETTER 30

To Mu'āwiyah

Fear Allāh regarding what you have amassed and find out your true right therein, and turn to understand for what you will not be excused on the grounds of ignorance. Certainly, for (following the path of) obedience there are clear signs, shining ways, straight highways and a fixed aim. The shrewd proceed towards them while the mean turn away from them. Whoever turns his face from them deviates from the right and gropes in bewilderment. Allāh takes away His bounty from him and afflicts him with His chastisement. Therefore, beware of yourself. Allāh has already shown you your way and the end where your affairs will terminate. You are speeding towards the aim of loss and the position of unbelief. Your ego has pushed you towards evil, thrown you into misguidance conveyed you to destruction and created difficulties in your way.

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COMMANDMENT 31

He wrote for al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī¹ (his son — peace be upon them),

¹ Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī (vol.5, p.2) has quoted Abū Ja'far ibn

**when Amīr al-mu'minīn encamped at al-Ḥādirīn on his way back
from Şiffin.**

From the father who is (shortly) to die, who acknowledges the hardships of the times, who has turned away from life, who has submitted himself to the (calamities of) time, who realizes the evils of the world, who is living in the abodes of the dead and is due to depart from them any day; to the son who yearns for what is not to be achieved, who is treading the path of those who have died, who is the victim of ailments, who is entangled in the (worries of the) days, who is a target of hardships, a slave of the world, a trader of its deception, a debtor of wishes, a prisoner of mortality, an ally of worries, a neighbour of griefs, a victim of distresses, who has been overpowered by desires, and who is a successor of the dead.

Now (you should know that) what I have learnt from the turning away of this world from me, the onslaught of time over me and the advancing of the next world towards me is enough to prevent me from remembering anyone except myself and from thinking beyond myself. But when I confined myself to my own worries leaving the worries of others, my intelligence saved me and protected me from my desires. It

Bābawayh al-Qummī to have stated that Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote this piece of advice in the name of his son Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah, while al-'Allāmah as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī has written that its addressee is Imām al-Ḥasan (p .b .u .h .). But the fact is that Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote another piece of advice to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah in brief which included a part of the same which he wrote to al-Imām al-Ḥasan. (*Kashf al-maḥajjah*, Ibn Ṭāwūs, pp.157-159; *al-Biḥār*, vol.77, pp.196 - 198)

In any case, whether the addressee is al-Imām al-Ḥasan or Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah, this manifesto of the Imām is a lesson of guidance to action in which the ways of success and achievement can be opened and the straying caravans of mankind can tread the path of guidance. It contains principles of correcting the matters of this world and the next, creating the sense of morality and improving economic and social matters whose like cannot be produced by the epitomes of scholars and philosophers. Its truthful preachings are a strong incentive for recalling to humanity the lessons it has forgotten, reviving the dead lines of social dealings and raising the standards of morality.

clarified to me my affairs and led me to seriousness wherein there was no trickery and truth which was not tarnished by falsehood. Here, I found you a part of myself, rather I found you my whole, so much so that if anything befell you, it was as though it befell me and if death came to you it was as though it came to me. Consequently, your affairs meant to me what my own matters meant to me. So, I have written this piece of advice (to you) as an instrument of seeking help through it, whether I remain alive for you or cease to exist.

I advise you to fear Allāh, O' my child, to abide by His commands, to fill your heart with remembrance of Him and to cling to hope from Him. No connection is more reliable than the connection between you and Allāh provided you take hold of it. Enliven your heart with preaching, kill it by renunciation, energise it with firm belief, enlighten it with wisdom, humiliate it by recalling death, make it believe in mortality, make it see the misfortunates of this world, make it fear the authority of the time and the severity of some changes during the nights and the days, place before it the events of past people, recall to it what befell those who were before you and walk among their cities and ruins, then see what they did and from what they have gone away and where they have gone and stayed. You will find that they departed from (their) friends and remain in loneliness. Shortly, you too will be like one of them. Therefore, plan for your place of stay and do not sell your next life with this world.

Give up discussing what you do not know and speaking about what does not concern you. Keep off the track from which you fear to go astray because refraining (from moving) when there is fear of straying is better than embarking on dangers. Ask others to do good; you will thus be among the good doers. Desist others from evil with your action as well as your speech and keep off, to the best of your ability, from he who commits it. Struggle for Allāh as is His due; and the reviling of a reviler should not deter you in matters of Allāh. Leap into dangers for the sake of right wherever it be. Acquire insight into religious law. Habituate yourself to endure hardships since the best trait of character is endurance in matters of right. In all your affairs resign yourself to your Allāh, because you will thus be resigning yourself to a secure shelter and a strong protector. You should ask only from your Lord because in His

hand is all the giving and depriving. Seek good (from Allāh) as much as you can. Understand my advice and do not turn away from it, because the best saying is that which benefits. Know that there is no good in that knowledge which does not benefit, and if knowledge is not made use of then its acquisition is not justified,

O' my child, when I noticed that I was of goodly age and noticed that I was increasing in weakness I hastened with my will for you and wrote down salient points of it lest death overtook me before I divulged to you what I have in my heart, or lest my wit be affected as my body has been affected, or the forces of passions or the mischiefs of the world overtake you making you like a stubborn camel. Certainly, the heart of a young man is like uncultivated land. It accepts whatever is strewn on it. So, I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened up and your mind became occupied, so that you might be ready to accept through your intelligence the results of the experience of others and be saved from going through these experiences yourself. In this way, you would avoid the hardship of seeking them and the difficulties of experimenting. Thus, you are getting to know what we had experienced and even those things are becoming clear to you which we might have missed.

O' my child, even though I have not reached the age which those before me have, yet I looked into their behaviour and thought over events of their lives. I walked among their ruins till I was as one of them. In fact, by virtue of those of their affairs that have become known to me it is as though I have lived with them from the first to the last. I have therefore been able to discern the impure from the clean and the benefit from the harm.

I have selected for you the choicest of those matters and collected for you their good points and have kept away from you their useless points. Since I feel for your affairs as a living father should feel and I aim at giving you training, I thought it should be at a time when you are advancing in age and new on the stage of the world, possessing upright intention and clean heart and that I should begin with the teaching of the Book of Allāh, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, and its

interpretation, the laws of Islam and its commands, its lawful matters and unlawful matters and that I should not go beyond these for you. Then I feared lest you should get confused as other people had been confused on account of their passions and (different) views. Therefore, in spite of my dislike for you being so warned, I thought it better for me to make this position strong rather than leave you in a position where I do not regard you safe from falling into destruction. I hoped that Allāh would help you in your straightforwardness and guide you in your resoluteness. Consequently, I wrote this piece of my will for you.

Know O' my child, that what I love most for you to adopt from my will is to fear Allāh, to confine yourself to what Allāh has made obligatory, on you, and to follow the actions of your forefathers and the virtuous people of your household, because they did not fall short in seeing for themselves what you will see for yourself, and they did about their 'affairs as you would like to think (about your affairs). Thereafter, their thinking led them to discharge the obligations they came to know of and to desist from what they were not required to do. If your heart does not accept this without acquiring knowledge as they acquired it, then your search should first be by way of understanding and learning and not by falling into doubts or getting entangled in quarrels.

And before you probe into this, you should begin by seeking your Allāh's help and turning to Him for competence and keeping aloof from everything that throws you into doubt or flings you towards misguidance. When you have made sure that your heart is clean and humble and your thoughts have come together and you have only one thought which is about this matter, then you will see what I have explained to you; but if you have not been able to achieve that peace of observation and thinking which you would like to have, then know that you are only stamping the ground like a blind she-camel and falling into darkness while a seeker of religion should not grope in the dark or create confusion. It is better to avoid this.

Appreciate my advice, O' my child, and know that He Who is the Master of death is also the Master of life, that the Creator causes death as well; that He Who destroys is also the restorer of life and that He Who inflicts disease is also the curer. This world continues in the way Allāh

has made it with regard to its pleasures, trials, rewards on the Day of Judgement and all that He wishes and you do not know. If anything of this advice is not understood by you then attribute it to your ignorance of it, because when you were first born you were born ignorant. Thereafter, you acquired knowledge. There are many matters of which you are ignorant and in which your sight first wonders and your eye wanders then after this you see them. Therefore, cling to Him Who created you, fed you and put you in order. Your worship should be for Him, your eagerness should be towards Him and your fear should be of Him.

Know O' my child, that no one received messages from Allāh, the Glorified, as the Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his progeny) did. Therefore, regard him as your forerunner and leader towards deliverance. Certainly, I shall spare no effort in giving you advice and surely even if you try, you cannot acquire that insight for your welfare as I have for you.

Know O' my child, that if there had been a partner with your Lord, his messengers too should have come to you and you would have seen signs of his authority and power and you should have known his deeds and qualities. But He is only One God as He has described Himself. No one can dispute with Him in His authority. He is from ever and will be for ever. He is before all things without any beginning. He will remain after all things without any end. He is far too great to have His divinity proved by the encompassing heart or eye. When you have understood this then you should do what is done by him who is like you by way of his low position, his lack of authority, his increasing incapability, and his great need of his Lord for seeking His obedience, fearing His chastisement and apprehending His anger, because He does not command you save for virtue and does not refrain you save from evil.

O' my child, I have informed you about the world, its condition, its decay and its passing away and I have informed you of the next world and of what has been provided in it for its people. I have recounted to you parables about it so that you may draw instruction from them and act upon them. The example of those who have understood the world is like those travellers who, being disgusted with drought stricken places set off

for greenery and a fruitful place. Then they endure difficulties on the way, separation from friends, hardships of the journey and unwholesome food in order to reach their fields of plenty and place of stay. Consequently, they do not feel any pain in all this and do not regard any expenditure to be waste. Nothing is more lovable to them than what takes them near their goal and carries them closer to their place of stay. (Against this), the example of those who are deceived by this world is like the people who were in a green place but they became disgusted with it and went to a drought-stricken place. Therefore, for them nothing is more detestable or abominable than to leave the place where they were to go to a place which they will reach unexpectedly and for which they are heading.

O' my child, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress as you do not like to be oppressed. Do good to others as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you. Do not talk about what you do not know even though what you know be very little. Do not say to others what you do not like to be said to you.

Know that self-admiration is contrary to propriety (of action) and is a calamity for the mind. Therefore, increase your striving and do not become a treasurer for (wealth to be inherited by) others. When you have been guided on the right path humble yourself before Allāh as much as you can.

Know that in front of you lies a road of long distance and severe hardship and that you cannot avoid seeking it. Take your requirements of provision keeping the burden light. Do not load your back beyond your power lest its weight become a mischief for you. Whenever you come across a needy person who can carry for you your provision to hand it back to you on the Day of Judgement when you will need it, then accept him as a good opportunity and get him to carry it. Put in that provision as much as you are able to, for it is likely that if you may need him

(afterwards), you may not get hold of him. If a person is willing to borrow from you in the days of your affluence to pay it back to you at the time of your need then make use of this opportunity.

Know that in front of you lies an impassable valley where in the light-burdened man will be in a better condition than the heavy-burden one, and the slow- paced would be in a worse condition than the swift-paced. Your terminating point at the other end of this passage will necessarily be either Paradise or Hell. Therefore, reconnoitre for yourself before alighting, and prepare the place before getting down, because after death there can be no preparation nor return to this world.

Know that He Who owns the treasuries of the heavens and of the earth has permitted you to pray to Him and has promised you acceptance of the prayer. He has commanded you to beg from Him in order that He may give you and to seek His mercy in order that He may have mercy on you. He has not placed any thing between you and Him that may veil Him from you. He has not required you to get a mediator for you to Him, and if you err, He has not prevented you from repentance. He does not hasten with punishment. He does not taunt you for repenting, nor does He humiliate you when humiliation is more appropriate for you. He has not been harsh in accepting repentance. He does not severely question you about your sins. He does not disappoint you of His mercy. Rather He regards abstention from sin as a virtue. He counts your one sin as one while He counts your one virtue as ten.

He has opened for you the door of repentance. Therefore, whenever you call Him He hears your call, and whenever you whisper to Him He knows the whisper. You place before Him your needs, unveil yourself before Him, complain to Him of your worries, beseech Him to remove your troubles, seek His help in your affairs and ask from the treasuries of His mercy that which no one else has power to give, namely length of life, health of body and increase in sustenance. Then He has placed the keys of His treasuries in your hands in the sense that He has shown you the way to ask Him.

Therefore, wherever you wish, open the doors of His favour with

prayer, and let the abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. Delay in acceptance of the prayer should not disappoint you because the grant of prayer is according to the measure of (your) intention. Sometimes acceptance (of prayer) is delayed with a view to its being a source of greater reward to the asker and of better gifts to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later, or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good of yours, because sometimes you ask for a thing which contains ruin for your religion if it is given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain away from you. As for wealth it will not last for you nor will you live for it.

O' my child, know that you have been created for the next world, not for this world, for destruction (in this world) not for lasting, and for dying not for living. You are in a place which does not belong to you, a house for making preparations and a passage towards the next world. You are being chased by death from which the runner-away cannot escape, as it would surely overtake him. So, be on guard against it lest it overtakes you at a time when you are in a sinful state and you are thinking of repenting but it creates obstruction between you and repentance. In such a case you will ruin yourself.

O' my child, remember death very much and the place where you have to go suddenly and reach after death, so that when it comes you are already on your guard against it and have prepared yourself for it and it does not come to you all of a sudden and surprise you. Beware, lest you become deceived by the leanings of the people towards worldly attraction and their rushing upon it. Allāh has warned you about it and the world has informed you of its mortal character and unveiled to you its evils.

Surely, those (who go) after it are like barking dogs or devouring carnivore who hate each other. The stronger among them eat away the weaker and the big among them tramples over the small. Some are like tied cattle and some like untied cattle who have lost their wits and are running in unknown directions. They are flocks of calamities wandering in rugged valleys. There is no herdsman to detain them nor any tenderer to take them to grazing. The world has put them on the track of blindness

and taken away their eyes from the beacons of guidance. They have therefore been perplexed in its bewilderings and sunk in its pleasures. They took it as a god so it played with them. They too played with it and forgot what is beyond it.

Darkness is disappearing gradually. Now it is as though travellers have got down and the hasteners will soon meet. Know, O' my child, that everyone who is riding on the carriage of night and day is being carried by them even though he may be stationary, and he is covering the distance even though he is staying and resting.

Know with certainty that you cannot achieve your desire and cannot exceed your destined life. You are on the track of those before you. Therefore, be humble in seeking and moderate in earning because often seeking leads to deprivation. Every seeker of livelihood does not get it, nor is everyone who is moderate in seeking deprived. Keep yourself away from every low thing even though they may take you to your desired aims, because you will not get any return for your own respect which you spend. Do not be the slave of others for Allāh had made you free. There is no good in good which is achieved through evil and no good in comfort that is achieved through (disgracing) hardship.

Beware lest bearers of greed should carry you and make you descend down to the springs of destruction. If you can manage that there be no wealthy person between yourself and Allāh, do so, because in any case you will find what is for you and get your share. A little received directly from Allāh the Glorified, is more dignified than that which is more but is received through (the obligation of) His creatures, although (really) all is from Allāh.

It is easier to rectify what you miss by silence than to secure what you lose by speaking. Whatever is in a pot can be retained by closing the lid. I should prefer you to retain what is in your hands rather to seek what is in other's hands. Bitterness of disappointment is better than seeking from people. Manual labour with chastity is better than the riches of a vicious life. A man is the best guard of his own secrets. Often a man strives for what harms him. He who speaks much speaks nonsense.

Whoever ponders perceives. Associate with people of virtue; you will become one of them. Keep aloof from people of vice; you will remain safe from them. The worst food is that which is unlawful. Oppressing the weak is the worst oppression.

Where leniency is unsuitable, harshness is lenience. Often cure is illness and illness is cure. Often the ill-wisher gives correct advice while the well-wisher cheats. Do not depend upon hopes because hopes are the mainstay of fools. It is wise to preserve one's experience. Your best experience is that which teaches you a lesson. Make use of leisure before it changes into (the hour of) grief. Every seeker does not achieve (what he seeks); and every departer does not return. To lose provision and to earn evil for the Day of Judgement means ruin. Every matter has a consequence. What is destined for you will shortly come to you. A trader undertakes a risk. Often a small quantity is more beneficial than a large quantity. There is no good in an ignoble helper, nor in a suspicious friend. Be compliant with the world as long as it is in your grip. Do not put yourself to risk as regards anything in expectation for more than that. Beware lest the feeling of enmity should overpower you.

Bear yourself towards your brother in such a way that if he disregards kinship you keep to it; when he turns away be kind to him and draw near to him; when he withholds spend for him; when he goes away approach him; when he is harsh be lenient; when he commits wrong think of (his) excuse for it, so much so as though you are a slave of him and he is the benevolent master over you. But take care that this should not be done inappropriately, and that you should not behave so with an undeserving person. Do not take the enemy of your friend as a friend because you will thus antagonize your friend. Give true advice to your brother, be it good or bitter. Swallow your anger because I did not find a sweeter thing than it in the end, and nothing more pleasant in consequence. Be lenient to him who is harsh to you for it is likely that he will shortly become lenient to you. Treat your enemy with favours, because this is sweeter of the two successes (the success of revenge and the success of doing favour).

If you intend to cut yourself off from a friend leave some scope for him from your side by which he may resume friendship if it so occurs to him some day. If anyone has a good idea about you prove it to be true. Do not disregard the interests of your brother depending upon your terms with him, for he is not your brother if you disregard his interests. Your household should not become the most miserable people through you. Do not lean towards him who turns away from you. Your brother should not be more firm in his disregard of kinship than you in paying regard to it, and you should exceed in doing good to him than is evil to you. Do not feel too much the oppression of a person who oppresses you, because he is only busy in harming himself and benefiting you. The reward of him who pleases you is not that you displease him.

Know O' my child, that livelihood is of two kinds — a livelihood that you seek and a livelihood that seeks you, which is such that if you do not reach it, it will come to you. How bad it is to bend down at the time of need and to be harsh in riches. You should have from this world only that with which you can adorn your permanent abode. If you cry over what has gone out of your hands then also cry for what has not at all come to you. Infer about what has not yet happened from what has already happened, because occurrences are ever similar. Do not be like those whom preaching does not benefit unless you inflict pain on them, because the wise take instruction from teaching while beasts learn only from beating.

Ward off from yourself the onslaught of worries by firmness of endurance and purity of belief. He who gives up moderation commits excess. A companion is like a relation. A friend is he whose absence also proves the friendship. Passion is a partner of distress. Often the near ones are remoter than the distant ones, and often the distant ones are nearer than the near ones. A stranger is he who has no friend. He who transgresses right narrows his own passage. He who stays in his position remains constant upon it. The most trustworthy intermediary is that which you adopt between yourself and Allāh the Glorified. He who does not care for your interests is your enemy. When greed leads to ruin deprivation is an achievement. Not every defect can be reviewed, and not every opportunity recurs.

Often a person with eyes misses the track while a blind person finds the correct path. Delay an evil because you will be able to hasten it whenever you desire. The disregard of kinship of the ignorant is equal to the regard for kinship of the wise. Whoever takes the world to be safe, it will betray him. Whoever regards the world as great, it will humiliate him. Every one who shoots does not hit. When authority changes the time changes too. Consult the friend before adopting a course and the neighbour before taking a house. Beware, lest you mention in your speech what may rouse laughter even though you may be relating it from others.

Do not consult women because their view is weak and their determination is unstable. Cover their eyes by keeping them under the veil because strictness of veiling keeps them for long. Their coming out is not worse than your allowing an unreliable man to visit them. If you can manage that they should not know anyone other than you, do so. Do not allow a woman matters other than those about herself, because a woman is a flower not an administrator. Do not pay her regard beyond herself. Do not encourage her to intercede for others. Do not show suspicion out of place, because this leads a correct woman to evil and a chaste woman to deflection.

For everyone among your servants fix a work for which you may hold him responsible. In this way, they will not fling the work one over the other. Respect your kinsmen because they are your wings with which you fly, the origin towards which you return and your hands with which you attack. Place your religion and your world at Allāh's disposal and beg Him to ordain the best for you in respect of the near and the far, this world and the next; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 32

To Mu'āwiyah

You have ruined a large group of people whom you have deceived by your misguidance, and have flung them into the currents of your sea where

darkness has covered them and misgivings toss them about. As a result they have strayed from the right path and turned on their backs. They turned their backs and pushed forward except those wise ones who came back because they left you after understanding you and ran towards Allāh away from your assistance when you put them to troubles and deviated them from the middle path. Therefore, O' Mu'āwiyah, fear Allāh about yourself and take away your rein from Satan, since this world is shortly to be cut off from you and the next world is near you; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 33

To Qutham ibn al-'Abbās, his Governor of Mecca

My spy in the West has written ¹ to me telling me that some people of Syria have been sent for *ḥajj* who are blind of heart, deaf of ears and devoid of eyesight. They confound the truth with vanity, obey men in disobeying Allāh, claim the milk of the world in the name of religion, and trade in the pleasures of this world by forsaking the rewards of the virtuous and the Godfearing. No one achieves good except he who acts for it, and no one is awarded the recompense of evil except he who commits it. 'Therefore, behave yourself in your duties like an intelligent,

¹ Mu'āwiyah sent some men in the garb of pilgrims to Mecca in order to create sensation in the peaceful atmosphere of the place, by taking common men into their confidence, by a show of piety and God-fearing and then convincing them that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib has instigated the people against 'Uthmān and in the end succeeded in getting him killed. In this way, they were to hold him responsible for the killing of 'Uthmān and to turn the people against him, and also to incline the people towards him (Mu'āwiyah) by mentioning the greatness of his character, the sublimity of his manners and stories of his generosity. But when the men whom Amīr al-mu'minīn had put on the job gave him the information, he wrote this letter to Qutham ibn al-'Abbās to keep an eye on their movements and to put a stop to their mischief - mongerings.

experienced, well-wishing and wise man who follows his superior and is obedient to his Imam. You should avoid what you may have to explain. Do not rise up in riches nor lose courage in distress; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 34

To Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr on coming to know that he had taken over the position of (Mālik) al-Ashtar as Governor of Egypt after the latter had died on his way to Egypt.

I have come to know of your anger at the posting of al-Ashtar in your place, but I did not do so because of any shortcoming on your part or to get you to increase your efforts, but when I had taken away what was under your authority I would have placed you at a position which would have been less exacting and more attractive to you.

The man whom I have made Governor of Egypt was my well-wisher, and very harsh and vengeful towards our enemies. May Allāh have mercy on him, as he has finished his days and met his death. I am quite pleased with him. May Allāh too accord him His pleasure, and multiply his reward. Now get ready for your enemy and act according to your intelligence. Prepare for fighting him who fights you and calling to the path of Allāh. Seek Allāh's help exceedingly. If Allāh wills He will assist you in what worries you and help you with what befalls you.

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LETTER 35

To ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās after Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr had been killed.

Now then, Egypt has, been conquered and Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr,

may Allāh have mercy on him, has been martyred. We seek his reward from Allāh. He was a son who was a well-wisher, a hard worker, a sharp sword and a bastion of defence. I had roused the people to join him and ordered them to reach him to help before this incident. I called to them secretly as well as openly repeatedly. Some of them came half-heartedly, some put up false excuses and some sat away leaving me. I ask Allāh the Sublime, to give me early relief from them, for by Allāh, had I not been yearning to meet the enemy for martyrdom and not prepared myself for death, I would not have liked to be with these people for a single day nor ever to face the enemy with them.

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LETTER 36

To his brother ‘Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib,¹ in reply to his letter which contained a reference to the army Amīr al-mu’minīn had sent to some enemy.

I had sent towards him a large army of Muslims. When he came to know of it he fled away and retreated repenting. They met him on the way when the sun was about to set. They grappled for a while like

¹ When after arbitration Mu‘āwiyah started a campaign of killing and devastation, he sent a force of four thousand under aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihri to attack Amīr al-mu’minīn’s cities. When Amīr al-mu’minīn came to know of his activities he roused the people of Kūfah to put up a defence, but they began to offer lame excuses. At last Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī al-Kindī rose with a force of four thousand men and, chasing the enemy, overtook him at Tadmur. The two parties had only a few grappings when darkness came in and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk fled away under its cover. This was the time when ‘Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib had come to Mecca for *‘umrah*. When he came to know that after attacking al-Ḥīrah, aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk had escaped alive and that the people of Kūfah were afraid of war and all their activities had come to a stop, he sent a letter to Amīr al-mu’minīn through ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Ubayd al-Azdī offering his help. In reply to that Amīr al-mu’minīn wrote this letter wherein he complains of the behaviour of the people of Kūfah and mentions the flight of aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk.

nothing. It was about an hour and then he rescued himself half-dead as he had almost been taken by the neck and only the last breath had remained in him. In this way, he escaped in a panic.

Leave the Quraysh in their rushing into misguidance, their galloping in disunity and their leaping over destruction. They have joined together to fight me as they had joined to fight the Messenger of Allāh (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) before me. I wish the Quraysh will get the reward of their treatment of me. For they disregarded my kinship and deprived me of the power due to me from the son of my mother (i .e., the Holy Prophet).

As for your enquiry about my opinion to fight till I die, I am in favour of fighting those who regard fighting lawful. The crowd of men around me does not give me strength nor does their dispersal from me cause any loneliness. Surely, do not consider the son of your father weak or afraid, even though all people have forsaken him, bow down submissively before injustice or hand over his reins into the hand of the puller, or allow his back to be used by the rider to sit upon. But he is as the man of Banū Salīm has said:

If you enquire how I am, then listen that I am enduring and strong against the vicissitudes of time. I do not allow myself to be grieved lest the foe feels joyed and the friend feels sorry.

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LETTER 37

To Mu‘āwiyah

Glory be to Allāh! How staunchly you cling to innovated passions and painful bewilderment along with ignoring the facts and rejecting strong reasons which are liked by Allāh and serve as pleas for the people.

As regards your prolonging the question of ‘Uthmān’s¹ murder the position is that you helped ‘Uthmān when it was really your own help while you forsook him when he was in need of help; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 38

To the people of Egypt when he appointed (Mālik) al-Ashtar as their Governor.

From the slave of Allāh, ‘Alī, Amīr al-mu’minīn to the people who became wrathful for the sake of Allāh when He was disobeyed on His earth and His rights were ignored and oppression had spread its coverings over the virtuous as well as the vicious, on the local as well as the foreigner. Consequently, no good was acted upon nor any evil was avoided.

Now, I have sent to you a man from among the servants of Allāh who allows himself no sleep in days of danger, nor does he shrink from the enemy at critical moments. He is severer on the wicked than a blazing fire. He is Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith, our brother from (the tribe of) Madhḥij. Therefore, listen to him and obey his orders that accord with right,

¹ There is no question of denying that Mu‘āwiyah claimed to help ‘Uthmān after he had been killed, although when he was surrounded and clamoured for his help by writing letter after letter Mu‘āwiyah never budged an inch. However, just to make a show he had sent a contingent towards Medina under Yazīd ibn Asad al-Qasrī, but had ordered it to remain in waiting in the valley of Dhū Khushub near Medina. Eventually, ‘Uthmān was murdered and he went back with his contingent.

No doubt Mu‘āwiyah wished ‘Uthmān to be killed so that he should create confusion in the name of his blood and through these disturbances clear the way for allegiance to himself (as Caliph). That is why he neither helped him when he was surrounded nor thought it necessary to trace the murderers of ‘Uthmān after securing power.

because he is a sword among the swords of Allāh, whose edge is not dull and which does not miss its victim. If he orders you to advance, advance, and if he orders you to stay, stay, because he surely neither advances or attacks nor puts anyone backward or forward save with my command. I have preferred him for you rather than for myself because of his being your well-wisher and (because of) the severity of his harshness over your enemies.

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LETTER 39

To ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ

You have surely made your religion subservient to the worldly seekings of a man whose misguidance is not a concealed affair and whose veil has been torn away. He mars an honourable man with his company and befools those who keep his society. You are following in his footsteps and seeking his favours like the dog that follows the lion looking at his paws and waiting for whatever remnants of his prey fall down to him. In this way, you have ruined your world as well as the next life, although if you had stuck to the right, you would have got what you were after. If Allāh grants me power over you and Ibn Abī Sufyān (Mu‘āwiyah), I shall award you both recompense of what you have done, but if you escape and survive then hereafter there is only evil for you both; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 40

To one of his officers

Now, I have come to know such a thing about you that if you have done so then you have displeased your Lord, disobeyed your Imām and betrayed your trust.

I have come to know that you have razed the ground and taken away whatever was under your feet and devoured whatever was in your hands. Send me your account and know that the accounting to Allāh will be severer than that to the people; and that is an end to the matter.

* * * * *

LETTER 41

To one of his officers

Now, I had made you a partner in my trust, and made you my chief man. And for me no other person from my kinsmen was more trustworthy than you in the matter of sympathizing with me, assisting and respecting my trusts. But when you saw that time had attacked your cousin, the enemy had waged war, the trust of the people was being humiliated, and the whole community was trackless and disunited, you turned your back against your cousin and forsook him when others forsook him, you abandoned him when others abandoned him, and you betrayed him when others betrayed him. Thus, you showed no sympathy to your cousin, nor discharged the trust.

It seems as if you do not want (to please) Allāh by your *jihād*, and as if you do not stand upon a clear sign from your Lord, and as if you have been playing tricks with this *ummah* (Muslim community) to earn (the pleasure of) this world and watching for the moment of their neglectfulness to usurp their share of the wealth. As soon as it was possible for you to misappropriate the *ummah's* trust, you hastened to turn around and attack (them), and made a swift leap to snatch away whatever you could from their property meant for their widows and their orphans as a wolf snatches a wounded and helpless goat. Then, you happily loaded it off to the Ḥijāz without feeling guilty for having appropriated it. Allāh's woe be to your ill-wishers; it was as though you were sending to your family what you had inherited from your father and mother.

Glory be to Allāh! Do you not believe in the Day of judgement, or do you not fear the exaction of account? O’ you who were counted by us among the men possessed of mind, how can you enjoy food and drink when you know that you are eating the unlawful and drinking the unlawful. You are purchasing slavemaids and wedding women with the money of the orphans, the poor, the believers and the participants in *jihād* to whom Allāh had dedicated this money and through whom He had strengthened these cities. Fear Allāh and return to these people their properties. If you do not do so and Allāh grants me power over you I shall excuse myself before Allāh about you and strike you with my sword with which I did not strike anyone but that he went to Hell.

By Allāh, even if Ḥasan and Ḥusayn had done what you did there would have been no leniency with me for them and they could not have won their way with me till I had recovered from them the right and destroyed the wrong produced by their unjust action. I swear by Allāh, the Lord of all beings, that I would not be pleased to regard their money which you have appropriated as lawful for me and to leave it to my successors by way of inheritance. Mind yourself and consider for a while as though you had reached the end of life and had been buried under the earth. Then your actions will be presented before you in the place where the oppressor cries “Alas” while he who wasted his life yearns for return (to the world), *but time was none to escape*. (Qur’ān, 38:3)

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LETTER 42

To ‘Umar ibn Abī Salamah al-Makhzūmī (foster son of the Holy Prophet from Umm al-mu’minīn, Umm Salamah) who was Amīr al-mu’minīn’s Governor of Bahrain, but whom he removed and replaced by an-Nu‘mān ibn Ajlān az-Zuraqī.

Now, I have posted an-Nu‘mān ibn ‘Ajlān az-Zuraqī at Bahrain and

have released you from that position without anything bad from you nor reproach on you, because you managed the governorship well and discharged the obligations. Therefore, proceed to me when you are neither suspected nor rebuked, neither blamed nor guilty. I have just intended to proceed towards the recalcitrant of Syria and desired that you should be with me because you are among those on whom I rely in fighting the enemy and erecting the pillars of religion, if Allāh wills.

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LETTER 43

**To Masqalah ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybānī, the
Governor of Ardashīr Khurrah (Iran).**

I have come to know concerning you a matter which if you have done it you have displeased your Allāh and disobeyed your Imam. You are distributing among the Arabs (Bedouins) of your kin who tend towards you the property of the Muslims which they collected by dint of their spears and horses and on which their blood was shed. By Allāh Who germinated the seed and created living beings, if this is true you will be humbled in my view and you will become light in weight. Therefore, do not treat lightly the obligations of your Lord and do not reform your world by ruining your religion, since then you will be among losers by the way of (your) actions.

Know that the right of those Muslims who are around you and those who are around me in this property is equal. For that reason they come to me and take from it.

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LETTER 44

To Ziyād ibn Abīh when Amīr al-mu'minīn

**had come to know that Mu‘āwiyah had
written to Ziyād to deceive him and to
attach him to himself in kinship.**

I have learnt that Mu‘āwiyah has written to you to deceive your wit and blunt your sharpness. You should be on guard against him because he is the Satan who approaches a believer from the front and from the back, from the right and from the left, to catch him suddenly in the hour of his carelessness and overcome his intelligence.

In the days of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū Sufyān ¹ happened to utter a thoughtless point which was an evil suggestion of Satan, from which neither kinship is established nor entitlement to succession occurs. He who relies on it is like the uninvited guest to a drink-party or like the

¹ Caliph ‘Umar sent Ziyād to Yemen for some encounter. When he returned after finishing the job he addressed a gathering which included Amīr al-mu‘minīn, ‘Umar, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and Abū Sufyān. Impressed with the speech ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ said:

“What a good man! Had he been from the Quraysh he would have led the whole of Arabia with his stick.” Whereupon Abū Sufyān said, “He is from the Quraysh as I know who is his father.” ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ enquired, “Who was his father?” Abū Sufyān said, “It is I.” History also conclusively holds that Ziyād’s mother Sumayyah, who was the slave-maid of al-Hārith ibn Kaldah and was married to a slave named ‘Ubayd, used to lead an immoral life in a quarter of aṭ-Ṭā’if known as Hāratu’l-Baghāyā, and immoral men used to visit her. Once Abū Sufyān also got to her through Abū Maryam as-Salūlī. As a result Ziyād was born. When ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ heard this from Abū Sufyān, he asked why he had not declared it. Abū Sufyān pointed to ‘Umar and said that he was afraid of him, otherwise he would have declared him his own son. Although he would not have dared to do this, when Mu‘āwiyah acquired power he started correspondence with him because Mu‘āwiyah was in need of such persons who were intelligent and cunning and expert in machinations. In any case, when Amīr al-mu‘minīn got information about this correspondence he wrote this letter to Ziyād wherein he warned him against Mu‘āwiyah so that he should not fall in the trap. But he did fall in his trap and joined Mu‘āwiyah and the latter declared him his brother by attaching him in his kin, although the Prophet had declared.

The child goes to the (lawful) husband while the adulterer gets stones.

dangling cup (tied to a saddle).

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: When Ziyād read this letter he said, “By Allāh he has testified to it.” This point remained in his mind till Mu‘āwiyah claimed him (as his brother by his father).

Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s word ‘*al-wāghil*’ means the man who joins the drinking group so as to drink with them, but he is not one of them. He is therefore constantly turned out and pushed off. As for the words ‘*an-nawṭu‘l-mudhabdhab*’, it is a wooden cup or a bowl or the like attached to the saddle of the rider so that it dangles when the rider drives the beast or quickens its pace.

* * * * *

LETTER 45

To ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī who was Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s Governor of Baṣrah, when he came to know that the people of that place had invited ‘Uthmān to a banquet and he had attended.

O’ Ibn Ḥunayf, I have come to know that a young man of Baṣrah invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colours were being chosen for you and big bowls were being given to you. I never thought that you would accept the feast of a people who turn out the beggars and invite the rich. Look at the morsels you take, leave out that about which you are in doubt and take that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully.

Remember that every follower has a leader whom he follows and from the effulgence of whose knowledge he takes light. Realize that your Imām has contented himself with two shabby pieces of cloth out of the (comforts of the) world and two loaves for his meal. Certainly, you cannot do so but at least support me in piety, exertion, chastity and uprightness, because, by Allāh, I have not treasured any gold out of your world nor amassed plentiful wealth nor collected any clothes other

than the two shabby sheets.

Of course, all that we had in our possession under this sky was Fadak, but a group of people felt greedy for it and the other party withheld themselves from it. Allāh is, after all, the best arbiter. What shall I do: Fadak, ¹ or no Fadak, while tomorrow this body is to go into

¹ Fadak was a green fertile village near Medina in the Ḥijāz and it also had a fortress called ash-Shumrūkh. (*Mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 4, p.238; *Mu'jam masta'jam*, al-Bakrī, vol.3, p.1015; *ar-Rawḍ al-mi'Tār*, al-Ḥimyarī, p.437; *Wafā' al-wafā'*, vol.4, p.1280). Fadak belonged to the Jews and in the year 7 A.H. its ownership went from them to the Prophet under the terms of a settlement for peace. The reason for this settlement was that when after the fall of Khaybar the Jews realized the real power of the Muslims, their martial aspirations were lowered, and noting that the Prophet had spared some Jews on their seeking protection, they also sent a message of peace to the Prophet and expressed their wish that Fadak might be taken from them and their area should not be made a battlefield. Consequently, the Prophet accepted their request and allowed them an amnesty, and this land became his personal property wherein no one else had any interest, nor could there be any such interest; because the Muslims have a share only in those properties which they might have acquired as booty after *jihād*, while the property acquired without *jihād* is called *fay'* and the Prophet alone is entitled to it. No other person has a share in it. Thus, Allāh says :

And whatever hath Allāh bestowed on His Apostle from them, ye pricked not against it any horse or a camel, but Allāh granteth authority unto His apostles against whomsoever He willeth; And Allāh over all things is All-powerful. (Qur'ān, 59:6)

No one has ever disputed the fact that Fadak was secured without battle. It was therefore the Prophet's personal property to which no one else had any title. The Historians write :

Fadak was personal to the Prophet as the Muslims did not use their horses or camels for it. (*at-Tārīkh*, aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp.1582—1583, 1589; *al-Kāmil*, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.2, pp.224—225; *as-Sīrah*, Ibn Hishām, vol.3, p.368; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.2, part 2, p.40; *Tārīkh al-khamīs*, ad-Diyār'bakrī, vol.2, p.58; *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, vol.3, p.50)

The historian and geographical scholar Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) writes:

Fadak was the personal property of the Prophet as the Muslims had not used their horses or camels for it. (*Futūḥ al-buldān*, vol.1, p.33)

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb had himself regarded Fadak as the unshared property of the Holy Prophet when he declared:

The property of Banū an-Naḍīr was among that which Allāh has bestowed on His Messenger; against them neither horses nor camels were pricked but they belonged to the Messenger of Allāh especially. (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, vol.4, p.46; vol.7, p.82; vol.9, pp.121-122; *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim, vol.5, p.151; *as-Sunan*, Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, pp. 139—141; *as-Sunan*, an-Nasā’ī, vol.7, p.132; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, pp.25, 48, 60, 208; *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, al-Bayḥaqī, vol.6, pp.296—299)

It is also proved in the accepted way that the Prophet had in his lifetime given this land (Fadak) to Fāṭimah as a gift. It is narrated through al-Bazzār, Abū Ya‘lā, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh and others from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī and through Ibn Marduwayh from ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās that when the verse:

“*And give to the near of kin his due ...*” (Qur’ān, 17:26) was revealed the Holy Prophet called Fāṭimah and gifted Fadak to her. (*ad-Durr al-manthūr*, as-Suyūṭī, vol.4, p.177; *Mama‘ az-zamā‘id*, al-Haythamī, vol.7, p.46; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, al-Muttaqī, vol.3, p.439; *Rūḥ al-ma‘ānī*, al-Ālūsī, vol.15, p.62)

When Abū Bakr assumed power then in view of some benefits of State he turned out Fāṭimah from Fadak and took it from her possession. Thus, the historians writes:

Certainly, Abū Bakr snatched Fadak from Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd, vol.16, p.219; *Wafā’ al-wafā*, as-Samhūdī, vol.3, p.1000; *aṣ-Ṣawā‘iq al-muḥrighah*, Ibn Ḥajar, p.32)

Fāṭimah raised a voice against it. Protesting to Abū Bakr, she said, “You have taken over possession of Fadak although the Prophet had gifted

it to me during his lifetime.” On this Abū Bakr asked her to produce witness of the gift. Consequently, Amīr al-mu’minīn and Umm Ayman gave evidence in her favour. (Umm Ayrnan was the freed bond maid and the dry nurse of the Holy Prophet. She was the mother of Usāmah ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥārithah. The Holy Prophet used to say “Umm Ayman is my mother after my mother. [*al-Mustadrak*, vol.4, p.63; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.3, p.3460; *al-Istī’āb*, vol.4, p.1793; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.567] The Holy Prophet bore witness that she is among the people of Paradise. [Ibn Sa’d, vol.8, p.1.92; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, p.432]). But this evidence was held inadmissible by Abū Bakr and Fāṭimah’s claim was rejected as being based on false statement. About this al-Balādhurī writes :

Fāṭimah said to Abū Bakr, “The Messenger of Allāh had apportioned Fadak to me. Therefore, give it to me.” Then he asked her for another witness than Umm Ayman, saying, “O’ daughter of the Prophet, you know that evidence is not admissible except by two men or one man and two women.”

After these facts there remains no possibility of denying that Fadak was the personal property of the Prophet and that he had completed its gifting to her by handing over possession in his lifetime. But Abū Bakr took over its possession and dislodged her from it. In this connection, he rejected the evidence of ‘Alī and Umm Ayman on the ground that the requirement of evidence was not completed by the evidence of one man and one woman. Besides them, Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn gave evidence in support of Fāṭimah, but their evidence was rejected too on the ground that the evidence of the offspring and minors was not acceptable in favour of their parents. Then Rabāḥ, the slave of the Holy Prophet was also produced as a witness in support of the claim of Fāṭimah but he was rejected too. (*Futūḥ al-buldān*, al-Balādhurī, vol.1, p.35; *at-Tārīkh*, al-Ya’qūbī, vol.3, p.195; *Murūj adh-dhahab*, al-Mas’ūdī, vol.3, p.237; *al-Awā’il*, Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, p.209; *Wafā’ al-wafā*, vol.3, pp. 999, 1000—1001; *Mu’jam al-buldān*, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, vol.4, p.239; *Sharḥ*, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.16, pp.216, 219-220, 274; *al-Muḥallā*, Ibn Ḥazm, vol.6, p.507; *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyah*, vol.3, p.361; *at-Tafsīr*, al-Fakhr ar-Rāzī, vol.29, p.284).

At this stage the question arises that when Fāṭimah’s possession over Fadak is admitted as Amīr al-mu’minīn has also clarified in this letter by saying, “We had Fadak in our possession,” what was the sense in asking Fāṭimah to produce evidence in support of her claim, because the onus of proof does not lie on the person in possession. The onus of proof lies on the

person filing a counter claim because possession itself constitutes a proof. As such it was on Abū Bakr to produce a proof of the lawfulness of his taking over the land, and in the case of his being unable to do so Fāṭimah's possession would mean a proof for her lawful ownership. As such it would be wrong to ask her to produce some more proof or evidence.

It is strange that when other claims of this nature came before Abū Bakr he allowed them in favour of the claimant merely on the basis of the claim, and the claimant is neither asked to furnish proof of his claim nor to produce witnesses. In this connection, the traditionalists write :

It is related from Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī that he said that the Messenger of Allāh had said that when the booty from Bahrain arrived he would allow him such and such out of it, but the booty did not arrive till the Prophet's death. When it arrived in the days of Abū Bakr he went to him and Abū Bakr made the announcement that whoever had a claim against the Messenger of Allāh or to whomever he had made a promise should come for his claim. So I went to him and told him that the Prophet had promised to give me such and such property out of the booty from Bahrain whereupon he gave me all that. (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, vol.3, pp.119, 209, 236; vol.4, p.110; vol.5, p.218; *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim, vol.7, pp.75—76; *al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, at-Tirmidhī, vol.5, p.129; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.3, pp.307—308; *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, Ibn Sa'd, vol.2, part 2, pp.88 — 89).

In the annotations of this tradition, Shihābu'd-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī (Ibn Ḥajar) al-'Asqalānī ash-Shāfi'ī (773/1372 — 852/1449) and Badru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī al-Ḥanafī (762/1361 — 855/1451) have written :

This tradition leads to the conclusion that the evidence of one just companion can also be admitted as full evidence even though it may be in his own favour, because Abū Bakr did not ask Jābir to produce any witness in proof of his claim. (*Fath al-bārī fī sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol.5, p.380; *'Umdatul-qārī fī sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol.12, p.121)

If it was lawful to allow property to Jābir on the basis of good impression without calling for witness or evidence then what stopped allowing Fāṭimah's claim on the basis of similar good impression. If good impression could exist in the case of Jābir to such an effect that he would not benefit by speaking a lie, then why should there not be the good belief

about Fāṭimah that she would not attribute a false saying to the Prophet just for a piece of land. Firstly, her admitted truthfulness and honesty was enough for holding her truthful in her claim and the evidence of ‘Alī and Umm Ayman in her favour was also available besides other evidences. It has been said that the claim could not be decided in favour of Fāṭimah on the basis of these two witnesses because the holy Qur’ān lays down the principle of evidence that:

. . .then call to witness two witnesses from among your men and if there not be two men, then (take) a man and two women, . . . (Qur’ān, 2:282)

If this principle is universal and general then it should be taken into regard on every occasion, but on some occasions it is found not to have been followed; for example, when an Arab had a dispute with the Prophet about a camel, Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī gave evidence in favour of the Prophet and this one evidence was deemed to be equal to two, because there was no doubt in the honesty and truthfulness of the individual in whose favour the evidence was led. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet granted him the title of *Dhu’sh-Shahādatayn* (i.e., one whose evidence is equivalent to the evidence of two witnesses). (al-Bukhārī, vol.4, p.24; vol.6, p.146; Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, p.308; an-Nasā’ī, vol.7, p.302; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.5, pp.188,189, 216; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.2, p.448; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.2, p.114; *al-Isābah*, vol.1, pp.425 -426; *al-Muṣannaf*, aṣ-Ṣan‘ānī, vol.8, pp.366 — 368).

Consequently, neither was the generality of the verse about evidence affected by this action nor was it deemed to be against the canons of evidence. So, if here in view of the Prophet’s truthfulness one evidence in his favour was deemed to be equal to two, then could not the evidence of ‘Alī and Umm Ayman be regarded enough for Fāṭimah in view of her moral greatness and truthfulness? Besides, this verse does not show that there can be no other way of establishing a claim other than these two ways. In this connection, al-Qādī Nūru’llāh al-Mar‘ashī at-Tustarī (956/1549 — 1019/1610) has written in *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq*, chapter on *al-Maṭā’in*:

The view of the objector that by Umm Ayman’s evidence the requirement of evidence remains incomplete is wrong, on the grounds that from certain traditions it is seen that it is lawful to give a decision on the basis of one witness and it does not necessarily mean that the injunction of the Qur’ān has been violated, because this verse means that a decision can be given on the strength of the evidence of two men or

one man and two women, and that their evidence is enough. From this it does not appear that if there are some other grounds besides evidence of witnesses that are unacceptable, and that verdict cannot be given on its basis, unless it is argued that this is the only sense of the verse. But since every sense is not final argument, this sense can be brushed aside, particularly because the tradition clearly points to a contrary sense, and ignoring the sense does not necessarily mean violation of the verse. Secondly, the verse allows a choice between the evidence of two men or of one man and two women. If by virtue of the tradition a third choice is added namely that a verdict can be passed by means of other evidence as well, then how does it necessitate that the Qur'ānic verse should stand violated?

In any case, from this reply it is clear that a claimant is not obliged to produce the evidence of two men or one man and two women in support of the claim because if there is one witness and the claimant swears on oath, then he can be taken to have legitimacy in his claim and a decision can be given in his favour. In this connection, it has been narrated by more than twelve companions of the Holy Prophet that:

The Messenger of Allāh used to decide cases on the strength of one witness and the taking of oath.

It has been explained by some companions (of the Prophet) and some scholars of jurisprudence that this decision is specially related to rights, property and transactions; and this decision was practised by the three Caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. (Muslim, vol.5, p.128; Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, pp.308—309; at-Tirmidhī, vol.3, pp.627—629; Ibn Mājah, vol.2, p.793; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, pp.248, 315, 323; vol.3, p.305; vol.5, p.285; Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, vol.2, pp.721 -725; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.10, pp.167 -176; *as-Sunan*, ad-Dār'quṭnī, vol.4, pp.212 — 215; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.4, p.202; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.7, p.13)

When decisions were passed on the strength of one witness and swearing, then even if in Abū Bakr's view the requirement of evidence was incomplete, he should have asked her to swear and given the judgement in her favour. But here the very object was to tarnish the truthfulness of Fāṭimah so that in future the question of her testimony should not arise.

However, when Fāṭimah's claim was rejected in this manner and Fadak was not accepted as the Prophet's gift to her, she claimed it on the basis of

inheritance saying:

“If you do not agree that the Prophet had gifted it to me, you cannot at least deny that Fadak and the revenues of Khaybar as well as the lands around Medina were the Prophet’s personal properties, and I am his only successor.” But she was deprived of her inheritance on the basis of a tradition related by Abū Bakr himself that the Holy Prophet said, “We prophets have no successors and whatever we leave behind constitutes charity.” (al-Bukhārī, vol.4, p.96; vol.5, pp.25 — 26,115,117; vol.8, p.185; Muslim, vol.5, pp.153—155; at-Tirmidhī, vol.4, pp.157—158; Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, pp.142—143; an-Nasā’ī, vol.7, p.132; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, pp.4, 6, 9, 10; al-Bayhaqī, vol.6, p.300; Ibn Sa’d, vol.2, part 2, pp.86—87; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, p.1825; *Tārīkh al-khamīs*, vol.2, pp.173 - 174).

Besides Abū Bakr no one else had knowledge of this saying which was shown to be a tradition of the Prophet nor had anyone from among the companions heard it. Thus, Jalālu’d-Dīn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr as-Suyūṭī ash-Shāfi’ī (849/1445—911/1505) and Shihābu’d-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (Ibn Ḥajar) al-Haytamī ash-Shāfi’ī (909/1504—974/ 1567) have written :

After the death of the Prophet there was a difference of view about the inheritance and no one had any information in this matter. Then, Abū Bakr said that he had heard the Messenger of Allāh saying that: “We prophets leave no successors and whatever we leave behind constitutes charity”. (*Tārīkh al-khulafā’*, p.73; *aṣ-Ṣawā’iq al-muḥriqah*, p.19)

The mind refuses to believe that the Prophet should not tell those individuals who could be deemed his successors that they would not inherit, and inform a third party who had not the remotest kinship that there would be no successor to him. Then this story was made public only when the case for Fadak had been filed in his court and he himself constituted the contesting party. In such circumstances how can his presenting in his own support a tradition which no one else had heard be deemed permissible. If it is argued that this tradition should be relied upon in view of the greatness of position of Abū Bakr, then why cannot Fāṭimah’s claim to the gift be relied upon because of her honesty and truthfulness, more so when the evidence of Amīr al-mu’minīn and Umm Ayman as well as others was also in her favour. If necessity was felt to call more evidence in her case, then evidence can also be called for about this tradition, particularly, since this tradition

hits against the general instructions of the Qur’ān on succession. How can a tradition which is weak in the manner of its relating and altered and is questioned on the basis of facts be deemed to particularize a generality of the Qur’ānic injunction on succession, because the question of the inheritance of the prophets is clearly mentioned in the Qur’ān. Thus, Allāh says:

And Solomon inherited David . . . (Qur’ān, 27:16)

At another place it is stated through the words of Prophet Zakariyyā:

... So grant me from yourself an heir, who shall inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob . . . (Qur’ān, 19:5—6)

In these verses succession refers to succession in estate and to take it in its figurative meaning of succession in prophetic knowledge would not only be obtuse but also against facts, because knowledge and prophethood are not objects of succession, nor do they possess the quality of transmission through inheritance, for in that case all the progeny of the prophets would have been prophets. There is no sense in making a distinction that the progeny of some prophets may inherit prophethood while others should remain deprived of it. It is strange that the theory of transmission of prophethood through inheritance is propagated by those who have always laid the objection against the Shī’ahs that they regard the Imāmate and the caliphate as an object of inheritance and confined to one family only. Will not prophethood become an object of inheritance by taking succession in this verse to mean succession to the prophethood?

If in Abū Bakr’s view by virtue of this tradition there could be no successor of the Prophet then where was this tradition when a document had been written admitting Fāṭimah’s claim for succession? Thus, Nūru’d-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī ash-Shāfi‘ī (975/1567 — 1044/1635) quoting from Shamsu’d-Dīn Yūsuf (Sibt ibn al-Jawzī) al-Ḥanafī (581/1185 — 654/1256) narrated:

Abū Bakr was on the pulpit when Fāṭimah came to him and said, ‘‘O’ Abū Bakr, the Qur’ān should allow your daughter to inherit you but I am not to inherit my father!’’ Abū Bakr started weeping and alighted from the pulpit. Then he wrote for her about Fadak. At that time ‘Umar arrived and enquired what it was. Abū Bakr replied, ‘‘It is a document I have written for Fāṭimah about her inheritance from her father.’’ ‘Umar

said, “What will you spend on the Muslims while the Arabs are waging war against you, as you see?” Then, ‘Umar took the document and tore it. (*as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, vol.3, pp. 361—362)

Every sensible person who remarks this behaviour can easily reach the conclusion that this tradition is concocted and wrong, and was fabricated only to secure possession over Fadak and other inheritances. Consequently, Fāṭimah refused to accept it and expressed her anger in this way that she made a will about Abū Bakr and ‘Umar that the two should not join in her funeral prayer. ‘Ā’ishah narrated :

Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h .), the daughter of the Holy Prophet (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) sent for Abū Bakr (after he became Caliph after the death of the holy Prophet) claiming from him her inheritance left by the Messenger of Allāh from what Allāh had bestowed (especially) upon him at Medina and Fadak and what was left from one-fifth (*khums*) of the income (annually received) from Khaybar. . . . Abū Bakr refused to hand over anything from it to Fāṭimah. Then, Fāṭimah became angry with Abū Bakr and forsook him and did not talk to him until the end of her life . . . When she died, her husband, Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib buried her at night. He did not inform Abū Bakr about her death and offered the funeral prayer over her himself . . . (al-Bukhārī, vol.5, p.177; vol.8; p.185; Muslim, vol.5, pp.153—155; al-Bayhaqī, vol.4, p.29; vol.6, pp. 300—301; Ibn Sa‘d, vol.2, part 2, p.86; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, p.9; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, p.1825; Ibn Kathīr, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.5, pp.285—286; Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd, vol.6, p.46 and *Wafā’ al-wafā’*, vol.3, p.995)

In this connection, Umm Ja‘far, the daughter of Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far, narrated about the request of Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h .) to Asmā’ bint ‘Umays near her death that:

When I die, I want you and ‘Alī to wash me, and do not allow anyone to go in to me (in my house).

When she died ‘Ā’ishah came to enter, Asmā’ told her, “Do not enter.” ‘Ā’ishah complained to Abū Bakr (her father) saying, “This Khath‘amiyyah (a woman from the tribe of Kath‘am, i.e. Asmā’) intervenes between us and the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh . . .” Then, Abū Bakr came and stood at the door and said, “O’ Asmā’, what makes you prevent the wives of the Prophet from entering in to the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh?” Asmā’ replied, “She had herself ordered me not to allow anyone to enter

into her . . .” Abū Bakr said, “Do what she has ordered you.” (*Hilyah al-awliyā*, vol.2, p.43; *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.3, p.396; vol.4, p.334; *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol.1, p.405; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.4, pp.1897—1898; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.524; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, pp.378—379)

Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) had also made a request to Amīr al-mu’minīn ‘Alī that she must be buried at night and that no one should come to her, that Abū Bakr and ‘Umar should not be notified about her death and burial, and that Abū Bakr should not be allowed to say the prayer over her body.

When she died, ‘Alī washed and buried her in the quietness of the night, not notifying Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. So, these two were not aware of her burial.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidi (130/747 — 207/823) said :

It has been proved to us that ‘Alī (p .b .u .h.) performed her funeral prayer and buried her by night, accompanied by al-‘Abbās (ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib) and (his son) al-Faḍl, and did not notify anyone.

It was for this reason that the burial place of Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) was hidden and unknown, and no one is sure about it. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.162—163; *al-Muṣannaḥ*, vol.4, p.141; *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol.1, pp.402, 405; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.4, p.1898; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, pp.524—525; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, pp.379-380; *aṭ-Ṭabarī*, vol.3, pp.2435-2436; Ibn Sa‘d, vol.8, pp.19—20; *Wafā’ al-wafā*, vol.3, pp.901—902, 904, 905; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.16, pp. 279 — 281)

To attribute this displeasure of Fāṭimah to sentiments and thereby to lower its importance does not evince a correct sentiment, because if this displeasure had been the result of sentiments then Amīr al-mu’minīn would have stopped her from this misplaced displeasure, but no history shows that Amīr al-mu’minīn took this displeasure to be misplaced. Besides, how could her displeasure be the result of personal feelings or sentiments since her pleasure or displeasure always accord with Allāh’s will. The Prophet’s following saying is a proof of this:

O’ Fāṭimah, surely Allāh is enraged in your rage and is pleased in your pleasure. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.153; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.522; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, p.366; *Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb*, vol.12, p.441; *al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-kubrā*, vol.2, p.265; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, vol.13, p.96; vol.16,

the grave in whose darkness its traces will be destroyed and (even) news of it will disappear. It is a pit that, even if its width is widened or the hands of the digger make it broad and open, the stones and clods of clay will narrow it and the falling earth will close its aperture. I try to keep myself engaged in piety so that one the day of great fear it will be peaceful and steady in slippery places.

If I wished I could have taken the way leading towards (worldly pleasures like) pure honey, fine wheat and silk clothes but it cannot be that my passions lead me and greed take me to choosing good meals while in the Ḥijāz or in Yamāmah there may be people who have no hope of getting bread or who do not have a full meal. Shall I lie with a satiated belly while around me there may be hungry bellies and thirsty livers? Or shall I be as the poet has said?

It is enough for you to have a disease that you lie with your belly full while around you people may be badly yearning for dried leather.

Shall I be content with being called ‘*Amīr al-mu’minīn*’ (The Commander of the Believers), although I do not share with the people the hardships of the world? Or shall I be an example for them in the distresses of life? I have not been created to keep myself busy in eating good foods like the tied animal whose only worry is his fodder or like a loose animal whose activity is to swallow. It fills its belly with its feed and forgets the purpose behind it. Shall I be left uncontrolled to pasture freely, or draw the rope of misguidance or roam aimlessly in the paths of bewilderment?

I see as if one of you would say that if this is what the son of Abī Ṭālib eats then weakness must have made him unfit to fight his foes and encounter the brave. Remember that the tree of the forest is the best for timber, while green twigs have soft bark, and the wild bushes are very strong for burning and slow in dying off. My relation with the Messenger of Allāh is that of one branch with another, or of the wrist with the

forearm. By Allāh, if the Arabs join together to fight me I will not run away from them and if I get the opportunity I will hasten to catch them by their necks. I shall surely strive to relieve the earth of this man of perverse mind and uncouth body, till the bits of earth are removed from the grain.

A part of the same which is the end of the letter

Get away from me, O' world. Your rein is on your own shoulders as I have released myself from your ditches, removed myself of your snares and avoided walking into your slippery places. Where are those whom you have deceived by your jokes? Where are those communities whom you have enticed with your embellishments? They are all confined to graves and hidden in burial places. By Allāh, if you had been a visible personality and a body capable of feeling, I would have awarded you the penalties fixed by Allāh because of the people whom you received through desires and the communities whom you threw into destruction and the rulers whom you consigned to ruin and drove to places of distress after which there is neither going nor returning. Indeed whoever stepped on your slippery place slipped, whoever rode your waves was drowned, and whoever evaded your snares received inward support. I-Ie who keeps himself safe from you does not worry even though his affairs may be straitened and the world to him is like a day which is near expiring.

Get away from me, for, by Allāh, I do not bow before you so that you may humiliate me, nor do I let loose the reins for you so that you may drive me away. I swear by Allāh an oath wherein I, except the will of Allāh, that I shall so train my self that it will feel joyed if it gets one loaf for eating, and be content with only salt to season it. I shall let my eyes empty themselves of tears like the stream whose water has flown away. Should 'Alī eat whatever he has and fall asleep like the cattle who fill their stomachs from the pasture land and lie down, or as the goats (who) graze, eat the green grass and go into their pen! His eyes may die if he, after long years, follows loose cattle and pasturing animals.

Blessed is he who discharges his obligations towards Allāh and endures his hardships, allows himself no sleep in the night but when

sleep overpowers him lies down on the ground using his hand as a pillow, along with those who keep their eyes wakeful in fear of the Day of judgement, whose bodies are ever away froth beds, whose lips are humming in remembrance of Allāh and whose sins have been erased through their prolonged beseechings for forgiveness. *They are the party of Allāh; Be it known, verily the party of Allāh alone shall be the successful ones* (Qur’ān, 58:22). Therefore, O’ Ibn Ḥunayf, fear Allāh and be content with your own loaves so that you may escape Hell.

* * * * *

A short history of Fadak after the death of Fāṭimah

The motive which causes us to pursue the history of Fadak and to extract the continuation of events after it for a period of three centuries from the texts of historical books is to clarify three questions:

- a. The rule of annulment of inheritance from prophets made by the Holy Prophet, in other words, that the property of the Holy Prophet is a part of the public treasury and belongs to all Muslims. This was claimed by the first caliph Abū Bakr, and was rejected by his successors, both by next the two caliphs (‘Umar and ‘Uthmān) and by the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāssids. We must consider that the lawfulness and rightfulness of their caliphate depended upon the correctness and lawfulness of the caliphate of the first Caliph and his actions.
- b. Amīr al-mu’minīn (‘Alī – p .b .u .h.) and the descendants of Fāṭimah never had any hesitation regarding the rightfulness and justifiability of their claim. They insisted and confirmed that Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) had always been right and that Abū Bakr’s claim had always been rejected, and they did not yield to the false claim.

- c. Whenever one of the Caliphs made a decision to put into effect Allāh's command, in regard to Fadak, to observe justice and equity, and to restore the right to the entitled one in conformity with Islamic rules, he used to return back the Fadak to the descendants of Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) and to hand it over to them.

1. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was the most harsh person in keeping Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) from Fadak and her inheritance as he himself confessed:

When the Messenger of Allāh died I came along with Abū Bakr to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and said, "What do you say about what has been left by the Messenger of Allāh?" He replied, "We have the most rights with the Holy Prophet." I ('Umar) said, "Even those properties of Khaybar?" He said, "Yes, even those of Khaybar." I said, "Even those of Fadak?" He replied, "Yes, even those of Fadak." Then, I said, "By Allāh, we say no, even if you cut our necks with saws." (*Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, pp.39 – 40)

As it has been mentioned before, 'Umar then took the document of Fadak and tore it up. But when 'Umar became Caliph (13/634 — 23/644) he gave back the Fadak to inheritors of the holy Prophet. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (574/1178 — 626/1229), the famous historian and geographer, following the event of Fadak said:

. . . Then, when 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb became caliph and gained victories and the Muslims had secured abundant wealth (i.e. the public treasury satisfied the Caliphate's needs) he made his judgement contrary to that of his predecessor, and that was to give it (Fadak) back to the Prophet's heirs. At that time 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib disputed Fadak.

'Alī said that Holy Prophet (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) had bestowed it on Fāṭimah during his lifetime. 'Abbās denied this and used to say, "This was in the possession of the Holy Prophet (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.)"

and I am sharing with his heirs.’’ They were disputing this ¹ among each other and asked ‘Umar to settle the case. He refused to judge between them and said, ‘‘Both of you are more conscious and aware to your problem; but I only give it to you. . .’’ (*Mu‘jam al-buldān*, vol.4, pp.238-239; *Wafā’ al-wafā*, vol.3, p.999; *Tahdhīb al-lughah*, vol.10, p.124; *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol.10, p.473; *Tāj al-‘arūs*, vol.7, p.166)

The reason that ‘Umar and Abū Bakr were trying to seize Fadak was an economic and political reason, not merely a religious one as the previous episode shows, for when the economic and political condition of the caliphate improved, and there was no need of the income obtained from Fadak, ‘Umar’s judgement changed also.

2. When ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān became caliph after the death of ‘Umar (23/644 — 35/656) he granted Fadak to Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, his cousin (*as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.6, p.301; *Wafā’ al-wafā*, vol.3, p.1000; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.1, p.198), and this was one of the causes of vindictive feelings among the Muslims towards ‘Uthmān (*al-Ma‘ārif*, Ibn Qutaybah, p.195; *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, vol.4, pp.283, 435; *at-Tārīkh*, Abu’l-Fidā’, vol.1, p.168; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn al-Wardī, vol.1, p.204) which ended in the revolt against him and his murder. ‘‘While previously Fāṭimah used to claim it. sometimes as her inheritance and sometimes as a gift (from her father), she was driven away from it (Fadak)’’ as Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd said. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*). In this way Fadak fell into the possession of Marwān. He used to sell its crops and

¹ The last part of this historic event has been inserted afterwards to demonstrate the matter of inheritance by the brother of the deceased or the paternal uncle of the deceased when he has no sons. This problem is a matter of dispute between Islamic sects. The judicial and jurisprudential discussion is separate from our goal. We are only discussing the matter historically.

‘Abbās had no claim in this case because he had not shown that he had a share in this property nor did his descendants consider it to be among their own assets even when they had become caliphs and were reigning. They owned this estate either in their position as caliphs, or they used to return it to the descendants of Fāṭimah when they had decided to be just governors.

products for at least ten thousand Dinars per year, and if in some years its income decreased this drop was not very pronounced. This was its usual profit until the time of the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (in 100/718). (Ibn Sa‘d, vol.5, pp.286, 287; *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*, vol.4, p.291)

3. When Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān became caliph (41/661 — 60/680) he became a partner with Marwān and others in Fadak. He allotted one third to Marwān and one third to ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and one third to his son Yazīd. This was after the death of al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī (p .b .u .h .). “To make angry the progeny of the Holy Prophet” al-Ya‘qubi states: (*at- Tārīkh*, vol.2, p.199)

It was in the possession of the three above mentioned persons until Marwān became caliph (64/684 — 65/685) and he completely took over possession of it. Then he donated it to his two sons, ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. Then ‘Abd al-‘Azīz donated his share to his son (‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz).

4. When ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz became caliph (99/717 — 101/720) he delivered a lecture and mentioned that : “Verily, Fadak was among the things that Allāh had bestowed on His Messenger, and no horse, nor camel was pricked against it. . .” and mentioned the case of Fadak during the past caliphates until he said : “Then Marwān gave it (Fadak) to my father and to ‘Abd al-Malik. It became mine and al-Walīd’s and Sulaymān’s (two sons of ‘Abd al-Malik). When al-Walīd became caliph (86/705 — 96/715) I asked him for his share and he gave it to me. I asked also for Sulaymān’s share and he gave it to me. Then I gathered the three parts and I possess no property more preferable to me than this. Be witness that I returned it to its original state.” He wrote this to his governor of Medina (Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr ibn Ḥazm) and ordered him to carry out what he had declared in the speech he delivered. Then Fadak came into the possession of the children of Fāṭimah. “This was the first removal of oppression by returning it (Fadak) to the children of ‘Alī.” (*al-Awā’il*, Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, p.209). They possessed it during the reign of this caliph.

5. When Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Mālik became caliph (101/720 — 105/724) he seized Fadak and they (the children of ‘Alī) were dispossessed. It fell into the possession of the Banū Marwān as it had been previously. They passed it from hand to hand until their caliphate expired and passed away to the Banū al-‘Abbās.

6. When Abu ‘l-‘Abbās ‘Abdullāh as-Saffāh became the first caliph of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty (132/749 — 136/754) he gave back Fadak to the children of Fāṭimah and submitted it to ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

7. When Abū Ja‘far ‘Abdullāh al-Manṣūr ad-Dawānīqī (136/754 — 158/775) became caliph, he seized Fadak from the children of al-Ḥasan.

8. When Muḥammad al-Mahdī ibn al-Manṣūr became caliph (158/775 — 169/785) he returned Fadak to the children of Fāṭimah.

9. Then Mūsā al-Hādī ibn al-Mahdī (169/785 — 170/786) and his brother Hārūn ar-Rashīd (170/786 — 193/809) seized it from the descendants of Fāṭimah and it was in the possession of Banū al-‘Abbās until the time that al-Ma’mūn became caliph (198/813 — 218/833).

10. al-Ma’mūn al-‘Abbāsī gave it back to the descendants of Fāṭimah (210/826). It is narrated through al-Mahdī ibn Sābiq that:

al-Ma’mūn one day sat to hear the complaints of the people and to judge in cases. The first utter of complaint which he received caused him to weep when he looked at it. He asked where the attorney of Fāṭimah daughter of the Holy Prophet was? An old man stood up and came forth, arguing with him about Fadak and al-Ma’mūn also argued with him until he overcame al-Ma’mūn. (*al-Awā’il*, p.209)

al-Ma’mūn summoned the Islamic jurisprudents (*al-Fuqahā’*) and interrogated them about the claim of the Banū Fāṭimah. They narrated to al-Ma’mūn that the Holy Prophet gifted Fadak to Fāṭimah and that

after the death of the Holy Prophet, Fāṭimah demanded Abū Bakr to return Fadak to her. He asked her to bring witnesses to her claim regarding this gift. She brought ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and Umm Ayman as her witnesses. They witnessed the case in her favour. Abū Bakr rejected their witness. Then al-Ma’mūn asked the Islamic jurists: “What is your view about Umm Ayman?” They replied, “She is a woman to whom the Holy Prophet bore witness that she is an inhabitant of Paradise.” al-Ma’mūn disputed at length with them and forced them to accept the argument by proofs till they confessed that ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and Umm Ayman had witnessed only the truth. When they unanimously accepted this matter, he restored Fadak to the descendants of Fāṭimah. (*at-Tārīkh*, al-Ya‘qūbī, vol.3, pp. 195 — 196)

Then al-Ma’mūn ordered that the estate (of Fadak) should be registered among the property (of the descendants of Fāṭimah) and it was registered and al-Ma’mūn signed it.

Then he wrote a letter to his governor in Medina named Qutham ibn Ja‘far as follows :

“Know that Amīr al-mu’mīnīn, in exercise of the authority vested upon him by the divine religion as the Caliph, successor and the kinsman of the Holy Prophet has considered himself more deserving to follow the precedent of the Holy Prophet (*sunnatu’n-nabī*) and to carry out his commands. And (the chief is more entitled) to restore to the rightful persons any endowment gifted by the Holy Prophet or thing which the Holy Prophet had gifted to someone. The success and safeguard of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn is by Allāh and he is particularly anxious to act in a way which will win the pleasure of the Almighty Allāh for him.

“Verily, the Holy Prophet had gifted the estate of Fadak to his daughter Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h .). He had transferred its ownership to her. It is a clear and established fact. None of the kindred of the Holy Prophet have any difference of view. Fāṭimah always claimed that which was more deserving (to be justified) than the person (Abū Bakr) whose word

was accepted. Amīr al-mu'minīn considers it right and proper to restore Fadak to the heirs of Fāṭimah. He would hereby win nearness to Almighty Allāh by establishing His justice and right. It would win the appreciation of the Holy Prophet by carrying into effect his commandments. Amīr al-mu'minīn has commanded that this restoration of Fadak should duly be registered. The commands should be transmitted to all the officials.

“Then, if, as it was, a custom to proclaim on every *hajj* gathering (every year), following the death of the Holy Prophet, that anyone to whom the Holy Prophet had promised (the donation) of a gift or a present, should come forward, his statement will be accepted and the promise will be fulfilled. Certainly, Fāṭimah (p .b .u .h.) had a superior right to have her statements accepted in the matter of the gifting of Fadak by the Holy Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) to her.

“Verily, Amīr al-mu'minīn has commanded his slave Mubārak aṭ-Ṭabarī to restore Fadak to the descendants of Fāṭimah the daughter of the Holy Prophet with all its borders, its rights and all slaves attached thereto, cereal crops and other things.

“The same has been restored to Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

“Amīr al-mu'minīn has appointed the two of them as the agents representing the owners of the lands — the heirs of Fāṭimah. Know then this is the view of Amīr al-mu'minīn and that Allāh has inspired him to obey the order of Allāh and to win His pleasure and the pleasure of the Holy Prophet. Let also your subordinates know this. Behave towards Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh in the same manner as you used to behave towards Mubārak aṭ-Ṭabarī. Help them both to everything which has to do with its flourishing and prosperity and its improvement in abundance of cereals by Allāh’s will; and that is an end to the matter.”

This is written this Wednesday, two nights past *Dhu'l-qi'dah*, the

year 210 (15/2/826).

11. During the period of al-Ma'mūn's caliphate Fadak was in the possession of Fāṭimah's descendants, and this continued during the caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim (218/833 — 227/842) and al-Wāthiq (227/842 — 232/847).

12. When Ja'far al-Mutawakkil became caliph (232/847 — 247/861), the one among them who was marked as an arch enemy of the progeny of the Holy Prophet both of those alive and of those dead, gave the order to recapture Fadak from the descendants of Fāṭimah. (He seized it and granted it to Ḥarmalah al-Ḥajjam or the Cupper), and after the death of al-Ḥajjam he granted it to al-Bāzyār or the Falconer, a native of Ṭabaristān. (*Kashf al-ghumnah*, vol.2, pp.121 — 122; *al-Biḥār*, [1st ed.], vol.8, p.108; *Safīnah al-biḥār*, vol.2, p.351). Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī mentioned that his name was 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Bāzyār and added: "And there were in it (Fadak) eleven date-palm trees which the Holy Prophet had planted by his own hands. The descendants of Abū Ṭālib used to gather these dates. When pilgrims (*al-Hujjāj*), entered Medina they donated the dates to them. Through this they received a considerable return. This news reached al-Mutawakkil. He ordered 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar to cut up the fruits and to squeeze the juice from them. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar sent a man named Bishr ibn Umayyah ath-Thaqafī who squeezed the fruits. It was reported that he made it into wine. It had not reached Baṣrah (on its way to the Caliph) before it decayed and al-Mutawakkil was killed." (*al-Awā'il*, p.209).

13. When al-Mutawakkil was killed and al-Muntaṣir (his son) succeeded him (247/861 — 248/862) he gave the order to restore Fadak to the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and delivered the donations of Abū Ṭālib to them and this was in 248/862.

(Ref. for Nos.3—13—*Futūh al-buldān*, vol.1, pp.33—38; *Mu'jam al-buldān*, vol.4, pp.238—240; *at-Tārīkh*, al-Ya'qūbī, vol.2, p.199; vol.3, pp.48, 195—196; *al-Kāmil*, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.2, pp.224—225; vol.3, pp. 457,497; vol.5, p.63; vol.7, p.116; *al-'Iqd al farīd*, vol.4,

pp.216, 283, 435; *Wafā' al-wafā'*, vol.3, pp.999—1000; *at-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol.5, pp. 286—287; *Ṭarīkh al-Khulafā'*, pp.231—232, 356; *Murūj adh-dhahab*, vol.4, p.82; *Sīrah 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz*, Ibn al-Jawzī, p.110; *Ṣubḥ al a'shā*, vol.4, p.291; *Jamharah rasā'il al-'Arab*, vol.2, pp.331—332; vol.3, pp.509—510; *'Alām an-nisā'*, vol.3, pp.1211-1212; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.16, pp.277-278: *al-Awā'il*, p.209; *Kashf al-ghummah*, vol.2, pp.120—122; *al-Bihār*, vol.8, pp.107—108).

14. It seemed that Fadak was recaptured from the descendants of Fāṭimah after the death of al-Muntaṣir (248/862), because Abu'l-Ḥasan, 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-Irbilī (d. 692/1293) mentioned, "al-Mu'taḍid (279/892 — 289/902) returned Fadak to the descendants of Fāṭimah. Then he mentioned that al-Muqtafī (289/902 — 295/908) seized it from them. It is said also that al-Muqtadir (295/908 — 320/932) returned it to them (the descendants of Fāṭimah)." (*Kash al-ghummah*, vol.2, p.122; *al-Bihār*, vol.8, p.108; *Safīnah*, vol.2, p.351).

15. And after this long period of recapturing and restoration, Fadak was returned to the possession of the usurpers and their heirs as it seems, no further mention was made in history and the curtain fell.

Is it (then that) the judgement of (the times of pagan) ignorance they desire? And who (else) can be better than Allāh to judge for a people of assured faith. (Qur'ān, 5:50)

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LETTER 46

To One of his Officers

Now, you are surely one of those whose help I take in establishing religion and with whose help I break the haughtiness of the sinful and

guard critical boundaries. You should seek Allāh's help in whatever causes you anxiety. Add a little harshness to the mixture of leniency and remain lenient where leniency is more appropriate. Adopt harshness when you cannot do without harshness. Bend your wings (in humbleness) before the subjects. Meet them with your face broad and keep yourself lenient (in behaviour) with them. Treat them equally in looking at them with half eyes or full eyes, in signalling and in greeting so that the great should not expect transgression on your part and the weak should not lose hope in your justice; and that is an end to the matter.

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WILL 47

For Imām al-Ḥasan and Imām al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon them) when ('Abd ar-Raḥmān) Ibn Muljam (the curse of Allāh be upon him) struck him (fatally with a sword).

I advise you (both) to fear Allāh and that you should not hanker after the (pleasures of this) world even though it may run after you. Do not be sorry for anything of this world that you have been denied. Speak the truth and act (in expectation) for reward. Be an enemy of the oppressor and helper of the oppressed.

I advise you (both) and all my children and members of my family and everyone whom my writing reaches, to fear Allāh, to keep your affairs in order, and to maintain good relations among yourselves for I have heard your grand-father (the Holy Prophet – p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) saying, "Improvement of mutual differences is better than general prayers and fastings."

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of orphans. So do not allow them to starve and they should not be ruined in your presence.

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of your neighbours, because they were the subject of the Prophet's advice. He

went on advising in their favour till we thought he would allow them a share in inheritance.

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of the Qur’ān. No one should excel you in acting upon it.

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of prayer, because it is the pillar of your religion.

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of your Lord’s House (Ka‘bah). Do not forsake it so long as you live, because if it is abandoned you will not be spared.

(Fear) Allāh (and) keep Allāh in view in the matter of *jihād* with the help of your property, lives and tongues in the way of Allāh.

You should keep to a respect for kinship and spending for others. Avoid turning away from one another and severing mutual relations. Do not give up bidding for good and forbidding from evil lest the mischievous gain positions over you, and then if you will pray, the prayers will not be granted.

Then he said: O’ sons of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, certainly I do not wish to see you plunging harshly into the blood of Muslims shouting “Amīr al-mu’minīn has been killed.” Beware, do not kill on account of me except my killer.

Wait till I die by his (Ibn Muljam’s) existing stroke. Then strike him one stroke for his stroke and do not dismember the limbs of the man, for I have heard the Messenger of Allāh (p .b . u .h .a .h .p.) saying, “Avoid cutting limbs even though it may be a rabid dog.”

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LETTER 48**To Mu‘āwiyah**

Surely, revolt and falsehood abase a man in his religious as well as worldly matters and manifest his shortcomings before his critic. You know that you cannot catch what is destined to remain away from you. Many people had aims other than right (ones) and began to swear by Allāh (that they will attain their goal) but He falsified them. Therefore, fear the Day when happy is he who made his end happy (by good actions) while repentant is he who allowed Satan to lead him and did not resist him. You called us to a settlement through the Qur’ān although you were not a man of the Qur’ān, and we responded to the Qur’ān through its judgement, and not to you; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 49**To Mu‘āwiyah**

So now, this world turns away from the next one. He who is devoted to it achieves nothing from it except that it increases his greed and coveting for it. He who is devoted to it is not satisfied with what he gets from it because of what he has not got. Eventually, there is separation from what has been amassed, and a breaking of what has been strengthened. If you take a lesson from the past you can be safe in the future; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 50**To the officers of his army**

From the servant of Allāh, ‘Alī, Amīr al-mu’minīn to the Officer-in-

charge of garrisons :

Now, it is obligatory on an officer that the distinction he achieves, or the wealth with which he has been exclusively endowed, should not make him change his behaviour towards those under him, and that the riches Allāh has bestowed on him should increase him in nearness to his people and kindness over his brethren.

Beware, that it is obligatory for you on me that I should not keep anything secret from you except during war, nor should I decide any matter without consulting you except the commands of religion, nor should I ignore the fulfilment of any of your rights nor desist till I discharge it fully, and that for me all of you should be equal in rights. When I have done all this, it becomes obligatory on you to thank Allāh for this bounty and to obey me, and you should not hold back when called, nor shirk good acts, and you should face hardships for the sake of right. If you do not remain steadfast in this, there will be no one more humiliated in my view than the one among you who has deviated, and then I will increase the punishment for him, wherein no one will get any concession from me. Take this (pledge) from your (subordinate) officers and accord to them such behaviour from your side by which Allāh may improve your matters; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 51

To his collectors of (land) tax

From the servant of Allāh ‘Alī, Amīr al-mu’minīn to the tax collectors:

So now, he who does not fear where he is going, does not send forward for himself that which could protect him. You should know that the obligations laid on you are few, while their reward is much. Even if there had been no fear of punishment for revolt and disobedience, which

Allāh has prohibited, the reward in keeping aloof from it would be enough (incentive) to abstain from going after it. Behave yourselves justly with the people and act with endurance with regard to their needs, because you are the treasurers of the people, representatives of the community and the ambassadors of the Imāms.

Do not deprive anyone of his needs and do not prevent him from (securing) his requirements. For the collection of tax (*kharāj*) from the people do not sell their winter or summer clothes, nor cattle with which they work, nor slaves. Do not whip anyone for the sake of one Dirham. Do not touch the property of any person whether he be one who prays (a Muslim) or a protected unbeliever, unless you find a horse or weapons used for attack against Muslims, because it is not proper for the Muslims to leave these things in the hands of the enemies of Islam to enable them to have power over Islam.

Do not deny good counsel to yourself, good behaviour to the army, succour to the subjects and strength to the religion of Allāh. Strive in the way of Allāh as is obligatory on you, because Allāh the Glorified, desires us and you to be thankful to Him as best as we can and that we should help Him to the best of our power. And there is no power save with Allāh, the All-high, the All-glorious.

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LETTER 52

To the Governors of various places concerning prayers

Now, say the *zuhr* (noon) prayers with the people when the shade of the wall of the goats' pen is equal to the wall. Say the '*aṣr* (afternoon) prayers with them when the sun is still shining in a portion of the day enough for covering the distance of two *farsakhs* (about six miles). Say the *maghrib* (sunset) prayers when he who is fasting ends the fast and the pilgrim rushes (from 'Arafat) to Minā. Say the '*ishā*' (night) prayers with them when

twilight disappears and upto one third of the night. Say the (early) morning prayers with them when a man can recognize the face of his companion. Say the prayers with the people as the weakest of them would do and do not be a source of trouble to them.

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DOCUMENT¹ OF INSTRUCTION 53

¹ This document, which deserves to be called the constitution of Islamic polity, was prepared by the person who was the greatest scholar of Divine law and acted upon it more than anyone else. From the study of Amīr al-mu'minīn's way of governance in these pages it can be concluded that his aim was only the enforcement of Divine law and the improvement of social conditions, and not to disrupt public security or to fill treasures by plunder, or to strive to extend the country's boundaries by fair means or foul. Worldly governments generally adopt such constitutions which cater to their utmost benefit and try to change every law which is against that aim or is injurious for their objective. But every article of this constitution serves as a custodian of common interests and protector of collective organization. Its enforcement has no touch of selfishness or any iota of selfinterest. It contains such basic principles of the fulfilment of Allāh's obligations, the protection of human rights without distinction of religion or community, the care of the destitute and the poor and the provision of succour to the low and the down-trodden from which full guidance can be had for the propagation of right and justice, the establishment of peace and security, and the prosperity and well-being of the people.

Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote this instrument for Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar, when he was appointed the Governor of Egypt in 38 A.H.. Mālik al-Ashtar was one of the chief companions of Amīr al-mu'minīn. He had shown great endurance and steadfastness and perfect confidence and trust in Amīr al-mu'minīn. He had attained the utmost nearness and attachment to him by moulding his conduct and character after the conduct and character of Amīr al-mu'minīn. This can be gauged by Amīr al-mu'minīn's words: "Mālik was to me as I was to the Messenger of Allāh." (Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, vol.15, p.98; *al-A'lām*, vol.6, p.131). Mālik al-Ashtar too, actuated by selfless feelings of service, took a very active part in military encounters and proved himself to be Amīr al-mu'minīn's arm in all battles and encounters. He showed such feats of courage and daring that his bravery was acknowledged throughout Arabia. Along with this bravery he was also

conspicuous in endurance and forbearing. In this connection, Warrām ibn Abī Firās an-Nakhaī has written that once Mālik was passing through the market of Kūfah with the dress and turban made of gunny-cloth when a shopkeeper finding him in this condition and clothing, he threw some rotten leaves upon him, but he did not at all mind this dirty behaviour, nor did he even look at him. Rather, he quietly stepped forward. Then someone said to this shopkeeper, “Do you know to whom you have been so insolent?” He replied that he did not know who he was, whereupon he said that it was Mālik al-Ashtar, the companion of Amīr al-mu’minīn. Hearing this, he lost his senses and at once ran behind him to seek pardon for this insolence and humiliating treatment. While in his search he reached a mosque where Mālik was offering prayers. When he finished the prayers this man went forward and fell on his feet and begged pardon with great pertinacity and weeping. Mālik raised the man’s beard up and said, “By Allāh, I have come to the mosque to pray to Allāh to forgive you. I myself had pardoned you that very moment, and I hope Allāh too will pardon you.” (*Tanbīhu’l-khawāṭir wa nuzhatu’n-nawāzīr*, vol.1, p.2; *al-Biḥār*, vol.42, p.157). This is the forgiveness and tolerance of a warrior at who name courage trembled, and whose swordsmanship was acknowledged by the brave men of Arabia. And this is the real sign of bravery that a man should exercise self-control during bitterness of anger and rage and endure hardships with patience and calmness. In this connection, Amīr al-mu’minīn’s saying is that, “The bravest of men is he who over-powers his passions.”

However, besides these characteristics and qualities, he had a perfect aptitude for organization and administration. Thus, when the ‘Uthmānī (al-‘Uthmāniyyah) party began to spread the germs of destruction in Egypt and tried to upset the law and order of the country by mischief and revolt then Amīr al-mu’minīn removed Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr from the governorship and decided to appoint Mālik al-Ashtar in his place, although at that time he was posted as the Governor of Naṣībīn. However, Amīr al-mu’minīn sent him word that he should name someone as his deputy and come to Amīr al-mu’minīn. On receipt of this order Mālik al-Ashtar appointed Shabīb ibn ‘Amīr al-Azdī in his place and himself came to Amīr al-mu’minīn. Amīr al-mu’minīn gave him a warrant of appointment and sent him off to Egypt, and also sent a written order to Egyptians to obey him. When Mu‘āwiyah got the news of Mālik al-Ashtar’s appointment through his spies he was perplexed because he had promised ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ that he would give him the governorship of Egypt in reward of his services and he had hoped that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ would easily defeat Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and wrest the power from him, but could not imagine conquering Egypt by defeating

Written for (Mālik) al-Ashtar an-Nakha‘ī, when the position of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr had become precarious, and Amīr al-mu‘minīn had appointed al-Ashtar as the Governor of Egypt and the surrounding areas; it is the longest document and contains

Mālik al-Ashtar. He therefore decided to do away with him before he took over the charge. For this he arranged with a landlord of the city of al-‘Arīsh (or al-Qulzum) that when Mālik passed through al-‘Arīsh on his way to Egypt he should kill him by some device or other and in reward for this the revenue of his estate would be written off. So, when Mālik al-Ashtar reached al-‘Arīsh with retinue and force the chief of al-‘Arīsh gave him a good ovation and insisted on having Mālik as his guest. Mālik agreed and stayed at his place. When he finished the meal the host gave him some syrup of honey to drink in which he had mixed with poison. Soon after drinking it the poison began to show its effect and before the eyes of everyone this great warrior known for his swordsmanship and for putting the rows of the enemy to flight calmly went into the embrace of death.

When Mu‘āwiyah got news of his success of this device he was overjoyed and shouted in merriment, “Oh, honey is also an army of Allāh”, and then said during a speech:

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib had two right hand men. One was chopped off on the day of Šiffīn and he was ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, and the second has been severed now and he is Mālik al-Ashtar.

But when the news of Mālik’s assassination reached Amīr al-mu‘minīn, he was highly grieved and sorrowful, then he said:

Mālik! who is Mālik? If Mālik was a stone, he was hard and solid; if he was a rock, he was a great rock which had no parallel. It seems his death has made me also lifeless. I swear by Allāh that his death made the Syrians joyous and insulted the Iraqīs.

Then he continued:

Women have become barren to give birth to such as Mālik. (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp.3392 – 3395; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, pp. 352 – 353; al-Ya‘qūbī, vol.2, p.194; *al-Isṭī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1366; Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd, vol.6, pp. 74 -77; Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, pp.313–314; Abu’l-Fidā’, vol.1, p.179)

the greatest number of beautiful sayings.

In the Name of Allāh, the Compassionate, the Merciful

This is what Allāh's servant 'Alī, Amīr al-mu'minīn, has ordered Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar in his instrument (of appointment) for him when he made him Governor of Egypt for the collection of its revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people and making its cities prosperous.

He has ordered him to fear Allāh, to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow what He has commanded in His Book (Qur'ān) out of His obligatory and elective commands, without following which one cannot achieve virtue, nor (can one) be evil save by opposing them and ignoring them, and to help Allāh the Glorified, with his heart, hand and tongue, because Allāh whose name is Sublime takes the responsibility for helping him who helps Him, and for protecting him who gives Him support.

He also orders him to break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at the time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allāh has mercy.

The qualifications of a governor and his responsibilities

Then, know O' Mālik that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticise you as you criticised them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allāh circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures. Therefore, the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds. So, control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes.

Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it

is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, wilfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allāh to extend His forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imām) is over you while Allāh is over him who has appointed you. He (Allāh) has sought you to manage their affairs and has tried you through them.

Do not set yourself to fight Allāh because you have no power before His power and you cannot do without His pardon and mercy. Do not repent of forgiving or be merciful in punishing. Do not act hastily during anger if you can find way out of it. Do not say: “I have been given authority, I should be obeyed when I order,” because it engenders confusion in the heart, weakens the religion and takes one near ruin. If the authority in which you are placed produces pride or vanity in you then look at the greatness of the realm of Allāh over you and His might the like of which might you do not even possess over yourself. This will curb your haughtiness, cure you of your high temper and bring back to you your wisdom which had gone away from you.

Beware of comparing yourself to Allāh in His greatness or likening yourself to Him in His power, for Allāh humiliates every claimant of power and disgraces every one who is haughty.

Do justice for Allāh and do justice towards the people, as against yourself, your near ones and those of your subjects for whom you have a liking, because if you do not do so you will be oppressive, and when a person oppresses the creatures of Allāh then, instead of His creatures, Allāh becomes his opponent, and when Allāh is the opponent of a person He tramples his plea; and he will remain in the position of being at war with Allāh until he gives it up and repents. Nothing is more inducive of the reversal of Allāh’s bounty or for the hastening of His retribution than continuance in oppression, because Allāh hears the prayer of the oppressed and is on the look out for the oppressors.

Ruling should be in favour of the people as a whole

The way most coveted by you should be that which is the most equitable for the right, the most universal by way of justice, and the most comprehensive with regard to the agreement among those under you, because the disagreement among the common people sweeps away the arguments of the chiefs while the disagreement among the chiefs can be disregarded when compared with the agreement of the common people. No one among those under you is more burdensome to the ruler in the comfort of life, less helpful in distress, more disliking of equitable treatment, more tricky in asking favours, less thankful at the time of giving, less appreciative of reasons at the time of refusal, and weaker in endurance at the time of the discomforts of life than the chiefs. It is the common people of the community who are the pillars of the religion, the power of the Muslims and the defence against the enemies. Your leanings should therefore be towards them and your inclination with them.

The one among the people under you who is furthest from you and the worst of them in your view should be he who is the most inquisitive of the shortcomings of the people, because people do have shortcomings and the ruler is the most appropriate person to cover them. Do not disclose whatever of it is hidden from you because your obligation is to correct what is manifest to you, while Allāh will deal with whatever is hidden from you. Therefore, cover shortcomings so far as you can; Allāh would cover those of your shortcomings which you would like to remain under cover from your subjects. Unfasten every knot of hatred in the people and cut away from yourself the cause of every enmity. Feign ignorance from what is not clear to you. Do not hasten to second a backbiter, because a backbiter is a cheat although he looks like those who wish well.

About counsellors

Do not include among those you consult a miser who would keep you back from being generous and caution you against destitution, nor a coward who would make you feel too weak for your affairs, nor a greedy

person who would make beautiful to you the collection of wealth by evil ways. This is because although miserliness, cowardice and greed are different qualities, yet they are common in having an incorrect idea about Allāh.

The worst minister for you is he who has been a minister for mischievous persons before you, and who joined them in sins. Therefore, he should not be your chief man, because they are abettors of sinners and brothers of the oppressors. You can find good substitutes for them who will be like them in their views and influence, while not being like them in sins and vices. They have never assisted an oppressor in his oppression or a sinner in his sin. They will give you the least trouble and the best support. They will be most considerate towards you and the least inclined towards others. Therefore, make them your chief companions in privacy as well as in public.

Then, more preferable among them for you should be those who openly speak better truths before you and who support you least in those of your actions which Allāh does not approve in His friends, even though they may be according to your wishes. Associate yourself with God-fearing and truthful people; then educate them, so that they should not praise you or please you by reason of an action you did not perform, because an excess of praise produces pride and drives you near haughtiness.

The virtuous and the vicious should not be in equal position before you because this means dissuasion of the virtuous from virtue and persuasion of the vicious to vice. Keep everyone in the position which is his. You should know that the most conducive thing for the good impression of the ruler on his subjects is that he should extend good behaviour towards them, lighten their hardships, and avoid putting them to unbearable troubles. You should therefore, in this way follow a course by which you will leave a good impression with your subjects, because such good ideas will relieve you of great worries. Certainly, the most appropriate for good impression of you is he to whom your behaviour has not been good.

Do not discontinue the good lives in which the earlier people of this community had been acting, by virtue of which there was general unity and through which the subjects prospered. Do not innovate any line of action which injures these earlier ways because (in that case) the reward for those who had established those ways will continue, but the burden for discontinuing them will be on you. Keep on increasing your conversations with the scholars and discussions with the wise to stabilize the prosperity of the areas under you, and to continue with that in which the earlier people had remained steadfast.

The different classes of people

Know that the people consist of classes who prosper only with the help of one another, and they are not independent of one another. Among them are the army of Allāh, then the secretarial workers of the common people and the chiefs, then the dispensers of justice, then those engaged in law and order, then the payers of head tax (*jizyah*) and land tax (*kharāj*) from the protected unbelievers and the common Muslims, then there are the traders and the men of industry and then the lowest class of the needy and the destitute. Allāh has fixed the share of every one of them and laid down His precepts about the limits of each in His Book (Qur'ān) and the *sunnah* of His Prophet by way of of a settlement which is preserved with us.

Now the army is, by the will of Allāh, the fortress of the subjects, the ornament of the ruler, the strength of the religion and the means of peace. The subjects cannot exist without them while the army can be maintained only by the funds fixed by Allāh in the revenues, through which they acquire the strength to fight the enemies, on which they depend for their prosperity, and with which they meet their needs. These two classes cannot exist without the third class namely the judges, the executives and the secretaries who pass judgements about contracts, collect revenues and are depended upon in special and general matters.

And these classes cannot exist except with the traders and men of industry, who provide necessities for them, establish markets

and make it possible for others not to do all this with their own hands. Then is the lowest class of the needy and the destitute support of and help for whom is an obligation, and everyone of them has (a share in) livelihood in the name of Allāh. Everyone of them has a right on the ruler according to what is needed for his prosperity. The ruler cannot acquit himself of the obligations laid on him by Allāh in this matter except by striving and seeking help from Allāh and by training himself to adhere to the right and by enduring on that account all that is light or hard.

1. The Army

Put in command of your forces the man who in your view is the best well-wisher of Allāh, His Prophet and your Imām. The chastest of them in heart and the highest of them in endurance is he who is slow in getting enraged, accepts excuses, is kind to the weak and is strict with the strong; violence should not raise his temper and weakness should not keep him sitting.

Also associate with considerate people from high families, virtuous houses and decent traditions, then people of courage, valour, generosity and benevolence, because they are repositories of honour and springs of virtues. Strive for their matters as the parents strive for their child. Do not regard anything that you do to strengthen them as big nor consider anything that you have agreed to do for them as little (so as to give it up), even though it may be small, because this will make them your wellwishers and create a good impression of you. Do not neglect to attend to their small matters, confining yourself to their important matters, because your small favours will also be of benefit to them while the important ones are such that they cannot ignore them.

That commander of the army should have such a position before you that he renders help to them equitably and spends from his money on them and on those of their families who remain behind so that all their worries converge on the one worry for fighting the enemy. Your kindness to them will turn their hearts to you. The

most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas and the manifestation of the love of their subjects, but the subjects' love manifests itself only when their hearts are clean. Their good wishes prove correct only when they surround their commanders (to protect them). Do not regard their positions to be a burden over them and do not keep watching for the end of their tenure. Therefore, be broad-minded in regard to their desires, continue praising them and recounting the good deeds of those who have shown such deeds, because the mention of good actions shakes the brave and rouses the weak, if Allāh so wills.

Appreciate the performance of every one of them, do not attribute the performance of one to the other, and do not minimize the reward below the level of the performance. The high position of a man should not lead you to regard his small deeds as big, nor should the low position of a man make you regard his big deeds as small.

Refer to Allāh and His Prophet the affairs which worry you and matters which appear confusing to you, because, addressing the people whom Allāh the Sublime, wishes to guide, He said:

O' you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Prophet and those vested with authority from among you; and then if you quarrel about anything refer it to Allāh and the Prophet if you believe in Allāh and in the Last Day (of Judgement). . . (Qur'ān, 4:59)

Referring to Allāh means to act according to what is clear in His Book and referring to the Prophet means to follow his unanimously agreed *sunnah* in regard to which there are no differences.

2. The Chief Judge

For the settlement of disputes among people select him who is the most distinguished of your subjects in your view. The cases (coming before him) should not vex him, disputation should not enrage him, he should not insist on any wrong point, and should not grudge accepting

the truth when he perceives it; he should not lean towards greed and should not content himself with a cursory understanding (of a matter) without going thoroughly into it. He should be most ready to stop (to ponder) on doubtful points, most regardful of arguments, least disgusted at the quarrel of litigants, most patient at probing into matters and most fearless at the time of passing judgement. Praise should not make him vain and elation should not make him lean (to any side). Such people are very few.

Then, very often check his decisions and allow him so much money (as remuneration) that he has no excuse worth hearing (for not being honest) and there remains no occasion for him to go to others for his needs. Give him that rank in your audience for which no one else among your chiefs aspires, so that he remains safe from the harm of those around you. You should have a piercing eye in this matter because this religion has formerly been a prisoner in the hands of vicious persons when action was taken according to passion, and worldly wealth was sought.

3. Executive Officers

Thereafter, look into the affairs of your executives. Give them appointment after tests and do not appoint them according to partiality or favouritism, because these two things constitute sources of injustice and unfairness. Select from among them those who are people of experience and modesty, hailing from virtuous houses, having been previously in Islam, because such persons possess high manners and untarnished honour. They are the least inclined towards greed and always have their eyes on the ends of matters.

Give them an abundant livelihood (by way of salary) because this gives them the strength to maintain themselves in order and not to have an eye upon the funds in their custody, and it would be an argument against them if they disobeyed your orders or misappropriated your trust. You should also check their activities and have people who report on them who should be truthful and faithful, because your watching their actions secretly will urge them to preserve trust with and to be kind to the

people. Be careful of assistants. If any one of them extends his hands towards misappropriation and the reports of your reporters reaching you confirm it, that should be regarded enough evidence. You should then inflict corporal punishment on him and recover what he has misappropriated. You should put him in a place of disgrace, blacklist him with (the charge of) misappropriation and make him wear the necklace of shame for his offence.

4. The Administration of Revenues

Look after the revenue (*kharāj* or land tax) affairs in such a way that those engaged in it remain prosperous because in their prosperity lies the prosperity of all others. The others cannot prosper without them, because all people are dependent on revenue and its payers. You should also keep an eye on the cultivation of the land more than on the collection of revenue because revenue cannot be had without cultivation and whoever asks for revenue without cultivation, ruins the area and brings death to the people. His rule will not last only a moment.

If they complain of the heaviness (of the revenue) or of diseases, or dearth of water, or excess of water or of a change in the condition of the land either due to flood or to drought, you should remit the revenue to the extent that you hope will improve their position. The remission granted by you for the removal of distress from them should not be grudged by you, because it is an investment which they will return to you in the shape of the prosperity of your country and the progress of your domain in addition to earning their praise and happiness for meeting out justice to them. You can depend upon their strength because of the investment made by you in them through catering to their convenience, and can have confidence in them because of the justice extended to them by being kind to them. After that, circumstances may so turn that you may have to ask for their assistance, when they will bear it happily, for prosperity is capable of bearing whatever you load on it. The ruin of the land is caused by the poverty of the cultivators, while the cultivators become poor when the officers concentrate on the collection (of money), having little hope for continuance (in their posts) and deriving no benefit from objects of warning.

5. The Clerical Establishment

Then you should take care of your secretarial workers. Put the best of them in charge of your affairs. Entrust those of your letters which contain your policies and secrets to him who possesses the best character, who is not elated by honours, lest he dares speak against you in common audiences. He should also not be negligent in presenting the communications of your officers before you and issuing correct replies to them on your behalf and in matters of your receipts and payments. He should not make any damaging argreement on your behalf and should not fail in repudiating an agreement against you. He should not be ignorant of the extent of his own position in matters because he who is ignorant of his own position is (even) more ignorant of the position of others.

Your selection of these people should not be on the basis of your understanding (of them), confidence and your good impression, because people catch the ideas of the officers through affectation and personal service and there is nothing in it which is like well-wishing or trustfulness. You should rather test them by what they did under the virtuous people before you. Take a decision in favour of one who has a good name among the common people and is the most renowned in trustworthiness, because this will be a proof of your regard for Allāh and for him on whose behalf you have been appointed to this position (namely your Imām). Establish one chief for every department of work. He should not be incapable of big matters, and a rush of work should not perplex him. Whenever there is a defect in your secretaries which you overlook, then you will be held responsible for it.

6. Traders and Industrialists

Now take some advice about traders and industrialists. Give them good counsel whether they be settled (shop-keepers) or traders or physical labourers because they are sources of profit and the means of the provision of useful articles. They bring them from distant and far-flung areas throughout the land and sea, plains or

mountains, from where people cannot come and to where they do not dare to go, for they are peaceful and there is no fear of revolt from them, and they are quite without fear of treason.

Look after their affairs before yourself or wherever they may be in your area. Know, along with this, that most of them are very narrow-minded, and awfully avaricious. They hoard goods for profiteering and fix high prices for goods. This is a source of harm to the people and a blot on the officers in charge. Stop people from hoarding, because the Messenger of Allāh (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) has prohibited it. The sale should be smooth, with correct weights and prices, not harmful to either party, the seller or the purchaser; whoever commits hoarding after you prohibit it, give him exemplary but not excessive punishment.

7. The Lowest Class

(Fear) Allāh and keep Allāh in view in respect of the lowest class, consisting of those who have few means: the poor, the destitute, the penniless and the disabled; because in this class are both the discontented and those who beg. Take care for the sake of Allāh of His obligations towards them for which He has made you responsible. Fix for them a share from the public funds and a share from the crops of lands taken over as booty for Islam in every area, because in it the remote ones have the same shares as the near ones. All these people are those whose rights have been placed in your charge. Therefore, a luxurious life should not keep you away from them. You cannot be excused for ignoring small matters because you were deciding big problems. Consequently, do not be unmindful of them, nor turn your face from them out of vanity.

Take care of the affairs of those of them who do not approach you because they are of unsightly appearance or those whom people regard as low. Appoint for them some trusted people who are God-fearing and humble. They should inform you of these people's conditions. Then deal with them with a sense of responsibility to Allāh on the day you will meet Him, because of

all the subjects these people are the most deserving of equitable treatment, while for others also you should fulfil their rights so as to render account to Allāh.

Take care of the orphans and the aged who have no means (for livelihood) nor are they ready for begging. This is heavy on the officers; in fact, every right is heavy. Allāh lightens it for those who seek the next world and so they endure (hardships) upon themselves and trust on the truthfulness of Allāh's promise to them. And fix a time for complainants wherein you make yourself free for them, and sit for them in common audience and feel humble therein for the sake of Allāh who created you. (On that occasion) you should keep away your army and your assistants such as the guards and the police so that anyone who like to speak may speak to you without fear, because I have heard the Messenger of Allāh (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) say in more than one place, "The people among whom the right of the weak is not secured from the strong without fear will never achieve purity." Tolerate their awkwardness and inability to speak. Keep away from you narrowness and haughtiness; Allāh would, on this account, spread over you the skirts of His mercy and assign the reward of His obedience for you. Whatever you give, give it joyfully, but when you refuse, do it handsomely and with excuses.

Then there are certain matters which you cannot avoid performing yourself. For example, replying to your officers when your secretaries are unable to do so, or disposing of the complaints of the people when your assistants shirk them. Finish every day the work meant for it, because every day has its own work. Keep for yourself the better and greater portion of these periods for the worship of Allāh, although all these items are for Allāh provided the intention is pure and the subjects prosper thereby.

Communion with Allāh

The particular thing by which you should purify your religion for Allāh should be the fulfilment of those obligations which are especially for Him. Therefore, devote to Allāh some of your physical

activity during the night and the day, and whatever (worship) you perform for seeking nearness to Allāh should be complete, without defect or deficiency, whatsoever physical exertion it may involve. When you lead the prayers for the people it should be neither (too long as to be) boring nor (too short as to be) wasteful, because among the people there are the sick as well as those who have needs of their own. When the Messenger of Allāh (p . b . u . h . a . h . p .) sent me to Yemen I enquired how I should offer prayers with them and he replied, “Say the prayers as the weakest of them would say, and be considerate to the believers.”

On the behaviour and action of a Ruler

Then, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for a long time, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a kind of narrow-sightedness and causes ignorance about their affairs. Seclusion from them also prevents them from the knowledge of those things which they do not know and as a result they begin to regard big matters as small and small matters as big, good matters as bad and bad matters as good, while the truth becomes confused with falsehood. After all, a governor is a human being and cannot have knowledge of things which people keep hidden from him.

No writ is big on the face of truth to differentiate its various expressions from falsehood. Then you can be one of two kinds of men. Either you may be generous in granting rights; and then why this hiding in spite of (your) discharging the obligations and good acts that you perform? Or you are a victim of stinginess; in that case people will soon give up asking you since they will lose hope of generous treatment from you. In spite of that there are many needs of the people towards you which do not involve any hardship on you, such as the complaint against oppression or the request for justice in a matter.

Further, a governor has favourites and people of easy access to him. They misappropriate things, are high-handed and do not

observe justice in matters. You should destroy the root of evil in the people by cutting away the causes of these defects. Do not make any land grants to your hangers on or supporters. They should not expect from you the possession of land which may cause harm to adjoining people over the question of irrigation or common services whose burden the grantees place on others. In this way, the benefit will be rather theirs than yours, and the blame will lie on you in this world and the next.

Allow rights to whomsoever it is due, whether near you or far from you. In this matter, you should be enduring and watchful even though it may involve your relations and favourites, and keep in view the reward of that which appears burdensome on you because its reward is handsome.

If the subjects suspect you of high-handedness, explain to them your position openly and remove their suspicion with your explanation, because this would mean exercise for your soul and consideration to the subjects while this explanation will secure your aim of keeping them firm in truth.

Do not reject peace to which your enemy may call you and wherein there is the pleasure of Allāh, because peace brings rest to your army and relief from your worries and safety for your country. But after peace there is great apprehension from the enemy because often the enemy offers peace to benefit by your negligence. Therefore, be cautious and do not act by wishfulness in this matter.

If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or enter into a pledge with him then fulfil your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully. Place yourself as a shield against whatever you have pledged because among the obligations of Allāh there is nothing on which people are more strongly united despite the difference of their ideas and variation of their views than respect for fulfilling pledges. Besides Muslims, even unbelievers have abided by agreements because they realized the dangers which would come in the wake of violation (thereof). Therefore, do not

deceive your enemy, because no one can offend Allāh save the ignorant and the wicked. Allāh made His agreement and pledged the sign of security which He has spread over His creatures through His mercy and an asylum in which they stay in His protection and seek the benefit of nearness to Him. Therefore, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it.

Do not enter into an agreement which may admit of different interpretations and do not change the interpretation of vague words after the conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement). If an agreement of Allāh involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification, because the bearing of hardships through which you expect relief and a handsome result is better than a violation whose consequence you fear, and that you fear that you will be called upon by Allāh to account for it and you will not be able to seek forgiveness for it in this world or the next.

You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting of Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequence, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short of life than the shedding of blood without justification. On the Day of Judgement Allāh the Glorified, would commence giving His judgement among the people with the cases of bloodshed committed by them. Therefore, do not strengthen your authority by shedding prohibited blood because this will weaken and lower the authority, moreover destroy it and shift it. You cannot offer any excuse before Allāh or before me for wilful killing because there must be the question of revenge in it. If you are involved in it be error and you exceed in the use of your whip or sword, or are hard in inflicting punishment, as sometimes even a blow by the fist or a smaller stroke causes death, then the haughtiness of your authority should not prevent you from paying the blood price to the successors of the killed person.

You should avoid self-admiration, having reliance in what appears good in yourself and love of exaggerated praise because this is one of the most reliable opportunities for Satan to obliterate the good deeds of the virtuous.

Avoid showing (the existence of) obligation on your subjects for having done good to them or praising your own actions or making promises and then breaking them, because showing (the existence of) obligation destroys good, self-praise takes away the light of truth, and breaking promises earns the hatred of Allāh and of the people. Allāh the Glorified, says:

Most hateful is it unto Allāh that you say what you (yourselves) do (it) not. (Qur'ān, 61:3)

Avoid haste in matters before their time, slowness at their proper time, insistence on them when the propriety of action is not known or weakens when it becomes clear. Assign every matter its proper place and do every job at the appropriate time.

Do not appropriate to yourself that in which the people have an equal share, nor be regardless of matters which have come to light with the excuse that you are accountable for others. Shortly, the curtains of all matters will be raised from your view and you will be required to render redress to the oppressed. Have control over (your) sense of prestige, any outburst of anger, the might of your arm and the sharpness of your tongue. Guard against all this by avoiding haste and by delaying severe action till your anger subsides and you regain your self-control. You cannot withhold yourself from this unless you bear in mind that you have to return to Allāh.

It is necessary for you to recall how matters went with those who preceded you, be it a government or a great tradition or a precedent of our Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) or the obligatory commands contained in the Book of Allāh. Then you should follow them as you have seen us acting upon them and should exert yourself in following that I have enjoined upon you in this document in which I have exhausted my pleas on you, so that if your heart advances towards its passions you may have no plea in its support.

I ask Allāh through the extent of His mercy and the greatness of His power of giving a good inclination that He may prompt me and you to

advance a clear plea before Him and His creatures in a manner that may attract His pleasure along with handsome praise among the people, good effect in the country, an increase in prosperity and a hightening of honour; and that He may allow me and you to die a death of virtue and martyrdom. Surely, we have to return to Him. Peace be on the Messenger of Allāh — may Allāh shower His blessings and plentiful salutation on him and his pure and chaste descendants; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 54

To Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr (through ‘Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn al-Khuzā‘ī¹). Abū Ja‘far al-Iskāfī has mentioned this in his

¹ ‘Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn al-Khuzā‘ī was a high ranking companion distinguished in learning and achievements and very cautious in relating traditions. He accepted Islam in the year of Khaybar and participated in *jihād* with the Prophet. Was honoured with the judicial position at Kūfah and died at Baṣrah in 52 A.H.

One of the genuine traditions related by ‘Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn about Amīr al-mu‘minīn is:

The Messenger of Allāh raised and sent an army under the command of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. From the *khums* (one-fifth) received by him ‘Alī set aside a slave girl for himself. This was distasteful to some of his men and four of them decided to complain of this to the Prophet (p . b . u . h . a . h . p .). On their return they approached the Prophet, and one of them stood up and said: ‘ ‘O’ Messenger of Allāh! Do you not see that ‘Alī did so and so?’’ The Prophet turned away his face from him. Another man stood up and made the same complaint and the Prophet turned away his face from him. Still another man stood up and repeated what his two colleagues had said and met the same reaction. Then the fourth man stood up and spoke like his predecessors. The Prophet (p . b . u . h . a . h . p .) then turned to them with signs of anger on his face and said: ‘‘What do you want me to do to ‘Alī? (repeating thrice). Surely, ‘Alī is from me and I am from him, and after me he is the Master of all the believers.’’ (*al-Jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, at-Tirmidhī, vol.5, p.632; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn

**“Kitāb al-maqāmāt” on the excellent qualities (manāqib) of
Amīr al-mu’minīn (peace be upon him).**

Now, both of you know, although you conceal it, that I did not approach the people till they approached me, and I did not ask them to swear allegiance to me till they themselves swore allegiance to me, and both of you were among those who approached me and swore me allegiance. Certainly, the common people did not swear me allegiance under any force put on them or for any money given to them. If you two swore allegiance to me obediently, come back and offer repentance to Allāh soon, but if you swore allegiance to me reluctantly, you have certainly given me cause for action, by showing your obedience and concealing your disobedience.¹ By my life, you were not more entitled than other *muhājirūn* to conceal and hide the matter. Your refusing allegiance before entering into it would have been easier than getting out of it after having accepted it.

You have indicated that I killed ‘Uthmān; then let someone from among the people of Medina who supported neither me nor you decide the matter between me and you. Then one of us shall face (the command of law) according to (their) involvement. You should give up your way now, when the great question before you is only one of shame, before you face the question of shame coupled with the Hell-fire; and that is an end to the matter.

Ḥanbal, vol.4, pp.437-438; *al-Musnad*, Abū Dāwūd at-Ṭayālīsī, p.111; *al-Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim, vol.3, pp.110-111; *Ḥilyah al-awliyā’*, Abū Nu‘aym, vol.6, p.294; *Tārīkh al-Islām*, adh-Dhahabī, vol.2, p.196; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.345; *Usd al-ghābah*, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, p.27, *al-Iṣābah*, Ibn Ḥajar, vol.2, p.509)

¹ That is you are men of riches and means having a large tribe and community. What is the need to you to do for this double dealing of concealing the real feelings of the heart, showing obedience and swearing allegiance loathsomely and unwillingly. Of course, if someone else, who was weak and helpless, said that he was obliged to swear allegiance, his point could be accepted to some extent. But when no one else has expressed his helplessness in the matter, why did this helplessness befall you so that you now regard your swearing of allegiance to be the result of your helplessness.

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LETTER 55**To Mu'āwiyah**

Now, Allāh, the Glorified, has made this world for what is to come hereafter, and put its inhabitants to trial as to which of you is good in action, and we have not been created for this world, nor ordered to strive for it, but we have been made to stay in it to stand trial therein. So, Allāh has tried me with you and tried you with me. He has therefore made either of us a plea for the other.

Now, you have leapt on the world by a wrong interpretation of the Qur'ān, and wanted me to account for what neither my hand nor tongue was responsible, but you and the Syrians put the blame on me, and your scholar incited against me the ignorant and one who is sitting incited the one who is standing. You should fear Allāh about yourself and not allow Satan to lead you. Turn your face towards the next world because that is our path and your path, and fear that Allāh may not entangle you in any sudden infliction which may destroy the root as well as cut away the branches. I swear to you by Allāh an oath which will not be broken that if destiny brings me and you together I shall steadfastly hold before you: *Until Allāh judges between us, and He is the Best of the judges.* (Qur'ān, 7:87)

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INSTRUCTION 56

When Amīr al-mu'minīn placed Shurayḥ ibn Hānī (al-Madhḥijī) at the head of the vanguard preceding towards Syria, he issued this document of instruction to him.

Fear Allāh every morning and evening and remain apprehensive about yourself of this deceitful world and do not regard it safe in any case. Know that if for fear of some evil you do not refrain yourself from things which you love, then passions will fling you into a lot of harm. Therefore, be for yourself a refrainer and protector, and for your anger a suppressor and killer.

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LETTER 57

**To the people of Kūfah at the time of
his march from Medina to Baṣrah**

Now, I have come out of my city either as an oppressor or as the oppressed, either as a rebel or one against whom rebellion has been committed. In any case, to whomsoever this letter of mine reaches, I appeal to him in the name of Allāh that he should come to me and if I am in the right he should help me; but if I am in the wrong then he should try to get me to the right according to his view.

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LETTER 58

**Written to the people of various localities describing what
took place between him and the people of Ṣiffin.**

The whole thing began thus that we and the Syrians met in an encounter although we believe in one and the same Allāh and the same Prophet, and our message in Islam is the same. We did not want them to add anything in the belief in Allāh or in acknowledging His Messenger (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) nor did they want us to add any such thing. In fact, there was complete unity except that we differed on the question of ‘Uthmān’s blood while we were uninvolved in it. We suggested to them to appease the situation by calming the temporary

irritation and pacifying the people till matters settled down and stabilized when we would gain strength to put matters right.

They however said that they would settle it by war. Thus, they refused our offer and consequently war spread its wings and came to stay. Its flames rose and became strong. When the war had bitten us as well as them and pierced its talons into us as well as them, they accepted what we had proposed to them. So, we agreed to what they suggested and hastened to meet their request. In this way, the plea became clear to them and no excuse was left to them. Now, whoever among them adheres to this will be saved by Allāh from ruin, and whoever shows obstinacy and insistence (on wrong) is the reverser whose heart has been blinded by Allāh and evils will encircle his head.

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LETTER 59

To al-Aswad ibn Quṭbah, the Governor of Ḥulwān

Now, if the actions of a governor follow the passions he will be greatly hampered in justice. All the people should be equal in right before you, because injustice cannot be a substitute for justice. Avoid that thing the like of which you would not like for yourself. Exert yourself in what Allāh has made obligatory on you, hoping for His reward and fearing His chastisement.

Know that this world is the place of trial. Whoever here wastes any hour of his time will repent it on the Day of Judgement, and nothing can ever make you too satisfied as not to need right. One of the rights on you is that you should protect yourself (from sins) and look after the subjects to your best. The benefit that will come to you from this will be greater than that which will accrue (to people) through you; and that is an to the matter.

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LETTER 60

To the officers through whose jurisdiction the army passed

From the servant of Allāh ‘Alī, Amīr al-mu’minīn to all the collectors of revenue and officers of the realm through whose area the army passes.

Now, I have sent an army that will pass by you, if Allāh wills. I have instructed them about what Allāh has made obligatory on them, namely that they should avoid molestation and evade harm. I hold myself clear before you and those (unbelievers) who are under your protection from any annoyance committed by the army except when one is compelled by hunger and there is no other way of satisfying it. If anyone of them takes anything through force you should punish him. None of you should be silly enough to obstruct them or intervene in matters which we have allowed them by way of exception. I am myself within the army. So, refer to me their high-handedness, and any hardship which is caused by them and which you cannot avert except through Allāh and through me. I shall then avert it with the help of Allāh, if He so wills.

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LETTER 61

To Kumayl ibn Ziyād an-Nakha‘ī, the Governor of Hit expressing displeasure on his inability to prevent the the enemy forces that passed through his area from marauding.

Now, the neglecting by a man of what he has been made responsible for and doing what is to be done by others is a manifest weakness and a ruinous sight. Certainly, your advance on the people of Qarqīsiyā, and your leaving the arsenals over which we had set you, without anyone to protect them or to repulse the enemy force, savoured of shattered thinking. In this way, you served like a bridge for the enemy who came marauding on your allies while your arms were weak, you had no awe around you; you could not prevent the enemy from advancing; you could not break his

might; you could not defend the people of your area and you could not discharge functions on behalf of your Imām.

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LETTER 62

To the people of Egypt sent through Mālik al-Ashtar when he was made the Governor of that place

Now, Allāh the Glorified, deputed Muḥammad (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) as a warner for all the worlds and a witness for all the prophets. When the Prophet expired, the Muslims quarrelled about power after him. By Allāh, it never occurred to me, and I never imagined, that after the Prophet the Arabs would snatch away the caliphate from his *Ahlu'l-bayt* (the members of his house), nor that they would take it away from me after him, but I suddenly noticed people surrounding the man to swear him allegiance.¹

¹ The Prophet's declarations about Amīr al-mu'minīn that "This is my brother, my vicegerent and my caliph among you", and while returning from his farewell *hajj* at Ghadīr Khum that "For whosoever I am the master, 'Alī is his master'" had settled the issue of his own replacement and succession after which there was no need at all for any new election, nor could it be imagined that the people of Medina would feel the need for an election. But some power-thirsty individuals so ignored these clear injunctions as if their ears had never been acquainted with them, and considered the election so necessary, that, leaving the burial rites of the Prophet, they assembled in the Saqīfah of Banū Sā'idah and elected Abū Bakr as Caliph with a show of democracy. This was a very critical moment for Amīr al-mu'minīn. On one side some interested persons declared that he should take up arms and on the other hand he noticed that those Arabs who had accepted Islam by dint of its military strength were leaving it and Musaylimah ibn Thumāmah al-Ḥanafī the liar (al-Kadhḥāb) and Ṭulayḥah ibn Khuwaylid al-Asadī (the liar) were throwing tribe after tribe into misguidance. In these circumstances, if there had been a civil war and the Muslims had fought against the Muslims, the forces of heresy and hypocrisy

I therefore withheld my hand till I saw that many people were reverting from Islam and trying to destroy the religion of Muḥammad (may Allāh bless him and his descendants). I then feared that if I did not protect Islam and its people and there occurred in it a breach or destruction, it would mean a greater blow to me than the loss of power over you which was, in any case, to last for a few days of which everything would pass away as the mirage passes away, or as the cloud scuds away. Therefore, in these happenings I rose till wrong was destroyed and disappeared, and religion attained peace and safety.

A part of the same letter

By Allāh, if I had encountered them alone and they had been so numerous as to fill the earth to the brim, I would not have worried or become perplexed. I am clear in myself and possess conviction from Allāh about their misguidance and my guidance. I am hopeful and expectant that I will meet Allāh and get His good reward. But I am worried that silly and wicked people will control the affairs of the entire community, with the result that they will grab the funds of Allāh as their own property and make His people slaves,¹ fight with the virtuous, and

would have joined together and swept Islam off the surface of the globe. Therefore, Amīr al-mu'minīn preferred to keep quiet rather than to fight, and, with the purpose of maintaining the solidarity of Islam, confined himself to protesting peacefully rather than taking up arms. This was because formal power was not so dear to him as the good and prosperity of the community. For stopping the machinations of the hypocrites and defeating the aims of the mischiefmongers there was no other course but that he should not fan the flames of war by giving up his own claim. This was such a big act for the preservation of Islamic polity that it is acknowledged by all the sects of Islam.

¹ This refers to the saying of the Holy Prophet about the children of Umayyah and the children of Abī al-'Āṣ ibn Umayyah (the grandfather of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and the dynasty of Marwān's caliphs) as related by Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī that the Holy Prophet said:

When the number of Banū (children of) Umayyah reaches forty men they will make Allāh's people their slaves, grab Allāh's funds as their

ally with the sinful. Indeed, there is among them he who drank (wine) unlawfully ¹ and was whipped by way of punishment fixed by Islam, and

own property and make the Book of Allāh a cause of corruption. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.4, p.479; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.11, p.149).

About the children of Abī al-'Āṣ it is related by Abū Dharr, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Hurayrah and others that the Holy Prophet said:

When the number of Banū (children of) Abī al-'Āṣ reaches thirty men, they will grab the funds of Allāh as their own property, make Allāh's people their slaves and make the religion of Allāh a cause of corruption. (*al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.3, p.80; *al-Mustadrak*, al-Hākim, vol.4, p.480; *al-Maṭālib al-'āliyah*, Ibn Ḥajar, vol.4, p.332; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, al-Haytamī, vol.5, pp.241,243; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, al-Muttaqī, vol.11, pp.148, 149, 351, 354).

The history of Islam (after the death of the Holy Prophet) has enough evidence to prove this prophecy of the Holy Prophet; and the fear of Amīr al-mu'minīn for the Muslim community was based on this reason.

¹ The man who drank wine was al-Walīd ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ. He was of the same mother as Caliph 'Uthmān and his Governor of Kūfah. al-Walīd on an occasion in a state of intoxication led the morning prayers in the Central mosque of Kūfah with four units (*raka'ah*) instead of the usual two as prescribed by the Holy Prophet. The congregation, which consisted of several pious persons like Ibn Mas'ūd, was much incensed and still more irritated when, finishing the four units, al-Walīd said:

What a pleasant morning! I would like to extend the prayers further if you consent.

Repeated complaints had already been made to the Caliph against al-Walīd on account of his debauchery, but as often dismissed. People now reproached 'Uthmān for not listening to their grievances, and favouring such a scoundrel. By chance they succeeded in taking off the signet ring from the hand of the Governor while he lay senseless from the effects of a debauch, and carried it off to Medina. Still the caliph was slow and hesitated to enforce punishment upon his Governor (of the same mother) ; giving cause to be himself reproachfully accused of ignoring the law; though at last he was persuaded to have al-Walīd scourged with forty strokes. He was

there is he who did not accept Islam until he had secured financial gain through it.¹ If this had not been so I would not have insisted on gathering you, reprehending you, mobilizing you and urging you (for *jihād*) but if you refuse and show weakness I will leave you.

Do you not see that the boundaries of your cities have diminished, your populated areas have been conquered, your possessions have been snatched away and your cities and lands have been attacked. May Allāh have mercy on you, get up to fight your enemy and do not remain confined to the earth, otherwise you will face oppression and suffer ignominy and your fate will be the worst. The warrior should be wakeful because if he sleeps the enemy does not sleep; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 63

To Abū Mūsā (‘Abdullāh ibn Qays) al-Ash‘arī, the Governor of Kūfah when Amīr al-mu‘minīn learned that he was dissuading the people of Kūfah from joining in the battle of Jamal when Amīr al-mu‘minīn had called them to fight along with him.

From the servant of Allāh, Amīr al-mu‘minīn to ‘Abdullāh ibn Qays:

Now, I have come to know of words uttered by you which go in your

consequently deposed from his office. Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ, a cousin of ‘Uthmān was appointed to take his place, and this was a matter of great reproach against ‘Uthmān. (*Ansāb al-ashraf*, al-Balādhurī, vol.5, pp.33-35; *al-Aghānī*, Abu’l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, vol.4, pp.174-187; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.4, pp.1554—1557; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, pp.91—92; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp . 2843 — 2850; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, pp.105—107; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.17, pp.227-245)

¹ The man who accepted Islam after securing financial gain was Mu‘āwiyah who was adhering to Islam only for worldly benefits.

favour as well as against you.¹: So, when my messenger reaches you prepare yourself and get ready, come out of your den and call those who are with you. Then, if you are convinced of the truth get up but if you feel cowardice go away. By Allāh, you will be caught wherever you may be and you will not be spared till you are completely upset and everything about you is scattered and till you are shaken from your seat. Then, you will fear from your front as you do from the rear.

What you hope is not a light matter, but it is serious calamity. We have to ride its camels, overcome its difficulties and level its mountains. Set your mind in order, take a grip on your affairs and acquire your (lot and your) share. If you do not like it then go away to where neither you are welcome nor can you escape from it. It is better that you be left alone and lie sleeping. Then no one will enquire where is so- and- so. By Allāh, this is the case of right with the rightful person and we do not care what the heretics do; and that is an end to the matter.

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¹ When Amīr al-mu'minīn had the idea of suppressing the revolt of the people of Baṣrah he sent this letter through Imām al-Ḥasan to Abū Mūsā ('Abdullāh ibn Qays) al-Ash'arī, who had been appointed Governor of Kūfah by 'Uthmān, wherein he has ascolded him for his duplicit and contradictory behaviour and attempted to persuade him to *jihād*, because on one side he used to say that Amīr al-mu'minīn was the true Imām and allegiance to him was right and on the other he said that to support him in fighting against the Muslims was not right; but it was a mischief and it was necessary to keep off this mischief. Thus, Amīr al-mu'minīn has referred to this contradictory view by the words "*huwa laka wa 'alayka*" (which go in your favour as well as against you). The intention is that when Amīr al-mu'minīn is the rightful Imām how can fighting his enemy with him be wrong? And if fighting on his side is wrong then what is the meaning of his being the rightful Imām.

In any case, in spite of his dissuading from fighting, the people of Kūfah came out in large numbers to join Amīr al-mu'minīn's army and took full part in the battle, giving such a defeat to the people of Baṣrah that they never again dared to revolt.

LETTER 64

In reply to Mu‘āwiyah

Now then, certainly, we and you were on amiable terms as you say but difference arose between us and you the other day, when we accepted belief (*īmān*) and you rejected it. Today the position is that we are steadfast (in the belief) but you are creating mischief. Those of you who accepted Islam did so reluctantly and that too when all the chief men had accepted Islam and joined the Messenger of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and his descendants).

You have stated that I killed Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, forced ‘Ā’ishah out of her house and adopted residence between the two cities (Kūfah and Baṣrah).¹ These are matters with which you have no concern nor do

¹ Mu‘āwiyah had written a letter to Amīr al-mu‘minīn in which after recalling mutual unity and amicability he laid on him the blame of killing Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr and ousting ‘Ā’ishah from her house and objected to his adopting Kūfah as his seat of government in place of Medina. In the end, he gave a threat of war and said that he was about to come out with a force of *muhājirūn* and *anṣār* to fight. Amīr al-mu‘minīn wrote this letter in reply to him, wherein commenting on Mu‘āwiyah’s claim for unity he says that: “There might have been unity between you and us but with the advent of Islam such a gulf has developed between the two that it is not possible to bridge it, and such a separation has occurred which cannot be removed. This was because we responded to the call of the Prophet and hastened towards Islam but your position was that you were still in the state of unbelief and ignorance whereby we and you came to adopt separate ways. But when Islam secured stability and the chiefs of Arabs entered its fold you too were obliged to, and secured protection of your lives by putting the covering of Islam on your faces, but continued secretly to fan the mischief intended to shatter its foundations. Since we had accepted Islam of our own free will and pleasure we adhered to the right path and at no stage did any faltering occur in our steadfastness. Therefore, your acceptance of Islam too could not make us agree with your views.”

As regards Mu‘āwiyah’s accusation that Amīr al-mu‘minīn engineered the killing of Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr; then even if this blame is admitted as true, is it not a fact that they had openly revolted against Amīr al-mu‘minīn

and had risen for war after breaking the allegiance. Therefore, if they were killed in connection with the revolt their blood would be wasted and no blame would lie on the killer, because the penalty for him who revolts against the rightful Imām is death, and fighting against him is permissible, without doubt. The fact however, is that this accusation has no reality because Ṭalḥah was killed by a man of his own party. Thus, the historians write :

Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam shot Ṭalḥah with an arrow and turning to Abān ibn ‘Uthmān said: “We have killed a killer of your father and relieved you of revenge.” (Ibn Sa‘d, vol.3, part 1, p.159; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3,p.244; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.2, pp.766 -769; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.3, pp.60, 61; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.230; *Tahdhīb, at-tahdhīb*, vol.5, p.21).

As for az-Zubayr, he was killed by ‘Amr ibn Jurmūz on his way back from Baṣrah, and there was no prompting by Amīr al-mu‘minīn in it. Similarly, ‘Ā’ishah herself came out of her house as the head of this rebellious group while Amīr al-mu‘minīn counselled her several times to realize her position and not to step out of her bounds but these things had no effect on her.

Of the same type was his criticism that Amīr al-mu‘minīn left Medina and adopted Kūfah as the seat of his government because Medina turns out bad people from itself and throws away dirt. The reply to it is only this that Mu‘āwiyah himself too always retained Syria as his capital keeping away from Medina.

In this way, what right can he have to object to Amīr al-mu‘minīn changing his seat. Amīr al-mu‘minīn left Medina because of those rebellions which had cropped up from all sides. To suppress them only the selection of such a place as capital from where military assistance could be mobilized at any time could be useful. Thus, Amīr al-mu‘minīn had seen on the occasion of the battle of Jamal that a great majority of the people of Kūfah had supported him and that therefore by making it a base for the army, defence against the enemy could be easily managed, while Medina was not appropriate for military mobilization or for supplies.

Lastly, as for Mu‘āwiyah’s threat that he would march with *muhājirūn* and *anṣār*, Amīr al-mu‘minīn gave a reply to this point in a very subtle way, namely that, “How would you bring *muhājirūn* now since the door for *hijrah* was closed the day when your brother Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān was

they involve anything against you. Therefore, no explanation about them is due to you.

You also state that you are coming to me with a party of *muhājirūn* and *anṣār*, but *hijrah* came to an end on the day your brother was taken prisoner. If you are in a hurry, then wait a bit as I may come to meet you and that would be more befitting as that would mean that Allāh has appointed me to punish you. But if you come to me it would be as the poet of Banū Asad said:

They are advancing against summer winds which are hurling stones on them in the highlands and lowlands.

(Remember) I have still the sword with which I dispatched your grandfather, your mother's brother and your brother to one and the same place. By Allāh, I know what you are. Your heart is sheathed and your intelligence is weak. It is better to say that you have ascended to where you view a bad scene which is against you, not in your favour, because you are searching a thing lost by someone else, you are tending someone else's cattle and you are hankering after a thing which is not yours nor have you any attachment with it. How remote are your words from your actions, and how closely you resemble your paternal and maternal uncles who were led by their wickedness and love for wrong to oppose Muḥammad (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) and in consequence they were killed as you know. They could not put up a defence against the calamity and could not protect their place of safety from the striking of swords which abound in the battle and which do not show weakness.

You have said a lot about killing of `Uthman. You first join what the people have joined (i.e., allegiance) then seek a verdict about (the accused people) from me and I shall settle the matter between you and them according to the Book of Allāh, the Sublime. But what you are

taken prisoner.” This man was taken prisoner on the day of the fall of Mecca and there is no question of *hijrah* after the fall of Mecca so as to enable anyone to be called a *muhājir* because of the Prophet's saying: “There is no *hijrah* after the victory over Mecca.”

aiming at is just the fake nipple given to a child in the first days of stopping of nursing. Peace be on those who deserve it.

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LETTER 65

To Mu‘āwiyah

Now, this is the time ¹ that you should derive benefit by observing a clear view of the main matters, because you have been treading in the path of your forefathers in making wrong claims, spreading false and untrue notions, claiming for yourself what is far above you and demanding what is not meant for you, because you want to run away from right and to revolt against what is more fastened to your flesh and blood namely what

¹ At the end of the battle of the Khārijites, Mu‘āwiyah wrote a letter to Amīr al-mu‘minīn wherein, as usual, he indulged in mud-throwing. In reply, Amīr al-mu‘minīn wrote this letter in which he has tried to draw Mu‘āwiyah’s attention to the clear facts about this very battle of the Khārijites, because this battle took place in accordance with the prophecy of the Prophet while Amīr al-mu‘minīn himself too had said before the battle that besides the people of Jamal and Şiffīn he had to fight against one more group and they were the “deviators” from the religion, namely the Khārijites. The occurrence of this battle and the killing of the man with breasts (Dhu‘thudayyah) was a clear proof of Amīr al-mu‘minīn being in the right. If Mu‘āwiyah had not been obsessed with self-advertisement and lust for conquests, and had not shut his eyes against the right like his forefathers Abū Sufyān and his brother ‘Utbah he would have seen right and come on its path. But compelled by his natural inclination he always evaded right and truth and kept himself blind to those sayings of the Prophet which threw light on Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s Imāmate and vicegerency. Because of being with the Prophet in the farewell pilgrimage the Prophet’s saying: “Of whomsoever I am the master, ‘Alī is his master” was not hidden from him, and neither was the Prophet’s saying that: “O ‘Alī you are to me as Hārūn was to Mūsā”, because of his presence on the occasion of the battle of Tabūk. In spite of all this, he passed his life in concealing right and encouraging wrong. This was not due to any misunderstanding but it was his lust for power that kept prompting him to suppress and trample truth and justice.

has been heard by the depth of your ears and has filled your chest. And after forsaking right there remains nothing except clear misguidance, and after disregarding a (clear) statement there is nothing except confusion. You should therefore guard (yourself) against doubts and its ill-effects of confusion, because for a long time mischief has spread its veils and its gloom has blinded your eyes.

I have received your letter which is full of uncouth utterances which weaken the cause of peace and nonsensical expressions which have not been prepared with knowledge and forbearance. By reason of these things you have become like one who is sinking in a marsh or groping in a dark place. You have raised yourself to a position which is difficult to approach and devoid of any signs (to guide). Even the royal kite cannot reach it. It is parallel to the *'Ayyūq* (the star Capella), in height.

May Allāh forbid that you be in charge of people's affairs after my assuming authority as Caliph, or that I issue an edict or document granting you authority over any one of them. Therefore, from now onwards you guard yourself and be watchful, because if you recalcitrate till the people of Allāh (are forced to) rush upon you, then matters will be closed for you and whatever can be accepted from you today will not be accepted then; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 66

To 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās

(This letter has already been included with a different version)

And then, sometimes a person feels joyful about a thing which he was not to miss in any case and feels grieved for a thing which was not to come to him at all. Therefore, you should not regard the attainment of pleasure and the satisfaction of the desire for revenge as the best favour of this world, but it should be the putting off of the (flame of) wrong and the revival of right. Your pleasure should be for what (good acts)

you have sent forward; your grief should be for what you are leaving behind; and your worry should be about what is to befall after death.

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LETTER 67

To Qutham ibn al-‘Abbās, his Governor of Mecca

Now, make arrangements for *ḥajj* by the people, remind them of the days (to be devoted to) Allāh. Sit for giving them audience morning and evening. Explain the law to the seeker, teach the ignorant and discuss with the learned. There should be no intermediary between you and the people except your tongue, and no guard save your own face. Do not prevent any needy person from meeting you, because if the needy is returned unsatisfied from your door in the first instance then even doing it thereafter will not bring you praise.

See what has been collected with you of the funds of Allāh (in the public treasury) and spend it over the persons with families, the distressed, the starving and the naked, at your end. Then, send the remaining to us for distribution to those who are on this side.

Ask the people of Mecca not to charge rent from lodgers, because Allāh, the Glorified, says that: *‘alike; for the dweller therein as well as the stranger’* (Qur’ān, 22:25). *‘al-‘ākif’* (the dweller) here means he who is living there while *‘al-bādī’* (the stranger) means he who is not among the people of Mecca, comes for *ḥajj* from outside. May Allāh grant us and you promptitude for seeking His love (by doing good acts) ; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 68

To Salmān al-Fārisī before Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s caliphate

Now, the example of the world is like that of a snake which is soft in

touch but whose poison is fatal. Therefore, keep yourself aloof from whatever appears good to you because of its short stay with you. Do not worry for it because of your conviction that it will leave you and that its circumstances are vicissitudes. When you feel most attracted towards it, shun it most, because whenever someone is assured of happiness in it, it throws him into danger; or when he feels secure in it, the world alters his security into fear; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 69

To al-Ḥārith (ibn ‘Abdillāh, al-A‘war) al-Hamdānī

Adhere to the rope of the Qur’ān and seek instructions from it. Regard its lawful as lawful and its unlawful as unlawful. Testify the right that has been in the past. Take lesson for the present condition of this world from the past (condition), because its one phase resembles the other, and its end is to meet its beginning, and the whole of it is to change and depart. Regard the name of Allāh as too great to mention Him, save in the matter of right. Remember more often death, and (what is to come) after death. Do not long for death except on a reliable condition.

Avoid every action which the doer likes for his own self but dislikes for the Muslims in general. Avoid every such action which is performed in secret and from which shame is felt in the open. Also avoid that action about which if the doer is questioned he himself regards it bad or offers excuses for it. Do not expose your honour to be treated as the subject of people’s discussions. Do not relate to the people all that you hear, for that would amount to falsehood. Do not contest all that the people relate to you for that would mean ignorance. Kill your anger and forgive when you have power (to punish). Show forbearance in the moment of rage, and pardon in spite of authority; the eventual end will then be in your favour. Seek good out of every favour that Allāh has bestowed on you, and do not waste any favour of Allāh over you. The effect of Allāh’s favours over you should be visible on you.

Know that the most distinguished among the believers is he who is the most forward of them in spending from himself, his family and his property, because whatever good you send forward will remain in store for you and the benefit of whatever you keep behind will be derived by others. Avoid the company of the person whose opinion is unsound and whose action is detestable, because a man is judged after his companion.

Live in big cities because they are collective centres of the Muslims. Avoid places of neglectfulness and wickedness and places where there are paucity of supporters for the obedience of Allāh. Confine your thinking to matters which are helpful to you. Do not sit in the marketing centres because they are the meetingplaces of Satan, and targets of mischiefs. Frequently look at those over whom you enjoy superiority because this is a way of giving thanks.

Do not undertake a journey on Friday until you have attended the prayers, except when you are going in the way of Allāh, or in an excusable matter. Obey Allāh in all your affairs because Allāh's obedience has precedence over all other things. Deceive your heart into worshipping, persuade it and do not force it. Engage it (in worshipping) when it is free and merry, except as regards the obligations enjoined upon you, for they should not be neglected and must be performed at the five times. Be on guard lest death comes down upon you while you have fled away from your Lord in search of worldly pleasure. Avoid the company of the wicked because vice adjoins vice. Regard Allāh as great, and love His lovers. Keep off anger because it is one large army from Satan's armies; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 70

To Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī, his Governor of Medina about certain persons in Medina who had gone over to Mu'āwiyah.

Now, I have come to know that certain persons from your side are stealthily going over to Mu‘āwiyah. Do not feel sorry for their numbers so lost to you or for their help of which you are deprived. It is enough that they have gone into misguidance and you have been relieved of them. They are running away from guidance and truth and advancing towards blindness and ignorance. They are seekers of this world and are proceeding to it and are leaping towards it. They have known justice, seen it, heard it and appreciated it. They have realized that here, to us, all men are equal in the matter of right. Therefore, they ran away to selfishness and partiality. Let them remain remote and far away.

By Allāh, surely they have not gone away from oppression and joined justice. In this matter, we only desire Allāh to resolve for us its hardships and to level for us its unevenness, if Allāh wills; and that is an end to the matter.

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LETTER 71

To al-Mundhir ibn Jārūd al-‘Abdī who had misappropriated certain things given into his administrative charge.

Now, the good behaviour of your father deceived me about you and I thought that you would follow his way and tread in his path. But according to what has reached me about you, you are not giving up following your passions and are not retaining any provision for the next world. You are making this world by ruining your next life, and doing good to your kinsmen by cutting yourself off from religion.

If what has reached me about you is correct, then the camel of your family and the strap of your shoe is better than yourself. A man with qualities like yours is not fit to close a hole in the ground, nor for performing any deed, nor for increasing his position, nor for taking him as a partner in any trust, nor for trusting him against misappropriation. Therefore, proceed to me as soon as this letter of mine reaches you if

Allāh so wills.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: al-Mundhir ibn Jārūd al-‘Abdī is he about whom Amīr al-mu’minīn (peace be upon him) said that:

He looks very often at his shoulders, feels proud in his garments (appearance) and usually blows away (dust) from his shoes.

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LETTER 72

To ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās

Now, you cannot go farther than the limit of your life, nor can you be given a livelihood which is not for you. Remember that this life consists of two days — a day for you and a day against you, and that the world is a house (changing) authorities. Whatever in it is for you will come to you despite your weakness: and whatever in it turns against you cannot be brought back despite your strength.

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LETTER 73

To Mu‘āwiyah

Now, (in) exchanging replies and listening to your letters my view has been weak and my intelligence has been erring. When you refer your demands to me and expect me to send you written replies, you are like one who is in deep slumber while his dreams contradict him, or one who stands perplexed and overwhelmed, not knowing whether whatever comes to him is for him or against him. You are not such a man but he is (to some extent) like you (as you are worse than him). I swear by Allāh that, had it not been for (my) giving you time, you would have faced

from me catastrophe that would have crushed the bones and removed the flesh. Know that Satan has prevented you from turning to good actions and listening to the words of counsels. Peace be upon those who deserve it.

* * * * *

DOCUMENT 74

Written by Amīr al-mu'minīn as a protocol between the tribes of Rabī'ah and the people of Yemen. Taken from the writing of Hishām ibn (Muḥammad) al-Kalbī.

This indenture contains what the people of Yemen, including the townsmen and nomads, and the tribes of Rabī'ah, including the townsmen and nomads, have agreed upon: that they will adhere to the Book of Allāh, will call to it and order according to it and will respond to whoever calls to it and orders according to it. They will not sell it for any price nor accept any alternative for it. They will join hands against anyone who opposes it and abandons it. They will help one another. Their voice will be one. They will not break their pledge on account of the rebuke of a rebuker, the wrath of an angry person, the humiliating treatment of one group to the other, or the use of abusive terms by one party against the other.

This pledge is binding on those of them who are present and those of them who are absent; those of them who are forbearing and those of them who are foolish; those of them who are learned and those of them who are ignorant. Along with this the pledge of Allāh is also binding on them, and the pledge of Allāh is to be accounted for.

Written by: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

* * * * *

LETTER 75

To Mu‘āwiyah, soon after Amīr al-mu‘minīn was sworn in. (Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar) al-Wāqidī has mentioned this in his ‘Kitāb al-Jamal’

From the servant of Allāh, ‘Alī Amīr al-mu‘minīn to Mu‘āwiyah son of Abū Sufyān :

Now, you are aware of my excuses before you people and my shunning you till that happened which was inevitable and which could not be prevented. The story is long and much is to be said. What was to pass has passed and what was to come has come. Therefore, secure (my) allegiance from those who are with you and come in a deputation of your people to me; and that is an end to the matter.

* * * * *

INSTRUCTION 76

Given to ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās at the time of his appointment as his Governor of Baṣrah.

Meet people with a broad face, allow them free audience and pass generous orders. Avoid anger because it is a augury of Satan. Remember that whatever takes you near Allāh takes you away from the Fire (of Hell), and whatever takes you away from Allāh takes you near the Fire.

* * * * *

INSTRUCTION 77

Given to ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās, at the time of his being deputed to confront the Khārijites.

Do not argue with them by the Qur'ān because the Qur'ān has many faces. You would say your own and they would say their own; but argue with them by the *sunnah*, because they cannot find escape from it.

* * * * *

LETTER 78

To Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in reply to his letter regarding the two arbitrators. Sa'īd ibn Yahyā al-Umawī has mentioned this in his "Kitāb al-maghāzī".

Certainly, many people have turned away from many a (lasting) benefit (of the next life), for they bent towards the world and spoke with passions. I have been struck with wonder in this matter, upon which people who are self-conceited have agreed. I am providing a cure for their wound but I fear lest it develops into a clot of blood (and becomes incurable). Remember that no person is more covetous than I for the unity of the *ummah* of Muḥammad (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) and their solidarity. I seek through it good reward and an honourable place to return to.

I shall fulfil what I have pledged upon myself even though you may go back from the sound position that existed when you left me last, because wretched is he who is denied the benefit of wisdom and experience. I feel enraged if anyone speaks wrong, or if I should worsen a matter which Allāh has kept sound. Therefore, leave out what you do not understand, because wicked people will be conveying to you vicious things; and that is an end to the matter.

* * * * *

LETTER 79

**To the army officers when Amīr al-mu'minīn
became Caliph.**

Now, what ruined those before you was that they denied people their rights and then they had to purchase them (by bribes), and they led the people to wrong and they followed it.

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NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

**SELECTIONS FROM THE SAYINGS AND PREACHINGS
OF AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN 'ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB (PEACE BE
UPON HIM) INCLUDING HIS REPLIES TO QUESTIONS,
AND MAXIMS MADE FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES**

1. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: During civil disturbance be like an adolescent camel ¹ who has neither a back strong enough for riding nor udders for milking.

2. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who adopts

¹ *“labūn”* means a milch camel and *“ibnu'l-labūn”* means its two year old young. In this age the young is neither suitable for riding nor does it has udders which could be milked. It is called *“ibnu'l-labūn”* because in this period of two years its mother bears another young and begins yielding milk again.

The intention is that during civil disturbance or trouble a man should behave in such a manner that he may be regarded of no consequence and ignored. No need should be felt for his participation in either party. This is because during mischief only dissociation can save from molestation. Of course, when the clash is between right and wrong it is not permissible to keep aloof nor can it be called civil disturbance: but on such occasions it is obligatory to rise up for the support of right and suppression of wrong. For example, during the battles of Jamal and Şiffīn it was obligatory to support the right and to fight against the wrong.

greed as a habit devalues himself; he who discloses his hardship agrees to humiliation; and he who allows his tongue to overpower his soul debases the soul.

3. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Miserliness is shame; cowardice is a defect; poverty disables an intelligent man from arguing his case; and a destitute person is a stranger in his home town.

4. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Incapability is a catastrophe; endurance is bravery; abstinence is riches; selfrestraint is a shield (against sin); and the best companion is submission (to Allāh's will).

5. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Knowledge is a venerable estate; good manners are new dresses; and thinking is clear mirror.

6. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The bosofn of the wise is the safe of his secrets; cheerfulness is the bond of friendship; effective forbearance is the grave of short-comings.

It is narrated that Amīr al-mu'minīn said in expressing this meaning that: Mutual reconciliation is the covering for shortcomings; and he who admires himself attracts many opponents against him.¹

7. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Charity is an effective cure, and the actions of people in their present life will be before their eyes in the next life.²

¹ In the last phrase. Arnīr al-mu'rninīn has described the consequences and effects resulting from self-admiration namely that it creates the feeling of hatred and humiliation-against others. Thus, the man who manifests his greatness by every pretext in order to make himself conspicuous is never regarded with esteem. People begin to despise him because of his mental condition in seeking self-conspicuity and are not prepared to accord him the worth which he really has, much less to regard him as he himself thinks to be.

² This saying comprises of two phrases:

8. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: How wonderful is man that he speaks with fat, talks with a piece of flesh, hears with a bone and breathes through a hole.

9. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When this world advances towards anyone (with its favours) it attributes to him other's good; and when it turns away from him it deprives him of his own good.¹

10. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Meet people in such a manner that if you die they should weep for you and if you live they should long for you.²

The first sentence relates to charity and Amīr al-mu'minīn has described it as an effective cure, because when a man helps the poor and the destitute by alms they pray for his health and recovery from the depth of their hearts and therefore their prayer is granted and brings him cure. In this connection, there is the saying of the Holy Prophet that, "Cure your sick by charity."

The second sentence relates to the disclosure of actions on the Day of Judgement, namely that the good and bad deeds which a person performs in this world cannot be perceived by human senses because of the veil of material elements but on the Day of Judgement when material curtains will be lifted they will so appear before the eyes that there will be no possibility of denial by anyone. Thus, Allāh has said:

On that day shall come out people (from their graves) in (scattered) groups, to be shown their own deeds. Then he who has done an atomweight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom-weight of evil shall see it. (Qur'ān, 99:6 - 8)

¹ The meaning is that when a man's fortune is helpful and the world is favourable to him then people describe his performances with exaggeration and give credit to him for others' actions as well, while if a man loses the favour of the world and the clouds of ill-luck and misfortune engulf him, they ignore his virtues and do not at all tolerate even to recall his name.

They are friends of him whom the world favours and the foes of him whom the world hits.

² To the person who behaves with others with benignity and

11. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you gain power over your adversary pardon him by way of thanks for being able to overpower him.¹

12. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The most helpless of all men is he who cannot find a few brothers during his life, but still more helpless is he who finds such a brother but loses him²

13. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you get (only) small favours do not push them away through lack of gratefulness.

mannerliness, people extend their hand of cooperation, they honour and respect him and shed tears after his death. Therefore, a person should lead such an agreeable life that no one should have any complaint against him, nor should any harm be caused by him to anyone so that during life he should attract others and after death too he should be remembered in good words.

¹ The occasion for pardon and forgiveness is when there is power to take revenge. But when there is no such power, then pardon is just the result of helplessness, for which there is no credit. However, to practise pardon despite having power and the ability to avenge is the essence of human distinction and an expression of thanks to Allāh for bestowing this power, because the feeling of gratefulness necessitates that man should bow before Allāh in humbleness and humiliation by which the delicate feeling of pity and kindness will arise in his heart and the rising flames of rage and anger will cool down after which there will be no urge to take revenge under the effect of which he would use his power and capability to satisfy his anger instead of using it properly.

² It is not difficult to attract others by good manners and cheerfulness and to befriend them by sweet speech because no physical exertion or mental worry is required for this; and after making friends it is still easier to maintain the friendship and good relations because for making friends some effort or other is needed while for maintaining it no difficulty is to be surmounted. Therefore, no one can be more wretched than the man who cannot even retain a thing which could be retained just by keeping away a frown from the face.

The intention is that a man should meet everyone with good manners and cheerfulness so that people may like to associate with him and extend a hand of friendship towards him.

14. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is abandoned by near ones is dear to remote ones.

15. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every mischief monger cannot even be reproved.¹

16. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: All matters are subject to destiny, so much so that sometimes death results from effort.

17. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked to explain the saying of the Messenger of Allāh that: Banish your old age (by hair-dye) and do not acquire resemblance to the Jews. **Amīr al-mu'minīn replied:**

The Prophet (p .b .u .h .a .h .p.) said this at a time when the religion was confined to a few, but now that its expanse has widened and it is firmly settled everyone is free in his action.²

18. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about those who avoided fighting on his side: They abandoned right but did not support wrong.³

¹ Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered this sentence when Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, Muḥammad ibn Maslamah and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar refused to support him against the people of Jamal. He means to say that these people are so against me that neither have my words any effect on them nor do I need to reproof, rebuke or correct them.

² The intention is that since in the beginning of Islam the number of Muslims was limited it was necessary to keep them distinct from the Jews in order to maintain their collective entity, so the Prophet ordered the use of hair-dye which was not in use among the Jews. Besides, it was also the aim that when facing the enemy the people should not appear old in age and weak.

³ This saying is about those who claimed to be neutrals, such as 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays, Muḥammad ibn Maslamah, Usāmah ibn Zayd and Anas ibn Mālik,

19. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who gallops with loose rein collides with death.

20. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Forgive the shortcomings of considerate people because when they fall into error Allāh raises them up.

21. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The consequence of fear is disappointment and of bashfulness is frustration. Opportunity passes away like the cloud. Therefore, make use of good opportunities.¹

22. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: We have a right. If it is allowed to us well and good, otherwise, we will ride on the hind part of the camel (like lowly people) even though the night journey may be

etc. No doubt these people did not openly support wrong but not to support right is also a kind of support of wrong. Therefore, they will be counted among the opponents of right.

¹ However bad a thing may be regarded among the people and however it may be looked down upon, if it is not really bad then to feel bashful about it is quite foolish, because it will often cause deprivation from things which are the source of successes and achievements in this as well as the next world. For example, if a man fears lest people may regard him to be ignorant and therefore feels bashful in asking an important and necessary issue then this misplaced bashfulness would result in his being deprived of knowledge. Therefore, no sane person should feel bashful about making enquiries. Thus, an old man who was learning despite old age was asked whether he did not feel ashamed of learning in old age and he replied: "I do not feel shame for ignorance during old age, then how can I feel shame for learning in old age." Of course, to feel shame in doing things which are really bad and mischievous is the essence of humanity and nobility; for instance, those immoral acts which are bad according to religion, intelligence and ethics. In any case, the first kind of bashfulness is bad and the second one is good. In this connection, the Holy Prophet's saying is that :

Bashfulness is of two kinds, bashfulness of intelligence and bashfulness of foolishness. The bashfulness of intelligence is knowledge whereas the bashfulness of foolishness is ignorance.

long.

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: This is a very fine and eloquent expression. It means that if we are not allowed our right we will be regarded humble. This sense comes out from this expression because on the rear part of the camel only slaves, prisoners or other people of this type used to ride.¹

23. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He whose deeds accord (him) a back position cannot be given a front position because of his lineage.

24. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: To render relief to the grief-stricken and to provide comfort in hardship means the atonement of great sins.

25. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' son of Adam, when you see that your Lord, the Glorified, bestows His favours on you while you are disobeying Him, you should fear Him.²

¹ The sense of the interpretation written by as-Sayyid ar-Radī is that Amīr al-mu'minīn intends to say that if our right, that lies with others in our position, as with the Imām whom it is obligatory to obey, is acknowledged and we are given the chance of worldly rule well and good, otherwise, we will have to bear all sorts of hardships and ignominies and we shall be compelled to live this life of ignominy and humiliation for a long time.

Some commentators have stated a different meaning than this, namely that: "If our position is belittled and put aside, and others are given precedence over us, we shall bear it patiently and agree to remain behind" and this is what is meant by riding on the hind part of the camel, because the person who rides on the hind part is on the rear while the person who sits on its back is in the fore. Some people take it to mean that if we are allowed our right we will accept it but if it is not given we shall not behave like the rider who gives over the rein of his animal into the hands of some other person who is free to take him wherever he likes but we shall stick to our right even though a long time may elapse and not surrender to the usurpers.

² When a person goes on receiving favours despite sinfulness he develops the misunderstanding that Allāh is pleased with him and that this is

26. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whenever a person conceals a thing in his heart it manifests itself through unintentional words from his tongue and (in) the expressions of his face.¹

27. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Keep walking in your sickness as long as you can.²

the result of His pleasure, because increase in favours arises out of gratefulness and in the event of ungratefulness the bestowal of favours stops, as Allāh says:

And when declared your Lord: ‘If you be grateful I will increase (My favours) to you, and if you be ungrateful, verily My torment is indeed severe.’ (Qur’ān, 14:7)

Nevertheless, continuous bestowal of favours, despite disobedience and ungratefulness, cannot be the result of Allāh’s pleasure, nor can it be said that in this way Allāh has put him under the misconception that he should regard this exuberance of favours as the result of Allāh’s pleasure because when he knows that he is a sinner and disobedient and is committing sins and vices, knowing them to be sins and vices, then there are no grounds for misconception on his part by assuming Allāh’s pleasure and consent. He should rather think that this is a sort of trial and respite for when his sinfulness and high-handedness reaches its zenith he will be caught all at once. Therefore, in such a case he should keep waiting as to when Allāh’s favours are taken away from him and he is punished with deprivation and discomfiture.

¹ The things which a man wants to conceal from others do come out through his tongue sometime or another, and his effort at concealment is unsuccessful. This is because although the far-sighted mind desires to keep them concealed yet sometimes it gets entangled in some more important matter and becomes careless on this score when the concealed thing comes out in words through his tongue. When the mind becomes attentive, it is not possible to undo the matter just as an arrow cannot be got back after shooting. Even if this is not the case and mind is fully cautious and attentive, the thing cannot remain concealed because the lines of the face are indicative of mental feelings and reflect the heart’s emotions, and consequently redness of face can easily point out to the sense of shame, and its yellowness fear.

² The intention is that as long as sickness does not become serious do

28. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The best abstemiousness is to conceal it.

29. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you are running away from the world and death is approaching, there is no question of delay in the encounter.

30. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear! Fear! By Allāh, He has hidden your sins so much so as though He has forgiven.

FAITH, UNBELIEF, DOUBT AND THEIR SUPPORTS

31. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about faith when he said:

Faith stands on four supports: on endurance, conviction, justice and *jihād* (fighting in the way of Allāh).

Endurance again has four aspects: eagerness, fear, abstention (from the world) and anticipation (of death). So, whoever is eager for Paradise will ignore the passions; whoever fears the Fire (of Hell) will refrain from prohibited acts; whoever abstains from the world takes hardships lightly; and whoever anticipates death will hasten towards good deeds.

Conviction also has four aspects: prudent perception, intelligence and understanding, drawing lessons from instructive things and following the precedents of past people. So, whoever perceives with prudence, wise knowledge will be manifest to him,

not give it importance, because by giving importance the feelings get effected and the illness increases. Therefore, continued activity and regarding oneself well dispels sickness and also prevents the power of resistance from getting weak, and keeps up its psychological power, while the psychological power curbs small ailments by itself, provided it is not forced to give up resistance by the surrendering the imagination to the ailment.

and to whomsoever wise knowledge becomes manifest he appreciates instructive objects, and whoever appreciates instructive objects he is just like past people.

Justice also has four aspects: keen understanding, deep knowledge, a good power of decision and firm forbearance. Therefore, whoever understands comes to acquire depth of knowledge; whoever acquires depth of knowledge drinks from the spring of judgement; and whoever exercises forbearance never commits evil actions in his affairs and leads a praiseworthy life among the people.

jihād also has four aspects: to ask others to do good, to keep away others from doing evil, to fight (in the way of Allāh) sincerely and firmly on all occasions, and to detest the vicious. So, whoever asks others to do good provides strength to the believers; whoever desists others from evil humiliates the unbelievers; whoever fights sincerely on all occasions discharges all his obligations; and whoever detests the vicious and becomes angry for the sake of Allāh, then Allāh will be angry in favour of him and will keep him and will keep him pleased on the Day of Judgement.

Unbelief stands on four supports: hankering after whims, mutual quarrelling, deviation from the truth, and dissension. So, whoever hankers after whims does not incline towards right; whoever quarrels much on . account of ignorance remains permanently blinded from the right; whoever deviates from truth, for him good becomes evil and evil becomes good and he remains intoxicated with misguidance; and whoever makes a breach (with Allāh and His Messenger), his path becomes difficult, his affairs become complicated and his way of escape becomes narrow.

Doubt has also four aspects: unreasonableness, fear, wavering and undue submission to every thing. So, he who adopts unreasonableness as his way, for him there is no dawn after the night; he who is afraid of what befalls him has to run on his heels; he who wavers in doubt Satans trample him under their feet; and he

who submits to the destruction of this and the next world succumbs to it.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: We have left out the remaining portion of this saying for fear of length and for being outside the purpose of this chapter.

32. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The doer of good is better than the good itself, and the doer of evil is worse than the evil itself.

33. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Be generous but not extravagant; be thrifty but not miserly.

34. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The best of riches is the abandonement of desires.

35. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If someone is quick in saying about people what they dislike, they speak about him that about which they have no knowledge.

36. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever prolongs his desire ruins his actions.

37. Once Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was proceeding towards Syria when the countrymen of al-Anbār met him. Seeing him they began to walk on foot and then ran in front of him. He enquired why they were doing so and they replied that this was the way they respected their chiefs. Then he said:

By Allāh, this does not benefit your chiefs. You are belabouring yourself in this world and earning misery for the next world by it. How harmful is the labour in whose wake there is punishment and how profitable is the case with which there is deliverance from the Fire (of Hell).

38. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to his son al-Ḥasan:

O' my son, learn four things and (a further) four things from me. Nothing will harm you if you practise them. That the richest of riches is intelligence; the biggest destitution is foolishness; the wildest wildness is vanity and the best achievement is goodness of the moral character.

O' my son, you should avoid making friends with a fool because he may intend to benefit you but may harm you; you should avoid making friends with a miser because he will run away from you when you need him most; you should avoid making friends with a sinful person because he will sell you for nought; and you should avoid making friends with a liar because he is like a mirage, making you feel far things near and near things far.

39. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Supererogatory worship cannot bring about nearness to Allāh if it hampers the obligatory.

40. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The tongue of the wise man is behind his heart, and the heart of the fool is behind his tongue.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This sentence has a strange and beautiful meaning. It means that the wise man does not speak with his tongue except after consulting his mind and exercising his imagination, but the fool quickly utters whatever comes to his tongue without thinking. In this way, the tongue of the wise man follows his heart while the heart of the fool follows his tongue.

41. This very sense has been related from Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, in a different version as follows:

The heart of a fool is in his mouth while the tongue of the wise man is in his heart.

The meaning of both the sayings (40 and 41) is the same.

42. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to one of his companions during his sickness:

May Allāh make your illness a means for writing off your sins, because there is no reward for sickness but that it erases sins and makes them fall like (dried) leaves. Reward lies in saying by the tongue and doing something with the hands and feet. Certainly, Allāh, the Glorified, admits into Paradise by virtue of truthfulness of intention and chastity of heart to whomsoever He wishes from among His creatures.

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: Amīr al-mu'minīn is right in saying that there is no reward for sickness as such because compensation is admissible in respect of the acts of Allāh, the Sublime, towards His creatures such as grief, illness and the like, whereas reward and recompense becomes admissible against actions by the creature. This is the difference between the two and Amīr al-mu'minīn has clarified it through his lustrous knowledge and sound view.

43. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt.¹

May Allāh have mercy on Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt since he accepted Islam willingly, immigrated (from Mecca) obediently, remained content with what sufficed him, was pleased with Allāh

¹ Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt was a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet and was one of the early *muhājirūn* (immigrants). He suffered various sorts of hardships at the hands of the Quraysh. He was made to stand in the scorching sun, and to lie on fire but he did not for any reason abandon the side of the Holy Prophet. He accompanied the Holy Prophet in Badr and other battles. He supported Amīr al-mu'minīn in Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān. He had left Medina and settled in Kūfah. Thus, he died here in 39 A.H. at the age of 73, Amīr al-mu'minīn led his funeral prayer and he was buried outside Kūfah. Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered these mercy-invoking words standing on his grave.

and lived the life of a *mujāhid* (holy soldier).

44. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Blessed is the person who kept in mind the next life, acted so as to be able to render account, remained content with what sufficed him and remained pleased with Allāh.

45. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Even if I strike the nose of a believer with this, my sword, for hating me he will not hate me, and even if I pile all the wealth of the world before a hypocrite (Muslim) for loving me he will not love me. This is because it is a verdict pronounced by the tongue of the revered Prophet, may Allāh bless him and his descendants, as he said:

O' 'Alī, a believer will never hate you and a hypocrite (Muslim) will never love you.¹

¹ This is one of the authentic traditions (*aḥādīth*) of the Holy Prophet whose authenticity the scholars of traditions had never doubted. It was narrated by certain companions of the Holy Prophet such as 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās, 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥusayn, Umm al-mu'minīn Umm Salamah and others, such as Amīr al-mu'minīn himself, also narrated that:

By Him Who split the seed and created the soul, verily the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his progeny, gave me a promise that no one but a (true) believer will love me, and none but a hypocrite will hate me. (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim, vol.1, p.60; [Muslim, in his book, regards the love of 'Alī as an ingredient of *īmān* or faith and one of its signs; and the hatred of 'Alī as the sign of dissemblance] *al-Jāmi'* *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.5, pp.635, 643; *as-Sunan*, Ibn Mājah, vol.1, p.55; *as-Sunan*, an-Nasā'ī, vol.8, pp.115 — 116, 117; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, pp.84, 95, 128; vol.6, p.292; *Ilal al-hadīth*, Abū Ḥātim, vol.2, p.400; *Hilyah al-awliyā'*, Abū Nu'aym, vol.4, p.185; *Jāmi' al-uṣūl*, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.9, p.473; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, p.133; *Manāqib 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib*, Ibn al-Maghāzilī, pp.190—195; *al-Isṭī'āb*, vol.3, p.1100; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p.26; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.509; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.2, p.255; vol.8, p.417; vol.14, p.426; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.354)

It was in this way that the companions of the Holy Prophet used to test

46. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The sin that displeases you is better in the view of Allāh than the virtue which makes you proud.¹

47. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worth of a man is according to his courage, his truthfulness is according to his balance of temper, his valour is according to his self-respect and his chasteness is according to his sense of shame.

48. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Victory is by determination; determination is by the turning over of thoughts, and thoughts are formed by guarding secrets.

49. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear the attack of a noble person when he is hungry, and that of an ignoble person when he is satiated.²

the faith (*īmān*) or hypocrisy (*nifāq*) of the Muslims through their love or hatred towards Amīr al-mu'minīn, as is related from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh that:

We (the companions of the Holy Prophet) used to distinguish the hypocrites by their hatred of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. (at-Tirmidhī, vol.5, p.635; *al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.129; *Hilyah al-awliyā'*, vol.6, p.294; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, pp.132—133; *Jāmi' al-uṣūl*, vol.9, p. p.473; *ad-Durr al-manthūr*, vol.6, pp.66—67; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.13, p. 153; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍirah*, vol.2, pp.214, 215; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p. 1110; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, pp.29-30)

¹ The person who feels ashamed and repentant after committing sin and offers repentance before Allāh remains safe from the penalty of that sin and deserves the reward of repentance: while the person who after doing a virtuous deed begins to feel superiority over others, and being proud of his virtues thinks that he has no apprehension whatever, destroys his virtue and remains deprived of the reward of the virtuous deed. Obviously, he who has erased the blot of his sin by repentance will be better than he who has ruined his action by being proud of it, and having not repented of it either.

² The meaning is that a man of prestige and esteem never tolerates humiliation or disgrace. If his honour is assailed he will leap like a hungry lion and break away the shackles of humiliation. If a low and narrow minded person is raised beyond his name he would not be able to contain himself but,

50. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The hearts of the people are like wild beasts. Whoever tames them, they would pounce upon him.¹

51. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: So long as your position is good, your defects will remain covered.

52. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The most capable of pardoning is he who is the most powerful to punish.

53. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Generosity is that which is by one's own initiative, because giving on being asked is either out of self-respect or to avoid rebuke.

54. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is no wealth like wisdom, no destitution like ignorance, no inheritance like refinement and no support like consultation.

55. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Patience is of two kinds, patience over what pains you, and patience against what you covet.

56. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: With wealth a strange land is a homeland, while with destitution even a

regarding himself very high, will assail other's position.

¹ This saying confirms the theory that by nature human hearts love wildness and that the feeling of love and affection in them is an acquired attribute. Consequently, when the factors and causes of love and affection crop up they get tamed but when these factors disappear or the feelings of hatred are created against them, the people return to wildness, and thereafter they return to the path of love and affection with great difficulty.

Do not tease the heart because it is a wild bird. If once it flies away from the roof it would come down with great difficulty.

homeland is a strange land.¹

57. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Contentment is wealth that does not diminish.²

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This saying has also been related from the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and his descendants.

58. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Wealth is the fountain head of passions.

59. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever warns you is like one who gives you good tidings.

60. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The tongue is a beast; if it is let loose, it devours.

61. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Woman is a

¹ A person who has wealth and riches will get friends and acquaintances wherever he may be and therefore he will not feel strange in a foreign land; but if he is poor and destitute he will have no friends even in his homeland because people do not like to make friends with the poor and the destitute, or to extend relations with them. He is therefore, a stranger even at home and has no friends or well-wishers.

He who has no worldly successor remains unknown as a stranger even in his homeland.

² Contentment means that a man should remain satisfied with what he gets and should not complain if he gets less. If he is not so contented he will try to satisfy his greed by committing social crimes like misappropriation, cheating and deceiving others, because greed compels one to satisfy one's wants by any means whatever. Then the satisfaction of one's want opens the way for another want and as a man's wants get satisfied his craving increases and he can never get rid of his needs or of dissatisfaction. This increasing dissatisfaction can be stopped only by contentment which makes a man carefree from all wants except the most essential ones. This is that everlasting wealth that gives satisfaction for good.

scorpion whose grip is sweet.

62. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If you are met with a greeting, give better greetings in return. If a hand of help is extended to you, do a better favour in return, although the credit would remain with the one who was first.

63. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The interceder is the wing of the seeker.

64. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The people of the world are like travellers who are being carried while they are asleep.

65. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A lack of friends means strangeness.

66. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: To miss what one needs is easier than to beg from an inappropriate person.¹

67. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not feel ashamed for giving little, because refusal is smaller than that.

68. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Charity is the adornment of destitution, while gratefulness (to Allāh) is the adornment of riches.

69. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If what you aim at does not come about then do not worry as to what you were.

70. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: You will not

¹ The shame that is faced in putting a request before an inappropriate person gives more mental pain than the grief in not obtaining its fulfilment. That is why non-fulfilment of a request can be tolerated but the obligation of a low and humble person is intolerable. Every self-respecting person would therefore prefer deprivation to being under obligation to an inappropriate man, and will not tolerate placing his request before a low and humble person.

find an ignorant person but at one extreme or the other (i.e. a person who neglects or a person who exaggerates).

71. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: As intelligence increases, speech decreases.¹

72. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Time wears our bodies, renews desires, brings death nearer and takes away aspirations. Whoever is successful with it encounters grief and whoever misses its favours also undergoes hardships.

73. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others; and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by the tongue. The person who teaches and instructs his own self is more entitled to esteem than he who teaches and instructs others.

74. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The breath of a man is a step towards his death.²

¹ Talkativeness is the result of diffused thinking while diffusion of thought is the result of the unripeness of wisdom. When wisdom attains perfection and understanding ripens one's mind, and thoughts are balanced, and wisdom acquires power and control over the tongue, as over other parts of the body, the tongue does not act without thinking or outside the dictates of wisdom. Obviously, uttering after thinking is short and free from extras.

As a man's intelligence increases his speaking decreases and he does not speak save at the opportune moment.

² That is just as each step makes way for the other and this exercise by steps is the means of nearing the goal, similarly every breath of life serves as, death-knell for the previous one and carries life towards death, as if the breath whose motion is regarded as a sign of life is in fact the sign of the passing away of one moment of life and a means of nearing the goal of death, because each breath is death for the previous one, and life is the name of those very death-carrying breaths.

75. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every countable thing is to pass away and every expected thing must come about.

76. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If matters get mixed up then the last ones should be appreciated according to the previous one.¹

77. It is related that when ʿDirār ibn Ḥamzah (the correct: ʿDamrah) aḍ-Ḍibābī (or aṣ-Ṣudā'ī)² went to Mu'āwiyah and

Every breath is the dead body of the life that passed by. Life is the name of living by facing successive deaths.

¹ By looking at a seed a cultivator can say what plant will come out of it, what fruits, flowers or leaves it will have and what will be its expense. In the same way, a guess can be made about the success of a student by looking at his labour and effort or about the failure of some other student by looking at his leisureliness and idleness, because the beginning is indicative of the end and the premises of the conclusion. Therefore, if the end of any matter is not visible then its beginning should be looked at. If its beginning is bad the end too would be bad and if the beginning is good the end too would be good.

An auspicious river begins from the very spring.

² ʿDirār ibn ʿDamrah was one of the companions of Amīr al-mu'minīn. After the death of Amīr al-mu'minīn, he went to Syria (ash-Shām) where he met Mu'āwiyah. Mu'āwiyah asked him, "Describe 'Alī to me." He replied, "Would you please excuse me from answering this?" But Mu'āwiyah insisted, "You must describe him." Whereupon ʿDirār said :

If there is no alternative, then you should know that 'Alī was a man whose personality knew no limits, terrible in power, his speech was decisive, his judgements based on justice, his knowledge spread out in all directions and wisdom was manifest in all his behaviour. Among the food he liked most was the coarse kind and among the clothes, the short (and humble) ones. By Allāh, he was among us as one of us. He used to respond to our questions and fulfil all our requests. By Allāh, although he used to let us get close to him and he himself was close to us, we did not dare address him due to our feeling of awe towards him nor did we dare to speak first due to his greatness in our hearts. His smile displayed a row of pearls. He

Mu‘āwiyah enquired from him about Amīr al-mu‘minīn, peace be upon him, he said: I stand witness that I have seen him on several occasions when night had spread and he was standing in the niche (of the mosque) holding his beard, groaning like a man bitten by a snake and weeping as a grieved man, saying:

O’ world, O’ world! Get away from me. Why do you present yourself to me? Or are you eager for me? You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other person. I have no concern with you. I have divorced you thrice whereafter there is no restitution. Your life is short, your importance is little and your liking is humble. Alas ! The provision is little, the way is long, the journey is far and the goal is hard to reach.

ON PREDESTINATION

78. A man enquired from Amīr al-mu‘minīn: Was our going to fight against the Syrians destined by Allāh? **Amīr al-mu‘minīn, peace be upon him, gave a detailed reply, a selection from which is hereunder:**

Woe to you. You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny¹

used to honour the pious; to be kind to the needy, *to feed the orphan, the near of kin or the needy man in misery on the day of hunger*; to clothe the bare ones and to help the undefended person. He used to detest the world and its flowering. I stand witness that . . . (and so forth, as quoted above by as-Sayyid ar-Radī).

When Mu‘āwiyah heard this from Ḍirār his eyes became full of tears and he said, “May Allāh have mercy on Abu’l-Ḥasan. He really was so.” Then, turning to Ḍirār he said, “How do you feel in his absence, O’ Ḍirār!” Ḍirār replied, “My grief is like that of a woman whose only child is butchered in her arms.” (*al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, pp.1107—1108; *Hilyah al-awliyā’*, vol.2, p.84; *Ṣifātu’š-ṣafwah*, Ibn al-Jawzī, vol.1, p.121; *al-Amālī*, Abū ‘Alī al-Qālī, vol.2, p.147; *Zahr al-ādāb*, al-Ḥuṣrī, pp.40—41; *Murūj adh-dhahab*, vol.2, p.421; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍirah*, al-Muḥibb aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.2, p.212; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.18, pp.225 -226)

¹ The end of this story is that after this the man enquired, “What kind

(according to which we are bound to act). If it were so, there would have been no question of reward or chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allāh's promises or warnings. (On the other hand) Allāh, the Glorified, has ordered His people to act by free will and has cautioned them and refrained them (from evil). He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations. He gives them much (reward) in return for little (action). He is disobeyed, not because He is overpowered. He is obeyed but not under force. He did not send prophets just for fun. He did not send down the Book for the people without purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth and all that is in between them in vain. *That is the imagination of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve —because of the fire.* (Qur'ān, 38:27)

79. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Take wise points from wherever they may be, because if a wise saying is in the bosom of a hypocrite it flutters in his bosom till it comes out and settles with others of its own category in the bosom of the believer.

80. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A wise saying is a lost article of the believer. Therefore, get wise sayings even though from people of hypocrisy.

81. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worth of every man is in his attainments.¹

of destiny it was by which we had to go?" and Amīr al-mu'minīn said, "‘*qaḍā*' (destiny)" means command of Allāh. For example, He has said, "‘*wa qaḍā rabbuka allā ta'budū illā iyyāhu*'" (And commanded your Lord has that you shall worship not any one] but Him" [Qur'ān, 17: 23]). Here "‘*qaḍā*'" stands for commanded.

¹ The real value of a person is his knowledge (and perfection of attainments). His worth and position would be in accordance with the position of knowledge and attainment he holds. Eyes that are conscious of real values do not look at the face, features, tallness of stature, size or worldly pomp and position but look at the attainments of a person and assess his worth according to these attainments. The conclusion is that a man should strive to acquire

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is the sentence whose value cannot be assessed, with which no wise saying can be weighed and with which no other sentence can be matched.

82. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I impart to you five things which, if you ride your camels fast in search of them, you will find them worth it.

No one of you should repose hope save in his Lord (Allāh) ; no one of you should fear anything save his sin; no one should feel ashamed of saying “I do not know” when he is asked a matter which he does not know; no one should feel ashamed of learning a thing that he does not know; and you should practise endurance, because endurance is for belief what the head is for the body, so that just as there is no good in a body without the head there is no good in belief without endurance.

83. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about a man who praised him much, although he did not admire him: I am below what you express and above what you feel in your heart.

84. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The survivors of the sword (from getting killed) are large in number and have a large progeny.

85. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever abandons saying, “I do not know” meets his destruction.

86. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I love the opinion of an old man more than the determination of a young man; (or according to another version) more than the martyrdom of a young man.

distinction and knowledge.

The worth of every person is according to the extent of his knowledge.

87. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I wonder about the man who loses hope despite the possibility of seeking forgiveness.

88. (Imām) Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir, peace be upon both of them, has related from Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, that he said:

There were two sources of deliverance from the Allāh's punishment, one of which has been raised up, while the other is before you. You should therefore adhere to it. The source of deliverance, which has been raised up is the Messenger of Allāh (may He bless him and his descendants), while the source of deliverance that remains is the seeking of forgiveness. Allāh, the Glorified, has said: *And Allāh is not to chastise them while you are among them, nor is Allāh to chastise them while yet they seek forgiveness.* (Qur'ān, 8:33)

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is one of the most beautiful way of deducing the meaning and the most delicate manner of interpretation.

89. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If a man behaves properly in matters between himself and Allāh, then Allāh keeps proper the matters between him and other people; and if a man keeps proper the affairs of his next life then Allāh keeps proper for him the affairs of this world. Whoever is a preacher for himself is protected by Allāh.

90. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The perfect jurist of Islam is he who does not let people lose hope from the mercy of Allāh, does not make him despondent of Allāh's kindness and does not make him feel safe from Allāh's punishment.

91. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The hearts

get disgusted as bodies get disgusted; so look for beautiful wise saying for them.

92. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The most humble knowledge is that which remains on the tongue and the most honourable one is that which manifests itself through (the action of) the limbs and the organs of the body.

93. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: None of you should say, ‘‘O’ Allāh, I seek Your protection from trouble’’ because there is no one who is not involved in trouble, but whoever seeks Allāh’s protection he should seek it from misguiding troubles, because Allāh, the Glorified, says: *And know you! That your wealth and your children are a temptation.* (Qur’ān, 8:28) and its meaning is that He tries people with wealth and progeny in order to distinguish one who is displeased with his livelihood from the one who is happy with what he has been given. Even though Allāh, the Glorified, knows them more than they know themselves yet He does so to let them perform actions with which they earn reward or punishment because some of them like to have male (children) and dislike to have female (children), and some like to amass wealth, and dislike adversity.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is one of the wonderful interpretations related from him.

94. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked what is good and he replied: Good is not that your wealth and progeny should be much, but good is that your knowledge should be much, your forbearance should be great, and that you should vie with other people in worship of Allāh. If you do good deeds you thank Allāh, but if you commit evil you seek forgiveness of Allāh. In this world good is for two persons only; the man who commits sins but rectifies them by repentance; and the man who hastens towards good actions.

95. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Action

accompanied by fear for Allāh does not fail, and how can a thing fail that has been accepted.¹

96. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The persons most attached to the prophets are those who know most what the prophets have brought. **Then Amir al-mu'minīn recited the verse:** *Verily, of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muḥammad) and those who believe (Qur'ān, 3:68).* **Then he said:** The friend of Muḥammad is he who obeys Allāh, even though he may have no blood relationship, and the enemy of Muḥammad is he who disobeys Allāh even though he may have near kinship.

97. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, heard about a Khārijite who said the mid-night prayers and recited the Qur'ān, then he said: Sleeping in a state of firm belief is better than praying in a state of doubtfulness.

98. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you hear a tradition test it according to the criterion of intelligence not that of mere hearing, because relaters of knowledge are numerous but those who guard it are few.

99. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, heard a man recite: *Verily we are Allāh's and verily to Him shall we return (Qur'ān, 2:156).* **Then he said:** Our saying “*innā li'llāh*” (Verily we are Allāh's) is an admission of His Majesty over us and our saying “*wa innā ilayhī rāji'un*” (and verily to Him shall we return) is an admission of our being mortal.

100. Some people praised Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, to his face, then he said: O' my Allāh! You know me better than myself, and I know myself more than they know. O' my Allāh!

¹ As Allāh says:

... Verily, Verily, Allāh do accept (an offering only) from those who guard (themselves against evil). (Qur'ān, 5:27)

Make us better than what they think and forgive us what they do not know.

101. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fulfilment of (others') needs becomes a lasting virtue in three ways:— regarding it small so that it attains bigness, concealing it so that it may manifest itself, and doing it quickly so that it becomes pleasant.

102. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Shortly a time will come for people when high positions will be given only to those who defame others, when vicious people will be regarded as witty and the just will be regarded as weak. People will regard charity as a loss, consideration for kinship as an obligation, and worship grounds for claiming greatness among others. At this time, authority will be exercised through the counsel of women, the posting of young boys in high positions and the running of the administration by eunuchs.

103. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was seen in worn-out clothes with patches and when it was pointed out to him he said: With it the heart fears, the mind feels humble and the believers emulate it. Certainly, this world and the next are two enemies against each other and two paths in different directions. Whoever likes this world and loves it hates the next and is its enemy. These two are like East and West. If the walker between them gets near to one, he gets farther from the other. After all, they are like two fellow-wives.

104. It is related by Nawf al-Bikālī that: I saw that one night Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, came out from his bed and looked at the stars, then he said to me: ‘ ‘ O ’ Nawf, are you awake or sleeping?’’ **I said:** ‘ ‘ I am awake, O’ Amīr al-mu'minīn.’’ **Then he said:**

O’ Nawf! blessed be those who abstain from this world and are eager for the next world. They are the people who regard this earth as a floor; its dust as their bed-cloth; and its water as their perfume; they recite the

Qur'ān in low tones and supplicate in high tones and then they are cut off from the world like 'Īsā (Jesus).

O' Nawf! The prophet Dāwūd (David), peace be upon him, rose up at a similar hour one night and said, "This is the hour when whatever a person prays for is granted to him unless he is a tax-collector, an intelligence man, a police officer, a lute player or a drummer.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: It is also said that " 'arṭabah' " means *ṭabl* (drum) and " 'kūbah' " means 'lute'.

105. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh has placed on you some obligations which you should not ignore, has laid down for you limits which you should not transgress, has prohibited you from certain things which you should not violate, and has kept quiet about certain things, but He has not left them out by mistake so that you should not find them.

106. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If people give up something relating to religion to set right their worldly affairs, Allāh will inflict upon them something more harmful than that.

107. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Often the ignorance of a learned man ruins him while the knowledge he has does not avail him.

108. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: In man there is a piece of flesh attached to him with a vein and it is the strangest thing in him. It is the heart. It has a store of wisdom and things contrary to wisdom. If it sees a ray of hope, eagerness humiliates it and when eagerness increases, greed ruins it. If disappointment overtakes it, grief kills it. If anger rises in it, a serious rage develops. If it is blessed with pleasure, it forgets to be cautious. If it becomes fearing, it becomes heedless. If peace extends all round, it becomes neglectful. If it earns wealth, freedom from care puts it in the wrong. If trouble befalls it, impatience makes it humble. If it faces starvation, distress overtakes it. If hunger attacks it, weakness makes it sit down. If its eating

increases, heaviness of stomach pains it. Thus, every shortness is harmful to it and every excess is injurious to it.

109. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: We (the members of the Prophet's family) are like the pillow in the middle. He who lags behind has to come forward to meet it while he who has exceeded the bounds has to return to it.

110. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: No one can establish the rule of Allāh, the Glorified, except he who shows no relenting (in the matter of right), who does not behave like wrong doers and who does-not run after objects of greed.

111. Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī died at Kūfah after his return from the battle of Ṣiffīn and he was very much loved by Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him. On this occasion Amīr al-mu'minīn said: Even if a mountain had loved me, it would have crumbled down.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: The meaning of this is that since the trial of the man who loves Amīr al-mu'minīn will be so, severe troubles would leap towards him, and this is not the case except with the God-fearing, the virtuous and select good. There is another similar saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn's individuals, namely:

112. Whoever loves us, members of the Household (of the Prophet), should be prepared to face destitution.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This has been interpreted in a different way as well, but on this occasion is not fit to mention here.¹

113. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: No wealth is more profitable than wisdom, no loneliness is more

¹ Perhaps the other meaning of this saying is that: "Whoever loves us should not hanker after worldly matters even though in consequence he may have to face destitution and poverty; but he should rather remain content and avoid seeking worldly benefits."

estranging than vanity, no wisdom is as good as tact, no honour is like fear from Allāh, no companion is like the goodness of moral character, no inheritance is like civility, no guide is like promptitude, no trade is like virtuous acts, no profit is like Divine reward, no selfcontrol is like inaction in time of doubt, no abstention is like that (which is) from prohibitions, no knowledge is like thinking, no worship is like the discharge of obligation, no belief is like modesty and endurance, no attainment is like humility, no honour is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance, and no support is more reliable than consultation.

114. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: At a time when virtue is in vogue in the world and among people, if a person entertains an evil suspicion about another person from whom nothing evil has ever been seen, then he has been unjust. And at a time when vice is in vogue in the world and among people, if a man entertains a good idea about another person he has flung himself in peril.

115. It was said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him; How are you, O' Amīr al-mu'minīn? **and he replied:** How can he be whom life is driving towards death, whose state of healthiness can change into sickness any moment and who is to be caught (by death) from his place of safety.

116. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There are many people who are given time (by Allāh) through good treatment towards them, and many who are deceived because their sinful activities are veiled (by Allāh), and many who are enamoured by good talk about themselves. And Allāh does not try anyone as seriously as He tries him whom He allows time (to remain sinful).

117. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Two categories of persons will face ruin on account of me: he who loves me with exaggeration, and he who hates me intensely.

118. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: To miss an opportunity brings about grief.

119. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The example of the world is like a serpent. It is soft to the touch but its inside is full of venom. An ignorant person who has fallen into deceit is attracted towards it but a wise and intelligent man keeps on his guard against it.

120. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about the Quraysh, when he replied: As for Banū Makhzūm they are the blossoms of the Quraysh. It is delightful to talk to their men and to marry their women. As for Banū 'Abd Shams, they are farsighted and cautious about all that is hidden from them. As for ourselves (Banū Hāshim) we spend whatever we get and are very generous in offering ourselves in death. Consequently, those people are more numerous, more contriving and more ugly while we are more eloquent, well-wishing and handsome.

121. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: What a difference there is between two kinds of actions: an act whose pleasure passes away but its (ill) consequence remains, and the act whose hardship passes away but its reward stays.

122. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was accompanying a funeral when he heard someone laugh. Then he said: Is it that death has been ordained only for others? Is it that right is obligatory only on others? Is it that those whom we see departing on their journey of death will come back to us? We lay them down in their graves and then enjoy their estate (as if we will live for good after them). We have ignored every preacher, man or woman, and have exposed ourselves to every catastrophe.

123. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Blessed be he who humbles himself, whose livelihood is pure, whose heart is chaste, whose habits are virtuous, who spends his savings (in the name of Allāh), who prevents his tongue from speaking nonsense, who keeps people safe from evil, who is pleased with the (Prophet's) *sunnah*, and who is unconnected with innovation (in

religion).

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Some people attribute this and the previous saying to the Messenger of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and his descendants).

124. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The jealousy of a woman (with co-wives) is heresy, while the jealousy of a man is a part of belief.

125. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I am defining Islam as no one has defined before me: Islam is submission, submission is conviction, conviction is affirmation, affirmation is acknowledgement, acknowledgement is discharge (of obligations), and discharge of obligations is action.

126. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I wonder at the miser who is speeding towards the very destitution from which he wants to run away and misses the very ease of life which he covets. Consequently, he passes his life in this world like the destitute, but will have to render an account in the next world like the rich.

I wonder at the proud man who was just a drop of semen the other day and will turn into a corpse tomorrow. I wonder at the man who doubts Allāh although he sees His creations. I wonder at him who has forgotten death although he sees people dying. I wonder at him who denies the second life although he has seen the first life. I wonder at him who inhabits this transient abode but ignores the everlasting abode.

127. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever falls short of actions falls into grief, and Allāh has nothing to do with him who spares nothing from his wealth in the name of Allāh.

128. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Guard

against cold in its (seasonal) beginning and welcome it towards its end because it effects bodies in the same way as it effects plants. In the beginning, it destroys them but in the end it gives them fresh leaves.¹

129. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Greatness of the Creator appreciated by you would belittle the creatures in your view.

130. When Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, returned from (the battle of) Şiffīn and noticed the graves outside Kūfah, he said: O' residents of houses which give a sense of loneliness, of depopulated areas and gloomy graves. O' people of the dust, O' victims of strangeness, O' people of loneliness and O' people of desolateness ! You have gone ahead and preceded us while we are following you and will meet you. The houses (you left) have been inhabited by others; the wives (you left) have been married by others; the properties have been distributed (among heirs). his is the

¹ During autumn, protection from cold is necessary because with the change of weather the temperature of the body also changes and ailments such as flue, catarrh, cough etc., occur. This is because bodies are accustomed to hot weather and when suddenly cold comes on tissues become contracted and cold dryness increases in the body. Thus, bathing with cold water soon after bathing with hot water is harmful for this very reason that with hot water the tissues expand and so they at once admit the effect of cold water, and in consequence the natural heat of the body is effected. On the other hand, there is no need of protection from cold during spring season nor is it harmful for the health, because the body is already accustomed to cold. Thus, the temperate cold of the spring is not unpleasant to the body. Rather, with the decline of cold there is an increase of heat and dampness in the body as a result of which growth gets impetus, natural heat rises, the body grows, the temperament feels pleasant and the spirit is joyful.

Similarly, there is the same effect in the plant world. Thus, during autumn due to the prevalence of coldness and dryness, the leaves wither, the vegetative power decreases, the freshness of the plants fades and there is a death-like effect on the green areas. Spring brings the message of life for them. Then with the blowing of healthy winds the blossoms begin to sprout, plants become fresh and healthy, and forests and wildernesses acquire a green hue.

news about those around us; what is the news about things around you?

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, turned to his companions and said: Beware If they were allowed to speak they would inform you that : *Verily, the best provision is fear of Allāh.* (Qur'ān, 2:197)

ABOUT THOSE WHO FALSELY ACCUSE THIS WORLD

131. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, heard a man abusing the world and said: O' you who abuse the world, O' you who have been deceived by its deceit and cheated by its wrongs. Do you covet the world and then abuse it? Do you accuse it or it should accuse you? When did it bewilder you or deceive you — whether by the decay and fall of your forefathers, or by the sleeping places of your mothers under the ground? How much you looked after them in their illness and nursed them during sickness, desiring them to be cured and consulting physicians for them in the morning when your medicine did not avail them and your wailing for them did not benefit them. Your mourning over them did not prove useful to them and you could not achieve your aims. You could not ward off (death) from them with all your power. In fact, through the dying man the world presented an illustration for you and showed you by the example of his falling down how you would (also) fall.

Certainly, this world is a house of truth for him who appreciates it; a place of safety for him who understands it; a house of riches for him who collects provision from it (for the next world); and a house of instructions for him who draws instruction from it. It is the place of worship for the lovers of Allāh; the place of praying for the angels of Allāh; the place where the revelation of Allāh descends; and the marketing place for those devoted to Allāh. Herein they earned mercy and herein they acquired Paradise by way of profit.

Therefore, who can abuse it when it has announced its departure and called out that it would leave ! It had given news of its own destruction

and the death of its people. By its hardship it set an example of their hardships. By its pleasures it created eagerness for the pleasures (of the next world). It brings ease in the evening and grief in the morning by way of persuasion, dissuasion, alarm and warning. People abuse it on the morning of their repentance but there are others who will praise it on the Day of Judgement. The world recalled to them the next life and they bore it in mind. It related to them (things of the next life) and they acknowledged them. It preached to them and they took lesson therefrom.¹

132. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is an angel of Allāh who calls out every day, “Beget children for death, collect wealth for destruction, and raise construction for ruin.”

133. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: This world is a place for transit, not a place for stay. The people herein are of two categories. One is the man who sold away his self (to his passions) and thus ruined it, and the other is the man who purchased his self (by control against his passions) and freed it.

134. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A friend is not a friend unless he affords protection to his comrade on three occasions: in his adversity, in his absence and at his death.

135. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is bestowed four things is not disallowed four things: he who is

¹ Every speaker and preacher manifests the force of his speaking in subjects in which he is well-versed. If he has to change the subject neither will his mind move nor will his tongue be able to speak out. But he whose intellect has the capability of adaptation and whose mind has the power of imagination can turn round his utterances in whatever manner he likes, and can show the excellence of speaking on whatever subject he desires. Consequently, when the tongue which had for so long been abusing the world and unveiling its deceitfulness starts praising the world it shows the same mastery of speaking and power of arguing that had ever been its chief distinction. And then, the use of commendatory words does not alter the principle and although the ways are different the object remains the same.

allowed to pray is not deprived of the response to it; he who is allowed to offer repentance is not deprived of its acceptance; he who is allowed to seek forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness; and he who is allowed to be grateful is not deprived of furtherance of favours.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is confirmed by the Book of Allāh. About praying, Allāh says: *“Call you to Me, I will answer you”* (Qur’ān, 4:60). About forgiveness Allāh says: *“And whoever does evil, or wrongs his own self and thereafter seeks pardon of Allāh, shall find Allāh Oft forgiving, Merciful”* (Qur’ān, 4:110). About gratefulness He says: *“If you be grateful I will increase (my favours) to you”* (Qur’ān, 14:7). About repentance He says: *“Verily, repentance (acceptable) with Allāh is only for those who do evil ignorantly and then turn (to Allāh) soon (after) ; these (are those) Allāh will turn (merciful) to them; and Allāh is All-knowing, All-wise”* (Qur’ān, 4:17).

136. Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, said: For the God-fearing prayers is a means of seeking nearness to Allāh: and for the weak the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) is as good as *jihād* (fighting in the way of Allāh). For every thing there is a levy; and the levy of the body is fasting. The *jihād* of a woman is to afford pleasant company to her husband.

137. Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, said: Seek livelihood by giving alms.

138. Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is sure of a good return is generous in giving.

139. Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, said: Assistance is allowed according to need.

140. Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is moderate does not become destitute.

141. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A small family is one of the ways of (securing) ease.

142. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Loving one another is half of wisdom

143. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Grief is half of old age.

144. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Endurance comes according to the affliction. He who beats his hand on the thigh in his affliction ruins all his good actions.

145. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is many a person who fasts, whose fast is nothing but just hunger and thirst, and many an offerer of prayers whose prayer is no better than wakefulness and hardship. The sleep as well as the eating and drinking of the intelligent (God-knowing) person is far better.

146. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Protect your belief by charity; guard your wealth by paying Allāh's share; and ward off the waves of calamity by praying.

AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN'S CONVERSATION WITH KUMAYL IBN ZIYĀD AN-NAKHA'Ī ¹

People are of three types

147. Kumayl ibn Ziyād has related: Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, caught hold of my hand and took me to the graveyard. When he had passed through the graveyard and left the city behind,

¹ Kumayl ibn Ziyād an-Nakha'ī was the holder of the secrets of the Imāmate and one of the chief companions of Amīr al-mu'minīn. He held a great position in knowledge and attainment and a chief place in abstinence and Godliness. He was Amīr al-mu'minīn's Governor of Hīt for sometime. He was killed by al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf ath-Thaqafī in the year 83 A.H. at the age of ninety years and was buried outside Kūfah.

he breathed a deep sigh and said:

O' Kumayl these hearts are containers. The best of them is that which preserves (its contents). So, preserve what I say to you.

People are of three types: One is the scholar and divine. Then, the seeker of knowledge who is also on the way to deliverance. Then (lastly) the common rot who run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the effulgence of knowledge and do not take protection of any reliable support.

O' Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge guards you, while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending, while knowledge multiplies by spending, and the results of wealth die as wealth decays.

O' Kumayl, knowledge is belief which is acted upon. With it man acquires obedience during his life and a good name after his death. Knowledge is the ruler while wealth is ruled upon.

O' Kumayl, those who amass wealth are dead even though they may be living while those endowed with knowledge will remain as long as the world lives. Their bodies are not available but their figures exist in the hearts. Look, here is a heap of knowledge (and Amīr al-mu'minīn pointed to his bosom). I wish I could get someone to bear it. Yes, I did find (such a one); but either he was one who could not be relied upon. He would exploit the religion for worldly gains, and by virtue of Allāh's favours on him he would domineer over the people and through Allāh's pleas he would lord over His devotees. Or he was one who was obedient to the hearers of truth but there was no intelligence in his bosom. At the first appearance of doubt he would entertain misgivings in his heart.

So, neither this nor that was good enough. Either the man is eager for pleasures, easily led away by passions, or is covetous for collecting and hoarding wealth. Neither of them has any regard for

religion in any matter. The nearest example of these is the loose cattle. This is the way that knowledge dies away with the death of its bearers.

O' my Allāh! Yes; but the earth is never devoid of those who maintain Allāh's plea either openly and reputedly or, being afraid, as hidden in order that Allāh's pleas and proofs should not be rebutted. How many are they and where are they? By Allāh, they are few in number, but they are great in esteem before Allāh. Through them Allāh guards His pleas and proofs till they entrust them to others like themselves and sow the seeds thereof in the hearts of those who are similar to them.

Knowledge has led them to real understanding and so they have associated themselves with the spirit of conviction. They take easy what the easygoing regard as hard. They endear what the ignorant take as strange. They live in this world with their bodies here but their spirits resting in the high above. They are the vicegerents of Allāh on His earth and callers to His religion. Oh, oh, how I yearn to see them!

Go away now, O' Kumayl ! wherever you wish.

148. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Man is hidden under his tongue.¹

149. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who does not know his own worth is ruined.

ON PREACHING

¹ The meaning is that a man's worth can be known by his speech because the speech of every person is indicative of his mind and manners, and by virtue of it his feelings and temperament can be very easily assessed. Therefore, so long as he is silent his weakness as well as attainments are concealed but when he speaks his real self manifests itself.

A man is hidden under his tongue.

Unless he speaks you cannot know his worth and value.

150. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to a man who had requested him to preach:

Do not be like him who hopes for (bliss in) the next life without action, and delays repentance by lengthening desires, who utters words like ascetics in this world but acts like those who are eager for it; if he is allowed something from it he does not feel satisfied; if he is denied he is not content: he is not grateful for what he gets and covets for increase in whatever remains with him; he refrains others but not himself; he commands others for what he himself does not do; he loves the virtuous but does not behave like them; he hates the vicious but himself is one of them; he dislikes death because of the excess of his sins but adheres to that for which he is afraid of death.

If he falls ill he feels ashamed; if he is healthy he feels secure and indulges in amusements; when he recovers from illness he feels vain about himself; when he is afflicted he loses hope; if distress befalls him he prays like a bewildered man; when he finds ease of life he falls into deceit and turns his face away; his heart overpowers him by means of imaginary things while he cannot control his heart by his conviction; for others he is afraid of small sins, but for himself he expects more reward than his performance; if he becomes wealthy he becomes self-conscious and falls into vice; if he becomes poor he despairs and becomes weak; he is brief when he is doing a good thing but goes too far when he is begging; when passion overtakes him he is quick in committing sin but delays repentance; if hardship befalls him he goes beyond the cannons of the (Islamic) community; he describes instructive events but does not take instruction himself; he preaches at length but does not accept any preaching for himself; he is tall in speaking but short in action; he aspires for things that will perish and ignores things that will last for good; he regards profit as loss and loss as profit; he fears death but does nothing in its anticipation.

He regards the sins of others as big but considers the same things for himself as small; if he does something in obedience to Allāh he considers it much but if others do the same he considers it small; he therefore rebukes others but flatters himself;

entertainment in the company of the wealthy is dearer to him than remembrance (of Allāh) with the poor; he passes verdicts against others for his own interests and does not do so against himself for others' interests; he guides others but misguides himself; he is obeyed by others but he himself disobeys (Allāh) ; he seeks fulfilment (of obligations towards himself) but does not fulfil his obligations (towards others) ; he fears the people (and acts) for other than his Lord (Allāh) and does not fear his Lord in his dealings with the people.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: If this book had contained nothing save this short utterance it would have sufficed as a successful piece of preaching, a specimen of high philosophy, an object of wisdom for the onlooker and a source of instruction for the meditative watcher.

151. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every human being has to meet the end, sweet or sour.

152. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every comer has to return and after returning it is as though he never existed.

153. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The endurer does not miss success although it may take a long time.

154. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who agrees with the action of a group of persons is as though he joins them in that action. And every one who joins in wrong commits two sins; one sin for committing the wrong and the other for agreeing with it.

155. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Adhere to contracts and entrust their fulfilment to steadfast persons.

156. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: On you lies (the obligation of) obedience to the person about whom you

cannot plead the excuse of ignorance.¹

¹ Just as Allāh sent down a series of prophets by way of His Justice and Mercy to guide and direct towards religion, in the same way He laid down the system of the Imamate to protect religion from alteration and change so that every Imam may in his time save the Divine teachings from the onslaught of personal desires and give directions about the correct precepts of Islam. And just as it is obligatory to know the originator of the religion (i.e., the Prophet) in the same way it is necessary to know the protector of the religion; and he who remains ignorant of him cannot be excused because the issue of Imāmate is supported by so many proofs and testimonies that no intelligent person can find any way to deny it. Thus, the Holy Prophet has said:

Whoever dies without knowing the Imām of his time dies a pre-Islamic (*jāhiliyyah*) death. (*Sharḥ al-maqāsid*, at-Taftāzānī ash-Shāfi‘ī, vol. 2, p.275; *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyyah*, al-Khaṭīb al-Ḥanafī, vol.2, pp. 457, 509).

It has also been narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās that the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants, said that:

One who dies without (knowing his) Imām and binding himself by an oath of allegiance to him will die the death of one belonging to the days of *jāhiliyyah*, and one who withdraws his hand from obedience (to the Imām) will find no argument (in his defence) when he stands before Allāh on the Day of Judgement. (*al-Musnad*, at Tayālisī, p.259; *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim, vol 6, p.22; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.4, p.96; *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, al-Bayhaqī, vol.8, p.156; *at-Tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr, vol 1, p.517; *Majma‘ az-zawā‘id*, vol.5, pp.218, 224, 225)

Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd also agrees that the personality about whom no one’s ignorance can be excused is that of Amīr al-mu’minīn. He also acknowledges the obligation to obey him and holds that he who does not believe in the issue of Imāmate will not achieve deliverance. In this connection he writes:

He who is ignorant of the position of ‘Alī, peace be upon him, as Imām and denies its veracity or obligatory character would, according to our associates, remain in Hell for ever, his fasting or prayers being of no avail to him, because the knowledge of this matter is among the basic principles which constitute the foundations of religion. However, we do not regard one who denies

157. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Surely, you have been made to see if (only) you care to see; surely, you have been guided if (only) you care to take guidance; and surely, you have been made to hear if (only) you care to lend your ears.

158. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Admonish your brother (comrade) by good behaviour towards him, and ward off his evil by favouring him.¹

159. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who puts himself in conditions of ill-repute should not blame those who entertain bad ideas about him.

160. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever obtains authority (usually) adopts partiality.

161. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who acts solely according to his own opinion gets ruined, and he who

his Imāmate as an unbeliever but only a sinner, a transgressor or a deviator, etc. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.18, p.373)

¹ If evil is done in return for evil, and abuse in return for abuse, the door for animosity and quarrel is opened. But if an evil-doer is met with kindness and gentleness he too would be compelled to change his behaviour. Thus, once Imām Ḥasan was passing through the market place of Medina when a Syrian noticing his majestic personality enquired from the people who he was and on being told that he was Ḥasan son of 'Alī (peace be upon him) he was exasperated and coming close to him began to abuse him. The Imām heard him quietly. When he finished the Imām said, "You seem to be a stranger here". He acknowledged this and the Imām continued, "Then you had better come with me and stay with me. If you have any need I shall fulfil it, and if you need financial assistance I shall render it." When he saw this kindness and fine manners in return for his harsh and hard words he was extremely ashamed, and admitting his fault sought his forgiveness. When he left the Imām, he did not have better regard for anyone else on the surface of the globe. (*al-Kāmil*, al-Mubarrad, vol.1, p.235; vol.2, p.63; *Nihāyah al-irab*, an-Nuwayrī, vol.6, p.52; *Maṭālib as-sa'ūl*, Ibn Ṭalḥah ash-Shāfi'ī vol.2, pp.11-12; *al-Manāqib*, Ibn Shahrāshūb, vol.4, p.19; *al-Biḥār*, al-Majlisī, vol.43, p.344)

If you are a proper human being do good to the evil-doer.

consults other people shares in their understanding.

162. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who guards his secrets retains control in his own hands.

163. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Destitution is the greatest death.

164. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who fulfils the right of a man who does not fulfil his right, (is as though he) worships him.

165. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There should be no obeying anyone against Allāh's commands.

166. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: No person is to be blamed for delay in (securing) his own right but blame lies on him who takes what he is not entitled to.

167. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Vanity prevents progress.¹

168. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The Day of judgement is near and our mutual company is short.

169. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: For the man who has eyes the dawn has already appeared.

170. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Abstention from sin is easier than seeking help afterwards.²

¹ A person who seeks perfection and believes that he is still in need of it can be expected to attain the aim of perfection, but a person who is under the illusion that he has reached the zenith of progress and perfection will not feel the need to strive to attain it, but according to his own view he has already traversed all the stages of perfection and now he has no stage in sight to strive for. Thus, this vain and illusioned man will always remain deprived of perfection and this vanity will end all possibility of his rise.

² It is not as difficult to keep aloof from sin the first time as it is after

171. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Many a single eating prevents several eatings.¹

172. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: People are enemies of what they do not know.²

173. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who has several opinions understands the pitfalls.

174. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who sharpens the teeth of anger for the sake of Allāh acquires the strength to kill the stalwarts of wrong.³

becoming familiar with it and tasting it, because a man does not feel difficulty in doing a thing to which he has become habituated, but it is really hard to give it up. As habits become confirmed, the conscience becomes weaker and difficulties crop up in the way of repentance. To console the heart by postponing repentance is therefore usually without avail. Surely, when there is difficulty in keeping off sin even in the beginning the lengthening of the period of sins will make repentance still more difficult.

¹ This is a proverb which is used when a man runs after one advantage so vehemently that he has to give up several other advantages, like the man who eats too much or against his appetite and has to go subsequently without several meals.

² A man attaches great importance to the science and art which he knows and regards that science of no importance which he does not know, and belittles it. This is because whenever such a matter is discussed he is regarded not worthy of attention and is ignored, and thereby he feels slighted. This slight pains him, and a man naturally dislikes a thing that pains him and hates it. In this connection, Plato was asked, "What is the reason that he who does not know hates him who does know, but he who knows does not bear malice or hatred towards him who does not know?" He replied, "He who does not know realizes that he suffers from a defect and thinks that he who knows must regard him low and humble on account of this defect, so he hates him. On the other hand he who knows does not have the idea that he who does not know should regard him low and so there is no reason why he should hate him."

³ The person who rises to face wrong for the sake of Allāh is afforded

175. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you are afraid of something dive straight into it, because the intensity of abstaining from it is greater (worse) than what you are afraid of.

176. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The means to secure high authority is breadth of chest (i.e., generosity).

177. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Rebuke the evil-doer by rewarding the good-doer.¹

178. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Cut away evil from the chest of others by snatching (it) away from your own chest.²

179. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Stubbornness

support and assistance from Allāh and, despite lack of power and means, the forces of wrong cannot shake his determination or create a tremor in his steady feet. But if there is a tinge of personal benefit in his action he can be very easily prevented from his aim.

¹ This means that the giving of full reward to the virtuous for their good actions and appreciating them puts the evil-doers also on the right path. This is more effective than ethical preaching, warning and rebuke. This is because by temperament man inclines towards things from which benefits accrue to him, and his ears (yearn to) resound with eulogies in praise and admiration of him.

² This sentence can be interpreted in two ways. One is that if you bear malice against anyone, he too will bear malice against you. Therefore, destroy the malice from his heart by removing it from your heart, since your heart is the index of other's heart. If your heart will have no malice there will remain no malice in his heart too. That is why a man assesses the purity of another person's heart by the purity of his own heart. Thus, a man asked his friend, "How much do you love me?" and the reply was, "Ask your own heart." That is, "I love you as much as you love me."

The second interpretation is that if you want to dissuade another person from evil, first you should refrain yourself from that evil. In this way, your advice can be effective on others, otherwise it will remain ineffective.

destroys (good) advice.

180. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him said: Greed is a lasting slavery.

181. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The result of neglect is shame, while the result of far-sightedness is safety.

182. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is no advantage in keeping quiet about an issue of wisdom, just as there is no good in speaking out an unintelligent thing.

183. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If there are two different calls then one (of them) must be towards misguidance.

184. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I have never entertained doubt about right since I was shown it.

185. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I have neither spoken a lie nor have I been told a lie. I have neither deviated nor have I been made to deviate (others).

186. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who takes the lead in oppression has to bite his hand (in repentance) tomorrow.

187. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The departure (from this world) is imminent.

188. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever turned away from right was ruined.

189. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If patience does not give relief to a man impatience kills him.

190. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: How strange? Could the caliphate be through the (Prophet's) companionship but not

through (his) companionship and (his) kinship?

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Verses have also been related from Amīr al-mu'minīn on the same matter. They are:

If you claim to have secured authority by consultation, how did it happen when those to be consulted were absent ! If you have scored over your opponents by kinship then someone else has greater right for being nearer to the Holy Prophet.¹

¹ Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd ('Izzu'd-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Hibatul'llāh al-Mu'tazilī [586/1190 -655/1257]) says:

“The saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn in the form of prose and poetry was intended for Abū Bakr and 'Umar. In his prose he addressed 'Umar, because when Abū Bakr asked 'Umar (on the day of Saqīfah): ‘ Give me your hand so that I may swear allegiance to you.’ 'Umar replied, ‘ You are the companion of the Messenger of Allāh in all circumstances — comfort and hardship. So, give me your hand.’

“ ‘Alī, peace be upon him, says (with regard to the claim of 'Umar) that:

If you give arguments in favour of the Abū Bakr's deserving the caliphate on the basis of his being the companion of the Holy Prophet in all circumstances, then why did you not hand over the caliphate to one (i.e., Amīr al-mu'minīn) who shares with him (Abū Bakr) in this matter, and who had superiority over him by having a relation of kinship with the Holy Prophet?

“In his poetry, Amīr al-mu'minīn addressed Abū Bakr, because he argued with the *anṣār* at Saqīfah saying; ‘We (the Quraysh) are the kin of the Messenger of Allāh and the seed from which he sprung, (therefore, we are the most deserving people to succeed him).’

“After allegiance was sworn to Abū Bakr (by a small group at Saqīfah) he used to argue with the Muslims that they must accept his caliphate since it had been accepted by the *ahlu'l-ḥalli wa'l-'aqd* (the group who can tie and untie a matter — i.e., those who were present at Saqīfah).

“ ‘Alī, peace be upon him, says (with regard to the claim of Abū Bakr) that:

191. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: In this world man is the target towards which the arrows of death fly, and is like that wealth whose destruction is quickened by hardships. (In this world) with every drink there is suffocation and with every morsel there is choking. Here no one gets anything unless he loses something else, and not a day of his age advances till a day passes out from his life. Thus, we are helpers of death and our lives are the targets of morality. How then can we expect everlasting life since the night and day do not raise anything high without quickly arranging for the destruction of whatever they have built and for the splitting asunder of whatever they have joined together.

192. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' son of Adam, whatever you earn beyond your basic needs you will only keep vigil over it for others.

193. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Hearts are imbued with passion and the power of advancing and retreating. Therefore, approach them for action at the time of their passionateness and when they are in a mood for advancing, because if hearts are forced (to do a thing) they will be blinded.

194. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, used to say: If I am angry when shall I vent my anger — when I am unable to take revenge and it be said to me, “better you endure” or when I have power to take revenge and it be said to me, “better forgive”?

195. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, passed beside a

Regarding your argument with the *anṣār* that you are from the seed from which the Messenger of Allāh sprung, and one of his tribe, there is other one (i.e. Amīr al-mu'minīn himself) who has the nearest relation of kinship to the Holy Prophet. And concerning your argument that you have been accepted by the consultation of the companions of the Holy Prophet (whom you mean by *ahlu'l-halli wa'l-'aqd*), how did it happen that most of the companions were absent (on the day of Saqīfah) and did not swear allegiance to you:” (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.18, p.416)

dump of rubbish full of filth and remarked: This is what the misers used to be niggardly about.

In another tradition it is related that he said: This is what you used to dispute with each other about until yesterday !

196. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The wealth that teaches you lesson does not go waste.¹

197. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The hearts become tired as the bodies become tired. You should therefore search for beautiful sayings for them (to enjoy by way of refreshment).

198. When Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, heard the slogan of the Khārijites: There is no verdict save of Allāh, **he said:** This sentence is true but it is interpreted wrongly.

199. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about the crowd of people: These are the people who, when they assemble together, are overwhelming but when they disperse they cannot be recognized.

It is related that instead of this Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: These are the people who when they assemble together cause harm but when they disperse are beneficial. **It was pointed out to him:** We know their harm at the time of their assembling but what is their benefit at the time of their dispersal? **Then he replied:** The workers return to their work and people get benefit out of them, like the return of the mason to the building

¹ The person who gains a lesson and experience by spending money and wealth should not lament its loss but should deem the experience more valuable than the wealth because wealth is in any case wasted away while the experience will protect him against the dangers of the future. Thus, a scholar who had become destitute after having been wealthy was asked what had happened to his wealth and he replied: "I have purchased experiences with it and they have proved more useful than the wealth. After losing all that I had, I have not been in the loss."

site, that of the weaver to his loom, and that of the baker to his bakery.

200. An offender was brought before Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, and there was a crowd of people with the man, so Amīr al-mu'minīn remarked: Woe to the faces who are seen only on foul occasions.

201. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: With every individual there are two angels who protect him; when destiny approaches they let it have its own way with him. Certainly, the appointed time is a protective shield (against the events which occur before it).

202. When Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr said to him: We are prepared to swear allegiance to you on condition that we have a share with you in this matter (of caliphate), **Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** No, but you will have a share in strengthening (the caliphate) and in affording assistance and you will both be helping me at the time of need and hardship.

203. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' people, fear Allāh Who is such that when you speak He hears and when you conceal (a secret) He knows it. Prepare yourself to meet death which will overtake you even if you run away, catch you even if you stay and remember you even if you forget it.

204. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If someone is not grateful to you, that should not prevent you from good actions, because (possibly) such a person will feel grateful about it who has not even drawn any benefit from it, and his gratefulness will be more than the ingratitude of the denier; *And Allāh loves those who do good.* (Qur'ān, 3:134,148; 5:93)

205. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every container gets narrower according to what is placed in it except knowledge which expands instead.

206. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The first reward the exerciser of forbearance gets is that people become his helpers against the ignorant.

207. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If you cannot forbear, feign to do so because it is seldom that a man likens himself to a group and does not become as one of them.¹

208. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever takes account of his self is benefited, and whoever remains neglectful of it suffers. Whoever fears remains safe; whoever takes instruction (from things around) gets light; and whoever gets light gets understanding, and whoever gets understanding secures knowledge.

209. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him said: The world will bend towards us after having been refractory as the biting she-camel bends towards its young. **Then Amīr al-mu'minīn recited the verse;** *And intend We to bestow (Our) favour upon those who were considered weak in the land, and to make them the Imāms (guides in faith), and to make them the heirs.*²(Qur'ān, 28:5)

210. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear Allāh like the one who prepares himself after extracting himself (from

¹ It means that if a person is not temperamentally forbearant he should try to be so in the sense that he should put up a show of forbearance against his temperament. Although he may feel some difficulty in curbing his temperament, the result will be that by and by forbearance will become his temperamental trait and then no need to feign will remain, because habit slowly develops into second nature.

² This saying is about the awaited Imam who is the last of the series of Imāms. On his emergence all states and governments will come to an end, and the complete picture referred to in the verse will appear before the eyes.

Whoever wants to may rule in this world but in the end the rule will be in the hands of the descendants of 'Alī (peace be upon them).

worldly affairs) and after getting ready in this way makes effort; then he acts quickly during the period of this life, hastens in view of the dangers (of falling into error) and has his eye on proceeding towards the goal, on the end of his journey and on the place of his (eventual) return.

211. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Generosity is the protector of honour; forbearance is the bridle of the fool; forgiveness is the levy of success; disregard is the punishment of him who betrays; and consultation is the chief way of guidance. He who is content with his own opinion faces danger. Endurance braves calamities while impatience is a helper of the hardships of the world. The best contentment is to give up desires. Many a slavish mind is subservient to overpowering longings. Capability helps preservation of experience. Love means well-utilized relationship. Do not trust one who is grieved.

212. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A man's vanity for himself is one of the enemies of his intelligence.¹

213. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Ignore pain otherwise you will never be happy. **(Or according to another reading):** Ignore pain and grief; you will ever be happy.²

¹ It means that just as an envious person cannot appreciate any good in him whom he envies, similarly, vanity cannot tolerate the emergence of intelligence or the prominence of good qualities as a result of which the envious person remains devoid of those qualities which are deemed to be good by human intellect.

² Every individual has some shortcomings or other. If a person keeps aloof from others because of their faults and weakness, he will, by and by, lose all his friends and become lonely and forlorn in this world and thus his life will become bitter and his worries will multiply. At such a moment he should realize that in this society he cannot get angels with whom he may never have any cause of complaint, that he has to live among these very people and to pass his life with them. Therefore, as far as possible he should ignore their shortcomings and pay no regard to the troubles inflicted by them.

214. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The tree whose trunk is soft has thick branches.¹

215. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Opposition destroys good counsel.

216. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who gives generously achieves position. **(Or according to another interpretation):** He who achieves position begins to make wrong use of it.

217. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Through change of circumstances the mettle of men is known.

218. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Jealousy by a friend means defect in his love.

219. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Most of the deficiency of intelligence occurs due to the flash of greed.²

220. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is no justice in passing a verdict by relying on probability.

221. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worst provision for the Day of Judgement is high-handedness over people.

¹ The person who is haughty and ill-tempered can never succeed in making his surroundings pleasant. His acquaintances will feel wretched and sick of him. But if a person is good-tempered and sweet-tongued people will like to get close to him and befriend him. At the time of need they will prove to be his helpers and supporters whereby he can make his life a success.

² When a man falls into greed and avarice, he gets entangled in evils like bribery, theft, misappropriation, usury and other immoral acts of this type, while the mind is so dazzled with the brilliance of the evil desires that it fails to see the ill effects and consequences of those bad deeds and to prevent him from them or awaken him from his slumber of unmindfulness. Nevertheless, when he prepares to depart from this world and finds that whatever he had amassed was for this world only and that he cannot take it with him, then, and only then his eyes get opened.

222. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The highest act of a noble person is to ignore what he knows.

223. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whomever modesty clothes with its dress people cannot see his defects.¹

224. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Excess of silence produces awe; justice results in more close friends; generosity heightens position; with humility blessings abound in plenty; by facing hardships leadership is achieved; by just behaviour the adversary is overpowered; and with forbearance against a fool there is increase of one's supporters against him.

225. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is strange that the jealous do not feel jealous about bodily health.²

226. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The

¹ If a person adorns himself with the quality of modesty then it prevents him from committing evil acts. Therefore, he has no evil for the people to find in him. Even if a bad act is ever committed by him he does not commit it openly because of his feeling of modesty lest the people notice him.

² A jealous person feels jealous of the property and position of others but not of their health and physical power, although this blessing is the best of all others. The reason is that the effects of wealth and riches remain before the eyes through external pageantry and means of ease and comfort, whereas health is the victim of disregard for being a routine matter, and it is regarded so unimportant that a jealous person does not consider it worth his feeling of jealousy.

Thus, if he sees a labourer carrying a burden on his head all day he does not feel envious, as if health and energy is not an object of envy. Nevertheless, when he himself falls ill he realizes the value and worth of healthiness. It is now that he realizes that it was this health which till now carried no importance in his eyes but was the most deserving to be envied. The intention is that one should regard health as a highly valuable blessing and remain attentive towards its protection and care.

greedy is in the shackles of disgrace.

227. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about belief (īmān) when he said: Belief means appreciation with the heart, acknowledgement with the tongue, and action with the limbs.

228. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is sorrowful for this world is in fact displeased with the dispensation of Allāh. He who complains of a calamity that befalls him complains of his Lord (Allāh). He who approaches a rich man and bends before him on account of his riches then two-third of his religion is gone. If a man reads the Qur'ān and on dying goes to Hell then it means that he was among those who treated Divine verses with mockery. If a man's heart gets attached to the world, then it catches three things, namely worry that never leaves him, greed that does not abandon him and desire which he never fulfils.

229. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Contentment is as good as estate,. and goodness of moral character is as good as a blessing.

230. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about Allāh's saying: (Whosoever did good, whether male or female, and he be a believer, then); *We will certainly make him live a life good and pure* (and certainly We will give them their return with the best of what they were doing). (Qur'ān, 16:97) **when he said:** that means contentment.¹

¹ The reason for calling goodness of moral character a blessing is that just as blessing brings forth pleasure, in the same way a man can make his environment pleasant by endearing others' hearts through goodness of moral character and can thus succeed in procuring ways for his happiness and ease. And contentment has been regarded as capital and estate for the reason that just as the estate and area under sway dispels need in the same way when a man adopts contentment and feels happy over his livelihood he becomes free of turning to others in the time of need.

231. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Be a sharer with him who has an abundant livelihood because he is more probable to get more riches and likely to secure an increase of the share therein.

232. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about Allāh's saying: *Verily, Allāh enjoins justice ('adl) and benevolence (ihsān),*(Qur'ān,16:90). Here 'adl means equidistribution and ihsān means favour.

233. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who gives with his short hand is given by a long hand.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: The meaning of this saying is that even though what a man spends in charity from his possessions may be small, yet Allāh, the Sublime, gives good reward for it. And the two hands referred to, here means two favours. Thus, Amīr al-mu'minīn has differentiated between the favour of man and the favour of the Lord (Allāh) — exalted be the mention of His name — since he has described the first as small and the other as big. This is because the favours of Allāh are ever multiplied manifold to the favours of man since Allāh's favours are basic in the sense that every other favour springs from it and turns to it.

234. Amīr al-mu'minīn said to his son al-Ḥasan, peace be upon them both: Do not call out for fighting, but if you are called to it do respond, because the caller to fighting is a rebel and the rebel deserves destruction.¹

Whoever is contented with the morsel he gets, dry or wet, is the king of all the land and sea.

¹ The meaning of this is that if the enemy aims at fighting and takes the initiative in it, then one should advance to face him, but one should not initiate the attack because this would be clear high-handedness and excess, and whoever commits high-handedness and excess will be disgracefully vanquished and thrown down. That is why Amīr al-mu'minīn always entered the battlefield on being challenged by the enemy. He never offered the

235. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The best traits of women are those which are the worst traits of men, namely: vanity, cowardice and miserliness. Thus, since the woman is vain, she will not allow anyone access to herself; since she is miserly, she will preserve her own property and the property of her husband; and since she is weak-hearted, she will be frightened with everything that befalls her.

236. It was said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: Describe the wise to us; **and he said:** The wise is one who places things in their proper positions. **Then, he was asked:** Describe the ignorant to us; **and he said:** I have already done so.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: The meaning is that the ignorant is one who does not place things in their proper positions. In this way, Amīr al-mu'minīn's abstention from describing was a way of describing him because his attributes are just the opposite of the wise.

237. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: By Allāh, this world of yours is more lowly in my view than the (left over) bone of a pig in the hand of a leper.

238. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A group of people worshipped Allāh out of desire for reward surely, this is the worship of traders. Another group worshipped Allāh out of fear, this is the worship of slaves. Still another group worshipped Allāh out of gratefulness, this is the worship of free men.

239. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Woman is evil, all in all; and the worst of it is that one cannot do without her.

challenge from his side. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes:

We have never heard that Amīr al-mu'minīn ever challenged anyone for confrontation. Rather, when either he was particularly challenged or the enemy flung a general challenge, then alone he would go out to meet the enemy and would kill him. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.19, p.60)

240. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is a sluggard loses his rights and he who believes in the backbiter loses his friend.

241. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: One illgotten piece of stone in a house is a guarantee for its ruin.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: In one tradition this saying is attributed to the Prophet. It is no wonder that the two sayings should resemble each other because they are driven from the same source and dispersed through the same means.

242. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The day of the oppressed over the oppressor will be severer than the day of the oppressor over the oppressed.¹

243. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear Allāh to some degree (even) though it be little; and set a curtain between you and Allāh (even) though it be thin.

244. Amīr al-mu'mnīn, peace be upon him, said: When replies are numerous the correct point remains obscure.²

¹ It is easy to bear oppression in this world but it is not easy to face its punishment in the next world, because the period of bearing oppression even though life-long is after all limited; but the punishment for oppression is Hell whose most fearful aspect is that life there will last for ever and death will not save from punishment. That is why, if an oppressor kills someone then with that killing the oppression comes to an end, and there is no further scope for any further oppression on the same person; but its punishment is that he is thrown in Hell where he suffers his punishment.

The Persian couplet says:

The effect of the oppression on us has passed away, but it will ever remain on the oppressor.

² If replies to a question begin to be given from all sides, every reply will raise another question and thus open the door for arguing, and as the number of replies will further necessitate search for the real truth, detection of

245. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Surely in every blessing there is a right of Allāh. If one discharges that right Allāh increases the blessing, and if one falls short of doing so one stands in danger of losing the blessing.

246. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When capability increases, desire decreases.

247. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Keep on guard against the slipping away of blessings because not everything that runs away comes back.

248. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Generosity is more prompting to good than regard for kinship.

249. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If a person has a good idea about you make his idea be true.

250. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The best act is that which you have to force yourself to do.

251. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I came to know Allāh, the Glorified, through the breaking of determinations, change of intentions and losing of courage.¹

the correct reply will become more and more arduous, because everyone will try to have his reply accepted as correct as a result of which he will try to collect arguments from here and there to have his reply accepted as correct as a result of which the whole matter will become confused and this dream will turn into an aimless one because of the multiplicity of interpretations.

¹ The breaking of determinations and losing of courage can be argued to prove the existence of Allāh in this way that, for example, a man determines to do a thing but before the determination is transformed into action, it changes and some other idea takes its place. This alteration of ideas and determinations and the emergence of change therein is a proof that there is some higher controlling power over us which has the capacity to bring them from non-existence to existence and again from existence into non-existence, and this is what is beyond human power. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge a super authority who effects change and

252. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The sourness of this world is the sweetness of the next world while the sweetness of this world is the sourness of the next one.

253. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh has laid down *īmān* (belief) for purification from polytheism; *ṣalāt* (prayer) for purification from vanity; *zakāt* (levy) as a means of livelihood; *ṣiyām* (fasting) as a trial of the people; *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to the House of Allāh in Mecca) as a support for religion; *jihād* (fighting in the way of Allāh) for the honour of Islam; persuasion for good (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*) for the good of the common people; dissuasion from evil (*an-nahy 'ani'l-munkar*) for the control of the mischievous; regard for kinship for increase of number; revenge for stoppage of bloodshed; the award of penalties for the realization of importance of the prohibitions; the abstinence from drinking wine for protection of the wit; the avoidance of theft for inculcating chastity; abstinence from adultery for safeguarding descent; abstinence from sodomy for increase of progeny; tendering evidence for furnishing proof against contentions; abstinence from the lie for increasing esteem for truth; maintenance of peace (*salām*) for protection from danger; *imāmah* or Imāmate (Divine Leadership) for the orderliness of the community and obedience (to Imāms) as a mark of respect to the Imāmate.¹

alteration in determinations.

¹ Before describing some of the aims and good points of the commands of the *sharī'ah* (i.e., religious law), Amīr al-mu'minīn has begun with the aims and objects of Belief (*īmān*), because *īmān* serves as the basis of religious commands, and without it no need is felt for any religious code or jurisprudence. *īmān* is the name of acknowledging the existence of the Creator and admission of His Singularity. When this *īmān* takes root in the heart of a man then he does not agree to bow before any other being, nor is he over-awed or affected by any power or authority. Rather, getting mentally freed of all ties he regards himself a devotee of Allāh and the result of this adherence to the Unity is that he is saved from the pollution of polytheism.

Prayer (*ṣalāt*) is the most important of all forms of worship. It consists of standing, sitting, bending and prostration, and these postures are a successful way of destroying the feeling of vanity and pride, erasing self-conceit and egotism and creating humility and submissiveness, because the actions and movements of a vain person produce pride and haughtiness while humble actions engender the quality of submissiveness and humbleness in the mind. With the exercise of these acts a man, by and by, acquires a humble temperament. This is how the Arabs who were so vain that if their whip fell off during riding they would not bend down to pick it up or if the strap of the shoe gave way they thought it insulting to bend down to mend it, began to rub their faces on dust during prostration in prayers, and place their foreheads in the position of others' feet during the congregational prayer, and in this way acquired the true spirit of Islam after abandoning the pre-Islamic vanity and partisanship.

zakāt, namely that a person who is able to do so should pay annually out of his money or property a fixed share for those who are either destitute or do not have means of livelihood for a year, is an obligatory command of Islam, the purpose behind which is that no individual in the community should remain poor and they should remain safe from the evils that result from need and poverty. Besides, another objective is that wealth should keep rotating from one individual to another and should not be centred in a few persons.

Fasting (*ṣiyām*) is a form of worship in which there is not an iota of show, and no motive is active in it except that of pure intention. As a result, even in seclusion when hunger perturbs a man or thirst makes him uneasy he does not extend his hand for eating, nor does the longing for water make him lose his control although if something is eaten or drunk no one is to peep into his stomach, but the purity of conscience prevents his will from deflecting. This is the greatest good of fasting that it engenders purity of will in action.

The purpose of *hajj* (pilgrimage to the House of Allāh) is that Muslims from all corners of the globe should assemble at one place so that this world assembly should prove to be an occasion for the manifestation of Islam's greatness, the renewal of the passion for worship and the creation of bonds of mutual brotherhood.

The purpose of *jihād* (fighting in the way of Allāh) is to fight with all possible might those forces which oppose Islam, so that Islam may achieve

stability and progress. Although there are dangers for life in this course and difficulties crop up at every step, yet the tidings for eternal ease and everlasting life produce the courage to bear all these hardships.

The persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil are effective ways of showing others the correct path and preventing them from wrong; If a community has no persons to perform these duties nothing can save it from ruin and it falls to an extreme depth morally and socially. That is why Islam has laid great stress on it as compared to other matters, and held disregard to it as an unpardonable sin.

Doing good for kinship means that a man should do favours to his relatives and at least should not stop mutual accosting and speaking with them so that spirits may become clean and family ties may develop, and the scattered individuals may render strength to one another.

Seeking vengeance is a right given to the survivors of the person killed. They can demand a life for a life so that for fear of punishment no one would dare kill any person, and at the same time the survivor's passion for revenge should not result in the killing of more than one person. No doubt forgiveness or pardon does carry weight in its own place but where it means trampling of an individual's right or a danger to world peace it cannot be regarded as good. Rather, on such an occasion revenge is the sole way of stopping bloodshed and killing for the safety of human life. Thus, Allāh says:

And for you there is (security of) Retaliation O' you men of understanding, so that you may guard yourself (against evil). (Qur'ān, 2:179)

The purpose behind the awarding of penalties is to make the offender appreciate the seriousness of violating the prohibitions of Allāh so that he may keep off the prohibitions for fear of punishments.

Wine causes diffusion of thinking, dispersion of senses and weakness of understanding. As a result, a man commits such actions which would not be expected of him in the state of being in his senses. Besides, it ruins health and renders the body liable to catch infectious diseases while, sleeplessness, nervous weakness and rheumatism are its chief effects. The *sharī'ah* has prohibited it in view of these ill-effects.

Theft, that is, taking over someone else's property is an evil habit which

is produced by the sway of greed and evil passions and since bringing down evil passions from the position of excess to the bounds of moderation means chastity the abstinence from theft by curbing greed and evil passions would produce chastity.

Adultery and sodomy have been prohibited in order that lineage may be regulated and the human race may continue and prosper, because the issues by adultery are not regarded legitimate for the purposes of lineage and consequently they are not entitled to inheritance, while there is no question of issues in the case of unnatural practices. Besides, as a consequence of these evil practices one contracts such diseases which cause ruination of life in addition to discontinuity of progeny.

The law of evidence is needed because if one party denies the right of another party the latter may establish it through evidence and safeguard it thereby.

Abstention from lies and falsehood has been commanded so that the standing and importance of its contrary namely truth may become prominent and in observing the benefits and advantages of truth the moral weakness of falsehood may be avoided.

salām means peace and peace-loving and it is obvious that peaceful attitude is a successful way of protection from dangers and prevention of war and fighting. Generally, commentators have taken the word *salām* to mean mutual greetings and well-wishing but the context and the fact that it has been mentioned in the series of obligations does not support this interpretation. However, according to this interpretation *salām* is a means of safety from dangers because it is regarded as a way of peace and peaceloving. When two Muslims meet each other they offer *salām* one to the other, it means that they announce the wishes of each for the welfare of the other whereafter each feels safe with the other.

Imāmate (*imāmah*): This word has appeared in the same form in the correct copies of *Nahj al-balāghah* as well as in its commentaries like Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.19, p.90; Ibn Maytham, vol.5, pp.367-368; *Minhāj albarā'ah*, vol.21, p.318; and other sources besides *Nahj al-balāghah* such as *Nihāyah al-irab* by an-Nuwayrī ash-Shāfi'ī vol.8, p.183 and *al-Bihār* by al-Majlisī, vol.6, p.111.

In fact, this word of “*imāmah*” has been distorted to “*amāmah*” (trust)

254. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, used to say: If you want an oppressor to take an oath ask him to swear like this that he is out of Allāh's might and His power, because if he swears falsely in this way he will be quickly punished, while if he swears by Allāh Who is such that there is no god but He, he will not be quickly punished since he is

or “*amānat*” (trusts) in some copies such as those printed in Egypt. It is very surprising to note that the word has appeared as *amāmah* in the text of *Nahj al-balāghah* printed with the commentary of Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd in Egypt in the, first edition vol.4, p.350 as well as in the second edition edited by Muḥammad Abu'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, vol.19, p.86; while he himself (Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd) based his commentary on its correct reading namely *imāmah* as did other commentators.

However, in explanation of this sentence, “Imāmate for the orderliness of the community,” as the theological scholars say:

Whoever has known dark experiences and has examined political principles knows, of necessity, that whenever men have among them a chief and a guide whom they obey, who restrains the oppressor from his oppression and the unjust man from his injustice and avenges the oppressed of his oppressor, and along with that leads them to rational principles and religious duties, and restrains them from the corruptions which cause the destruction of order in their worldly affairs, and from the evils which result in wretchedness in the world to come, so that every individual might fear that punishment, then because of this they will draw near to soundness and depart from corruption. (*al-Bābu'l-ḥādī 'ashar*, Engl. transl. p.63)

The institution of Imāmate is intended to cater for the unification of the nation and to protect the commandments of Islam from alteration and change, because if there is no head of the nation and no protector of religion neither can the order of the nation be maintained nor can the commandments of Islam remain safe from interference by others. This object can be achieved only when obedience to him is obligatory on the people, because if he is not obeyed and followed as an obligation he will neither be able to maintain justice and equity, nor secure the rights of the oppressed from the oppressor, nor issue and enforce the laws of the *sharī'ah* and consequently the extinction of evil and mischief from the world cannot be expected.

expressing the Unity of Allāh, the Sublime.¹

255. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' son of Adam, be your own representative in the matter of your property and do about it whatever you want to be done with it after your death.²

¹ It is narrated that someone levied some charges against Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq before the 'Abbāsīde Caliph 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Manṣūr. al-Manṣūr sent for the Imām and told him that such and such a person had told him such and such about him. The Imam said it was all wrong and there was not an iota of truth therein, and desired the man to be sent for and questioned before him. Consequently, he was sent for and questioned. He said that whatever he had said was true and correct. The Imām said to him, "If you are speaking the truth then you swear as I ask you to swear." Thereafter, the Imām made him swear by saying, "I am out of Allāh's might and power and I rely on my own might and power." Soon after swearing like this he got an attack of paralysis and he became motionless. The Imām, returned with full honour and prestige. (*al-Kāfi*, al-Kulaynī, vol.6, pp. 445 -446; *al-Biḥār*, vol.47, pp.164 -165, 172 -175, 203 — 204; *al-Fuṣūl al-muḥimmah*, Ibn aṣ-Ṣabbāgh al-Mālikī, pp.225 - 226; *aṣ-Ṣawa'iq al-muḥriqah*, Ibn Ḥajar ash-Shāfi'ī, p.120; *Jāmi' karāmāt al-awliyā'*, an-Nabhānī ash-Shāfi'ī, vol.2, p.4).

Such an event took place again during the reign of Hārūn ar-Rashīd (149/766 -193/809 — the grandson of al-Manṣūr) when 'Abdullāh ibn Muṣ'ab (the grandson of 'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr — the well-known enemy of *Ahlu'l-bayt* of the Holy Prophet) slandered Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn (al-Imām) al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib before Hārūn ar-Rashīd by saying that he was plotting a revolution against him (Hārūn). Then, Yaḥyā made 'Abdullāh swear before Hārūn in the same manner as the Imām had done. When 'Abdullāh swore as he was required to, the symptom of leprosy soon appeared in him in the presence of Hārūn and he died after three days, while every part of his flesh cracked open and all the hair of his body fell out. After this, Hārūn used to say, "How soon Allāh took revenge on 'Abdullāh for Yaḥyā !" (*Maqātil at-ṭālibiyyīn*, Abu'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, pp.472-478; *Murūj adh-dhahab*, al-Mas'ūdī, vol.3, pp.340 – 342; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, al-Khatīb, vol.14, pp. 110 - 112; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.19, pp.91 -94; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, pp.167-168; *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, as-Suyūṭī, p.287).

² The meaning of it is that if a person desires that after his death a portion of his property should be spent on charity, he should not wait for his death but spend it wherever he desires even during his lifetime; for it is possible that after his death his

256. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Anger is a kind of madness because the victim to it repents afterwards. If he does not repent his madness is confirmed.

257. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Health of body comes from paucity of envy.¹

258. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to Kumayl ibn Ziyād an-Nakha'ī: O' Kumayl, direct your people to go out in the day to achieve noble traits and to go out in the night to meet the needs of those who might be sleeping, for I swear by Him Whose hearing extends to all voices if ever someone pleases another's heart, Allāh will create a special thing out of this pleasing so that whenever any hardship befalls him it will come running like flowing water and drive away the hardship as wild camels are driven away.

259. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When you fall in destitution, trade with Allāh through charity.

260. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Faithfulness with faithless people is faithlessness with Allāh, while faithlessness with faithless people is faithfulness with Allāh.

261. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is many a man being gradually brought towards punishment by good treatment with

successors may not act upon his will or he may not get an opportunity to will.

A Persian couplet says :

Give away money and property while you are living as after you it would be out of your control.

¹ Envy produces such a poisonous matter in the body which destroys the natural heat of the body as a result of which the body weakens and the spirit withers. That is why an envious person never prospers and melts away in the heat of envy.

him; many' a man who remains in deceit because his evils are covered; and many a man who is in illusion because of good talk about him, while there is no greater ordeal by Allāh, the Glorified, than the giving of time.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This saying has appeared earlier as well but here it contains a beautiful and useful addition.

**Section wherein we have included selections
from wonderful sayings of Amīr al-mu'minīn,
peace be uponhim, which require explanation**

262-1. A tradition related from Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, says: When the situation is like this, then the head of the religion will rise and people will gather around him as pieces of rainless cloud collect during autumn.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: ‘*ya ‘sūb*’¹ is the great chief who is in

¹ ‘*ya ‘sūb*’ is the name given to the queen bee, and the saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn is: ‘*fa idhā kāna dhālika ḍaraba ya ‘sūbu'd-dīn bi dhanabihī*’. The word ‘*ḍarab*’ means to beat, strike, hit, etc.; ‘*ya ‘sūbu'd-dīn*’ means ‘the head of religion and the *sharī'ah*’, and ‘*dhanab*’ means tail, end, adherent or flower. In this sentence ‘*ya ‘sūbu'd-dīn*’ stands for the present Imām (al-Imām al-Mahdī). Although this title was given by the Holy Prophet to Amīr al-mu'minīn specially, as he said :

O' ‘Alī, you are the *ya ‘sūb* (head) of the believers while wealth is the *ya ‘sūb* of the hypocrites. (*al-Istī'āb*, vol.4, p.1744; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.287; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, p.171; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍirah*, vol.2, p.155; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, p.102; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.1, p.12; vol.19, p.224).

Also the Holy Prophet said to ‘Alī:

You are the *ya ‘sūb* of the religion. (*ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍirah*, vol.2, p.177; *Tāj al-'arūs*, vol.1, p.381; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.1, p.12; vol.19, p.224)

Also the Holy Prophet said to ‘Alī:

You are the *ya ‘sūb* of the Muslims (*Yanābi' al-mawaddah*, al-Qundūzī, p.62)

charge of the people's affairs, and "quza' " means the pieces of cloud which have no rain.

263-2. A tradition of Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, says: He is a versatile speaker.¹

Again the Holy Prophet said :

You are the *ya'sūb* of the Quraysh (*al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasanah, as-Sakhāwī*, p.94).

Therefore, the reason for giving the Imām this name is that just as the queen bee is pure alone and in the society of other bees, and she collects her nectar from the blossoms and flowers keeping away from pollution, in the same way the present Imām is free from all pollutions and is perfectly clean and pure. This saying has been interpreted in several ways:

Firstly, it means that "when the present Imām settles at his seat after his tour and rotation round the world people will gather around him."

Secondly, it means that "when the Imām moves about on the earth along with his friends and associates . . ." In this case the word "*ḍaraba*" would mean moving about and the word "*dhanab*" would mean helpers and associates.

Thirdly, it means that "when the Imām rises with a sword in hand . . ." In this case the word "*dhanab*" would mean stinging by the bee.

Fourthly, it means that "when the Imām rises for the propagation of true faith with full fervour . . ." In this case the sentence is suggestive of the state of anger and the posture for attack.

¹ The reference by the versatile speaker is to Ṣa'ṣa'ah ibn Sūḥān al-'Abdī who was among the chief companions of Amīr al-mu'minīn. This saying throws light on the greatness of his speaking quality and the force of his utterances. In this connection, Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd has written :

It is enough for Ṣa'ṣa'ah's greatness that a personality like 'Alī, peace be upon him, has praised him for versatility and eloquence of speech. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.19, p.106)

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: ‘*shahshah*’ means one expert and free in speech, and every one who is free in speech or walking is called ‘*shahshah*’, while in another sense this word means a miserly and niggardly person.

264-3. A tradition from Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, says: Quarrels bring about ruin.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: ‘*quḥm*’ means ruin because quarrels often drive men into ruin and grief. In the same way, it is said ‘*quḥmatu’l A’rāb*’ which means the period (of drought) when the cattle owned by the nomad desert Arabs are reduced to bones, and this is their being driven to it. Another argument is also advanced in this matter; namely that the situation drives them to green areas, in other words the hardship of the desert life drives them to *ḥaḍar* (a civilized region with town and villages and a settled population [as opposed to desert]).

265-4. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, says: When girls reach the stage of (realizing) realities, relations on the father’s side are preferable.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Instead of ‘*naṣṣa’l-ḥiqāq*’ the combination ‘*naṣṣa’l-ḥaqā’iq*’ has also been related. ‘*naṣṣ*’ means the last end of things or their remotest limit, such as ‘*an-naṣṣi fi’ssayr*’ means the maximum a beast can walk. Or you say ‘*naṣṣtu’r-rajula ‘ani’l-amrī*’ when you have questioned a man to the extreme to make him utter all he has. Thus, ‘*naṣṣu’l-ḥaqā’iq*’ means prudence because it is the last limit of childhood and is the time when a child crosses childhood into majority, and this is a very eloquent reference to the point, and strange too. Amīr al-mu’minīn intends to say: When girls reach this stage their relations on father’s side have a better right than their mother, provided they are those with whom marriage is prohibited like brothers and uncles, to arrange for their marriages if they so desire. ‘*al-ḥiqāq*’ also means the quarrelling of the mother with a girl’s paternal relations. This quarrel is that everyone of them says he has a better right for her. That is why it is said ‘*ḥāqatuhu ḥiqāqan*’ on the lines of ‘*jādaltuhu*

jidālan’. It has also been said that ‘*naṣṣu’l-ḥiqāq*’ means acquiring understanding and this is prudence, because Amīr al-mu’minīn refers to the stage when rights and duties become applicable. The person who has related the word as ‘*ḥaqā’iq*’ intends to signify the plural of ‘*ḥaqīqah*’ (reality).

The above is what Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām has stated (in *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, vol.3, pp.456 -458) ; but I think that the intention here by the word ‘*naṣṣu’l-ḥiqāq*’ is a girl’s reaching the stage when it is possible to marry her and to allow her to dispose of her rights herself on the analogy of ‘*bil ḥiqāqi mina’l-ibili*’ (a camel’s attaining majority) wherein ‘*ḥiqāq*’ is the plural of ‘*ḥiqqah*’ or ‘*ḥiqq*’ and it means completion of three years (of age) and entry into the fourth, which is the time when it reaches the age when it is possible to ride on its back and to exert it in walking. ‘*ḥaqā’iq*’ too is the plural of ‘*ḥiqqah*’. Thus, both the versions point to the same meaning, and this interpretation is more in keeping with the way of the Arabs than the other one stated earlier.

266-5. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, says: Faith produces a ‘*lumazah*’ in the heart. As faith develops, the ‘*lumazah*’ also increases.

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: ‘*lumazah*’ is a white spot or something like that. On that analogy if a horse has a white spot on its lower lip it is called ‘*farusun al-mazu*’, that is, a white-spotted horse.

267-6. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, says: If a man has a ‘*ad-daynu’z-zanūn*’ (i.e. doubtful loan) it is his duty to pay *zakāt* thereon for all the past years when he recovers it.

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: ‘*az-zanūn*’ is the loan about which the lender does not know whether he will be able to recover it from the borrower. He is like the one who hopes as well as loses hope. This is the most eloquent way of expression. In this way everything about which you do not know where you stand would be *zanūn*. In the same strain poet al-A’shā (Maymūn ibn Qays al Wā’ilī [d. 7/ 629]) says :

The az-zanūn well (i.e., the one that may or may not have water) which is also deprived of the rain of the raining clouds cannot be compared to the Euphrates whose waves are rising high and which is pushing away the boat as well as the adept swimmer.

“*judd*” means the well (situated in a wilderness), while *zanūn* is that about which it is not known whether or not it has water.

268-7. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, relates that he arranged a force for advancing for *jihād* and said: *i’dhibu* (turn away) from women so far as you can.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: It (*i’dhibu*) means that “keep off” from thoughts of women and from clinging your heart to them, and do not have union with them; because all this produces weakness in enthusiasm, affects the firmness of determination, weakens against the enemy and prevents from exerting in fighting. Whatever prevents from something is called “*‘adhaba ‘anhu*” i.e., turned away from it. Thus, “*al-‘ādhīb*” and “*al-‘adhūb*” mean one who gives up eating and drinking.

269-8. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, says: Like the successful shooter (*al-yāsir al fālij*) who looks forward to achieving success at his first shot.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: “*al-yāsirūn*” (pl. of *al-yāsir*) means those who shoot with arrows on the slaughtered camel by way of gambling; while “*al fālij*” means successful or victorious, For example, it is said: “*‘falaja ‘alayhim*” or “*‘falajahum*” (that is, he got victory over them or overpowered them). A poet has said by way of war recital:

When I noticed a successful person securing victory.

270-9. A tradition of Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, runs: When the crisis became red-hot we sought refuge with the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him and his descendants), and none of us was closer to the enemy than he himself.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This means that when fear of the enemy increased and fighting became serious, the Muslims would begin to think that since the Messenger of Allāh had taken up fighting himself, Allāh must give them victory through him and that therefore they would be safe from all the dangers because of his existence.

And the words ‘*idha ḥmarra’l ba’su*’ (when the crisis became red-hot) refers to the seriousness of the matter. For this purpose several expressions have been used out of which this is the best one, since Amīr al-mu’minīn has likened war with fire which combines heat and redness both in action as well as colour. This is confirmed by the words of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him and his descendants) when on the day of Ḥunayn he noticed people of Hawāzin (tribe) fighting he said, “Now *waṭīs* has heated up” and *waṭīs* is the place where fire is lighted. In this way, the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him and his descendants) likened the seriousness of fighting by men to the seriousness of the fire and its flames.

*This section ends and we return to the original theme
of the chapter.*

271. When the news of the attack of Mu‘āwiyah’s men on al-Anbār reached Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, he himself came out walking till he reached an-Nukhaylah, where people overtook him and said: “O’ Amīr al-mu’minīn, we are enough for them,” then he said:

You cannot be enough for me against yourselves, so how can you be enough for me against others? Before me the people used to complain of the oppression of their rulers but now I have to complain of the wrongful actions of my people; as though I am led by them and they are the leaders or that I am the subject and they are the rulers.

The narrator says: When Amīr al-mu’minīn, peace be upon him, uttered this during his long speech which we have included in the collection of sermons (No.27), two men from his companions advanced towards him and one of them said : *I rule no one except myself and my brother* (Qur’ān, 5:25). So, order us with your command, O’ Amīr al-

mu'minīn and we will accomplish it. **Thereupon, Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** How can you two accomplish what I aim at?

272. It is said that al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥawṭ came to Amīr al-mu'minīn, and said: Do you believe I can ever imagine that the people of Jamal were in the wrong? **Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** O' al-Ḥārith ! You have seen below yourself but not above yourself, and so you have been confused. Certainly, you have not known right, so that you can recognize the righteous. And you have not known wrong, so that you can recognize the people of wrong! **Then al-Ḥārith said:** In that case, I shall withdraw along with Sa'd ibn Mālīk and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar; **whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** Verily, Sa'd and 'Umar have neither sided with Right nor forsaken Wrong.¹

¹ Sa'd ibn Mālīk (i.e. Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, the father of 'Umar ibn Sa'd who killed Imām Ḥusayn) and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar were among those who were keeping themselves away from Amīr al-mu'minīn's help and support. As for Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, after the killing of 'Uthmān he retired to some wilderness and passed his life there, but did not agree to swear allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn (as Caliph). But after the death of Amīr al-mu'minīn he used to express his repentance, saying, "I held an opinion but it was a wrong opinion." (*al-Mustadrak*, al-Hākim, vol.3, p. 116). And when Mu'āwiyah blamed him for not supporting him in his fight with Amīr al-mu'minīn, Sa'd said :

I only repent for not having fought against the rebellious group (i.e. Mu'āwiyah and his people). (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Ḥanafī, vol.2, pp.224,225; *al-Furū'*, Ibn Mufliḥ al-Ḥanbalī, vol.3, p.542)

As for 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, although he had sworn allegiance, he refused to help Amīr al-mu'minīn in the battles putting forth the excuse: "I have sought seclusion to devote myself to worship and do not therefore want to involve myself in war and fighting."

A Persian couplet says :

Intelligence regards such excuses worse than the offence itself.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar also frequently used to express his repentance,

273. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The holder of authority is like the rider on a lion — he is envied for his position but he well knows his position.¹

274. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do good with the bereaved ones of others so that good is done to your bereaved ones also.

275. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When the utterance of the wise is to the point it serves as a cure, but if it is wrong it proves like an illness.²

276. Someone asked Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, to define religion for him, so he said: Come to me tomorrow so that I

even up to the last moments of his life, saying:

I do not find anything in myself to be distressed about in this world, except my not having fought alongside 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib against the rebellious group as Allāh, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, had commanded me. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.115-116; *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, al-Bayhaqī, vol.8, p.172; *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, Ibn Sa'd, vol.4, part1, pp.136, 137; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p.953; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.3, p.229; vol.4, p.33; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.3, p.182; vol.7, p.242; *al-Furū'*, vol.3, p.543; *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī*, al-Alūsī, vol.26, p.151).

¹ The intention is that if a person holds high position in the royal court people look at his rank and position and honour and prestige with envy, but he himself has always the fear lest the royal pleasure turns against him and he falls in the pit of disgrace and dishonour or death and destruction, like the rider on a lion with by whom people are awed, but he himself is ever facing the danger lest the lion devours him, or throws him in some fatal pit.

² The group of the learned and reformers is responsible for improvement as well as deterioration because the common people are under their influence, and regard their words and action as correct and standard, rely on them and act upon them. In this way, if their teaching caters for improvement then thousands of individuals will acquire improvement and betterment thereby; but if there be evil in it then thousands of individuals will get involved in misguidance and get astrayed. That is why it is said: "When a scholar gets into evil the whole world gets into evil."

enlighten you in the presence of all the people, so that if you forget what I say others might retain it, because an utterance is like a fluttering prey which may be grappled with by someone but missed by others.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: We have already stated in the earlier chapter what Amīr al-mu'minīn replied to this man, namely his saying (no. 31) . "Faith stands on four supports."

277. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' son of Adam, do not inflict the worry of the day that has not yet come on the day which has already come, because if that day be in your life Allāh will bestow its livelihood also.

278. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Have love for your friend up to a limit, for it is possible that he may turn into your enemy some day; and hate your enemy up to a limit for it is possible that he may turn into your friend some day.

279. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There are two kinds of workers in the world. One is a person who works in this world for this world and his work of this world keeps him unmindful of the next world. He is afraid of destitution for those he will leave behind but feels himself safe about it. So, he spends his life after the good of others. The other is one who works in this world for what is to come hereafter, and he secures his share of this world without effort. Thus, he gets both the benefits together and becomes the owner of both the houses together. In this way, he is prestigious before Allāh. If he asks Allāh anything He does not deny him.

280. It is related that during the days of (Caliph) 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the question of the excess of the ornaments of the Ka'bah was mentioned to him and some people suggested: If you prepare with it an army of Muslims that will be a matter of great reward; and what would the Ka'bah do with the ornaments? **'Umar thought of doing so but asked Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, when he said:**

When the Qur'ān was descended on the Prophet, peace be upon him

and his descendants, there were four kinds of property. One, the property of Muslim individuals which he distributed among the successors according to fixed shares. Second, the tax (*fay'*) which he distributed to those for whom it was meant. Third, the One-fifth (*khums*) levy for which Allāh had fixed the ways of disposal. Fourth, amounts of charity (*ṣadaqāt*) whose disposal was also fixed by Allāh. The ornaments of Ka‘bah did exist in those days but Allāh left them as they were, but did not leave them by omission, nor were they unknown to Him. Therefore, you retain them where Allāh and His Prophet placed them.

Thereupon, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: If you had not been here we would have been humiliated; **and he left the ornaments as they were.**¹

¹ Among the first three Caliphs, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb often used to call upon Amīr al-mu‘minīn for the solution of many unsolved problems and so as to benefit from his vast knowledge. But Abū Bakr, due to the short period of his caliphate, and ‘Uthmān, due to the special circumstances of his caliphate and his entourage, seldom used to call on Amīr al-mu‘minīn and benefit from his advice. ‘Umar used to praise Amīr al-mu‘minīn very much for his vast knowledge, saying:

The most knowledgeable person among us in jurisprudence and judgement is ‘Alī. (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, vol.6, p.23; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.5, p.113; *al-Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim, vol.3, p.305; *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, Ibn Sa‘d, vol.2, part 2, p.102; *al-Istī‘ab*, vol.3, p.1102)

Certainly, there is no need for the evidence of ‘Umar and others in this field when ‘Umar himself and a group of the Companions confess that the Holy Prophet used to say:

‘Alī is the most knowledgeable in jurisprudence and judgement among my *ummah* (Muslim community). (*Akḥbār al-quḍāt*, Wakī‘, vol.1, p.78; *Maṣābīḥ as-sunnah*, al-Baghawī, vol.2, p.203; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.1, pp.16 — 17; vol.3, p.1102; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, p.108; *as-Sunan*, Ibn Mājah, vol.1, p.55)

In this connection, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrates from Abū Hāzim that a certain man approached Mu‘āwiyah and put to him some questions on religion. Mu‘āwiyah said, “Refer this question to ‘Alī who possesses better

knowledge.” The man said, “But I would rather have your reply than that of ‘Alī.” Mu‘āwiyah silenced him and said, “It is the worst thing I have heard from you. You have expressed hate towards the person whom the Messenger of Allāh used to coach and tutor as a mother bird feeds a nestling by putting grain after grain into the mouth of the nestling with its beak and to whom the Messenger of Allāh said :

You hold the same position in relation to me as Hārūn held in relation to Mūsā except that there shall, in all certainty, be no prophet after me;

and to whom ‘Umar used to turn for the solution of unsolved problems.’’ (*Fayḍ al-qadīr*, al-Munāwī, vol.3, p.46; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, p.195; *aṣ-Ṣawā‘iq al-muḥriqah*, p.107; *Fath al-bārī*, vol.17, p.105)

Also ‘Umar used to say frequently:

Women lack the ability to give birth to such as ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Had it not been for ‘Alī, ‘Umar would have been finished. (*Ta’wīl mukhtalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, Ibn Qutaybah, p.202; *al-Isṭī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1103; *Quḍāt al-Undulus*, al-Māliqī, p.73; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, p.194; *al-Manāqib*, al-Khwārazmī, p.39; *Yanābī‘ al-mawaddah*, pp.75, 373; *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, vol.4, p.356)

He also used to say:

I seek the protection of Allāh from the problems in which Abu’l-Ḥasan (‘Alī) is not present! (*al-Isṭī‘āb*, vol.3, pp.1102—1103; *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.2, part 2, p.102; *Ṣifatu ‘ṣ-ṣafwah*, Ibn al-Jawzī, vol.1, p.121; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, pp.22—23; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.509; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.360)

‘Umar often addressed Amīr al-mu’minīn, thus:

O’ Abu’l-Ḥasan, I seek the protection of Allāh from being in a community among which you are not found. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.1, pp. 457—458; *at-Taḥfīr*, Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, vol.32, p.10; *ad-Durr al-manthūr*, as-Suyūfī, vol.3, p.144; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, p. 197; *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, vol.3, p.46; vol.4, p.356; *aṣ-Ṣawā‘iq al-muḥriqah*, p.107)

Above all these confessions is the acknowledgement by the Holy Prophet of Amīr al-mu’minīn as narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb himself,

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī and Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal that the Holy Prophet said:

O’ ‘Alī, I have exceeded you in prophethood, for there will be no prophet after me, and you exceed others in seven noble qualities. You are : i) the first who believed in Allāh, ii) the best fulfiller of the promise made to Allāh, iii) the best adherer to the commandments of Allāh, iv) the most equitable distributor among the people, v) the best dispenser of justice (or the most clement) to the (Muslims) subjects, vi) the one who has the best insight into controversial cases, (or the most learned in judgement), and vii) the most conspicuous in virtue and honour before Allāh. (*Hilyah al-awliyā’*, vol.1, pp.65, 66; *ar-Riyād an-naḍirah*, vol.2, p.198; *al-Manāqib*, al-Khwārazmī, p.61; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, vol.12, p.214; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.13, p.230)

It is also narrated by Amīr al-mu‘minīn, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Ma‘qil ibn Yāsir and Buraydah ibn Ḥuṣayb that the Messenger of Allāh (p.b.u.h.a. h.p.) said to Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h.) that :

Are you not satisfied? Surely, I have married you to the foremost of my *ummah* who believes in Islam, and the most knowledgeable among them and superior among them in clemency. (*al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.5, p.26; *al-Muṣannaḥ*, aṣ-Ṣan‘ānī, vol.5, p.490; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1099; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.5, p.520; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, vol.12, p.205; vol.15, p.99; *Majma‘ az-zawā’id*, vol.9, pp.101, 114; *as-Sīrah al-ḥalabiyyah*, vol.1, p.285)

After we read the following saying of the Holy Prophet, it is no surprise for us to note that the above acknowledgements of the vast knowledge of Amīr al-mu‘minīn and his efficiency in the field of jurisprudence and judgement were made.

I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its gate; he who wants to acquire (my) knowledge must come through the gate. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.126,127; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1102; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p.22; *Tandhīb at-thdhīb*, vol.6, pp.320— 321; vol.7, p.337; *Majma‘ az-zawā’id*, vol.9, p.114; *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, vol.12, pp.201, 212; vol.15, pp.129 -130)

Also, the Holy Prophet said :

I am the store-house of wisdom and ‘Alī is its gate. He who wants to acquire wisdom must come through the gate. (*al-Jāmi‘aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, at-Tirmidhī, vol.5, pp.637 -638; *Hilyah al-awliyā’*, vol.1, p.64; *Maṣābīḥ as-sunnah*, al-Baghawī,

281. It is related that two persons were brought to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him. They had committed theft of public property. One of them was a slave purchased from public money and the other had been purchased by someone among the people. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said: As for this one who is the property of public money, there is no punishment for him for it means one property of Allāh having taken another property of Allāh. As for the other, he should get the punishment. **Consequently, his hand was cut.**

282. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If my steps acquire firmness out of these slippery places, I will alter several things.¹

vol.2, p.275; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, p.193; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.12, p.201)

¹ It cannot be denied that after the Prophet of Islam changes came into existence in the religion when some people acting upon their imagination, amended or altered the commands of the *sharī'ah*, although no one has the right to make alteration in the *sharī'ah*, namely to ignore the clear commands of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* and enforce commands produced by his own imagination and thinking. Thus, the Qur'ān contains this clear method of divorce that “(Revokable) *Divorce* (i.e. divorce in which resumption of conjugal relations is permissible without a marriage to another man taking place) *may be twice*” (Qur'ān, 2:229). But in view of certain supposed advantages the Caliph 'Umar ordered three divorces to be pronounced on a single occasion. Similarly, he introduced the system of *'awl* in inheritance and introduced four *takbīr* in the funeral prayer. In the same way the Caliph 'Uthmān added an *adhān* to the Friday prayer, ordered the offering of full prayers in place of *qasr* (shortened) ones, and allowed the sermon to precede the *'īd* prayer. In fact, hundreds of commands of this type were fabricated, as a result of which even correct commands got mixed with the wrong ones and lost their authenticity. (For changes made see: *al-Ghadīr*, al-Amīnī [by Abū Bakr], vol.7, pp.74-236; [by 'Umar], vol.6, pp.83-325; [by 'Uthmān], vol.8, pp.98-387; *an-Naṣṣ wa'l-ijtihād*, Sharafu'd-Dīn [by Abū Bakr], pp.76-154; [by 'Umar], pp.155-276; [by 'Uthmān], pp.284—289. See also *Muqaddamah mir'ātu'l-'uqūl*, al-'Askarī, vol.1 & 2).

Amīr al-mu'minīn, who was the greatest scholar of the *sharī'ah*, used to protest against these commands and had his own views as against the

283. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Know with full conviction that Allāh has not fixed for any person more livelihood than what has been ordained in the Book of Destiny, even though his means (of seeking it) may be great, his craving for it intense and his efforts for it acute; nor does the weakness of a person or the paucity of his means stand in the way between what is ordained in the Book of Destiny and himself. He who realizes it and acts upon it is the best of them all in point of comfort and benefit; while he who disregards it and doubts it exceeds all men in disadvantages. Very often a favoured person is being slowly driven (towards punishment) through those favours; and very often an afflicted person is being done good through his affliction. Therefore, O' listener, increase your gratefulness, lessen your haste and stay within the bounds of your livelihood.

284. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance or your conviction into doubt. When you gain knowledge act (upon it) and when you acquire conviction proceed (on its basis).¹

Companions. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes:

There is no possibility for us to deny that Amīr al-mu'minīn had views on the commands of the *sharī'ah* and opinions at variance with those of the Companions. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.19, p.161)

When Amīr al-mu'minīn assumed charge of the formal caliphate, revolts soon cropped up on all sides and he did not get rid of these troubles up to the last moment. Consequently, the altered commands could not be fully corrected and many wrong or doubtful commands gained currency in areas far removed from the centre. Nevertheless, the group of people who were associated with Amīr al-mu'minīn used to enquire about the commands of the *sharī'ah* from him and recorded them, as a result of which the correct commands did not disappear and the wrong ones did not become unanimously accepted.

¹ Knowledge and conviction require that they should be acted upon. If they are not acted upon they cannot be called knowledge and conviction. Consequently, if a man says he knows the dangers that exist on particular path but he adopts that very path for his journey instead of the path that has no dangers, then who can say that this man had full certainty about the

285. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Greed takes a person to the watering place but gets him back without letting him drink. It undertakes responsibility but does not fulfil it. Often the drinker gets choked before the quenching of his thirst. The greater the worth of a thing yearned for the greater is the grief for its loss. Desires blind the eyes of understanding. The destined share will reach him who does not approach it.

286. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' my Allāh, I seek Your protection from this that I may appear to be good in the eyes of the people whilst my inward self may be sinful before You, and that I may guard myself (from sins) only for show before the people although You are aware of all about me. Thus, I appear before the people in good shape although my evil deeds are placed before You. This means achieving nearness to Your creatures but remoteness from Your pleasure.

287. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I swear by Him Who let us pass the dark night after which there was a bright day that such and such¹ did not happen.

288. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A small action which is continued with regularity is more beneficial than a long one performed with disgust.

289. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When optional issues stand in the way of obligatories, abandon them.

dangers of that path, because the consequence of such certainty should have been that he would have avoided going on that path. Similarly, the person who has belief in the resurrection and revival of life or in chastisement and reward cannot be overpowered by those things of this world that make a man neglectful to the extent of disregarding the next life, nor can he fall short in good actions for fear of chastisement and evil consequences.

¹ as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī has not written what it was that did not happen, leaving us only with the first part of the sentence.

290. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever keeps in view the distance of the journey remains prepared.

291. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Perception by the eyes is not real observation because the eyes sometimes deceive people; but wisdom does not deceive whomsoever it counsels.

292. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Between you and the preaching there is a curtain of deception.

293. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The ignorant among you get too much while the learned are just put off.

294. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Knowledge dispels the excuse of those who advance excuses.

295. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He whom death overtakes early seeks time while he whose death is deferred puts forth excuses for postponement (of doing good actions).

296. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: For every thing to which people say “how good ! ” there is an evil hidden in this world.

297. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about Destiny, when he said: It is a dark path — do not tread upon it, it is a deep ocean — do not dive in it, and it is the secret of Allāh — do not take trouble about (knowing) it.

298. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When Allāh intends to humiliate a person He denies him knowledge.

299. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: In the past I had a brother-in-faith,¹ and he was prestigious in my view because the

¹ The man whom Amīr al-mu'minīn has referred to as his brother and whose qualities he has stated, has been taken by some commentators to be Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, by some 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn al-Jumaḥī and

world was humble in his eyes, the needs of the stomach did not have sway over him, he did not long for what he did not get; if he got a thing he would not ask for more; most of his time he was silent, if he spoke he silenced the other speakers, he quenched the thirst of questioners, he was weak and feeble but at the time of fighting he was like the lion of the forest or the serpent of the valley, he would not put forth an argument unless it was decisive.

He would not abuse anyone in an excusable matter unless he had heard the excuse, he would not speak of any trouble except after its disappearance, he would say what he would do, and would not say what he would not do, even if he could be exceeded in speaking, he could not be excelled in silence, he was more eager for keeping quiet than speaking and if two things confronted him he would see which was more akin to the longing of the heart and he would oppose it.

These qualities are incumbent upon you. So, you should acquire them and excel each other in them. Even if you cannot acquire them you should know that acquiring a part is better than giving up the whole.

300. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Even if Allāh had not warned of chastisement on those disobedient to Him, it would be obligatory by way of gratefulness for His favours that He should not be disobeyed.

301. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said in condoling Ash'ath ibn Qays about (the death of) his son: O' Ash'ath, if you grieve over your son, certainly it is the consequence of the blood relationship; but if you endure, then Allāh provides recompense for every affliction. O' Ash'ath, if you endure even then matters will move on as ordained by Allāh but in that case you will deserve

by some al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad al-Kindī; but it is not unlikely that no particular individual is referred to at all, because it is customary with Arabs for them to speak of a brother or a comrade although they have no particular individual in mind.

reward; while if you lose patience, matters will again move as ordained by Allāh, but in this case you will be bearing the burden (of sins). O' Ash'ath, your son (when he lived) gave you happiness while, at the same time, he was a trial and hardship and (when he died) he grieved you while, at the same time, he has proved a source of reward and mercy for you.

302. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said on the grave of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants, at the time of burial:

Certainly, endurance is good except about you; fretting is bad except over you; and the affliction about you is great while every other affliction before or after it is small.

303. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not associate with a fool because he will beautify his actions before you and long that you too be like him.¹

304. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about the distance between East and West when he replied: One day's travelling for the sun.

305. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Your friends are three and your enemies are (also) three. Your friends are: your friend, your friend's friend and your enemy's enemy. And your enemies are: your enemy, your friend's enemy and your

¹ A fool considers his ways of action appropriate, and wants his friend also to adopt the same ways, so that he should become as he himself is. This does not mean that he desires that his friend should become as foolish as he is. He cannot be thinking like this, because he does not consider himself foolish. If he in fact considered himself foolish, then he would not have been foolish. Instead, he considers his ways of action as correct, and desires his friend to be equally "wise". That is why he presents his view before him in an embellished form and desires him to act upon it. It is possible his friend may be influenced by his advice and tread on the same path. Therefore, it is better to keep away from him.

enemy's friend.

306. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, saw a man busy against his enemy with what was harmful to himself too, so he said: You are like one who pierces a spear through himself in order to kill the person sitting behind him.

307. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: How many are the objects of lessons, but how few the taking of lessons.¹

308. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who goes too far in quarrelling is a sinner, but if one falls short in it, one is oppressed and it is difficult for a quarreller to fear Allāh.

309. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I am not worried by a fault after which I get time to offer prayer in two units (*rak'ah*) and beg safety from Allāh.

310. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked: How Allāh would conduct the accounting of all persons despite their large number. **He replied:** Just as He provides them livelihood despite their large number. **Then it was said to him:** How will He conduct their

¹ If the vicissitudes and changes of this world are observed, the circumstances and condition of the people attended to and their histories noted, then from every corner edifying stories can be heard which are fully capable of arousing the mind out of its forgetful slumber, of providing instruction and of imparting teaching and clear mindedness. Thus, the creation and dissolution of every thing in this world, the blossoming of flowers and their withering, the thriving of vegetation and its withering away and the subjugation of every atom to change are such instructive lessons that they are enough to curb any hope of attaining eternity in this deceitful life as long as the eyes and ears are not closed to these instructive events.

A Persian couplet says :

The world is full of stories of folk gone by, but unless one lends an ear to it, its call is weak.

accounting without their seeing Him. **He replied:** Just as He provides them livelihood although they do not see Him.

311. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Your messenger is the interpreter of your intelligence while your letter is more eloquent in expressing your true self.

312. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The person who is afflicted with hardship is not in greater need of praying than the one who has been spared affliction but is not immune from it.

313. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: People are the progeny of the world and no one can be blamed for loving the mother.

314. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The destitute is the Messenger of Allāh. Whoever denies him denies Allāh and whoever gives him gives Allāh.

315. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A selfrespecting man never commits adultery.

316. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The fixed limit of life is enough to remain watchful.¹

317. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A man can sleep on the death of his child, but cannot sleep at loss of property.

¹ The idea here is that lighting may flash a hundred thousand times, tempests may rise, the earth may quake and mountains may collide with each other, but as long as the fixed period of life has yet to run its course no occurrence can cause any harm, nor the typhoon of death put out the flame of life; for there is a fixed hour for death, and nothing can cut it short before that time. In this way, obviously death itself is the watchman and guardian of life.

The hemistich of a verse says :

What is known as death is the watchman of life.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: It means that a man keeps patience on the death of his children but does not do so on the loss of property.

318. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Mutual affection between fathers creates a relationship between the sons. Relationship is more in need of affection than affection is of relationship.

319. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Be afraid of the ideas of believers, because Allāh, the Sublime, has put truth on their tongues.

320. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The belief of a person cannot be regarded as true unless his trust in what is with Allāh is more than his trust in what he himself has.

321. When Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, came to Baṣrah he sent Anas ibn Mālik to Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr to make them recall what he (Anas) himself had heard the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants, say concerning them both, but he avoided doing so and when he came back to Amīr al-mu'minīn, he said that he had forgotten that matter.

Thereupon, Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If you are speaking a lie Allāh may afflict you with white spots (leucoderma) which even the turban may not cover.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: White spot means leucoderma. After sometime this disease did occur to Anas's face so much so that he was never seen without a veil.¹

¹ The occasion and circumstances surrounding this saying as related by as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī were that when at the time of the Battle of Jamal Amīr al-mu'minīn sent Anas ibn Mālik to Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr with the purpose that he should recall them the Prophet's saying to the effect that: "You two will fight 'Alī and will commit excess over him'", he came back and stated that he had forgotten to mention it. Then, Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered these words about him. However, it is said that Amīr al-mu'minīn said the

322. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Sometimes the hearts move forward and sometimes they move backward. When they move forward get them to perform the optionals (as well), but when they move backward keep them confined to obligatories only.

sentence on the occasion when he wanted Anas to confirm the Prophet's saying: "Whosoever master I am, 'Alī is his master. O' my Allāh, love him who loves 'Alī and hate him who hates 'Alī". Consequently, numerous persons have testified to this saying but Anas kept quiet. Then, Amīr al-mu'minīn, said to him, "You too were present at Ghadīr Khum, what is keeping you silent on this occasion?" and he said, "I have grown old and my memory does not serve me well". Then, Amīr al-mu'minīn, pronounced this curse. (*Ansāb al-ashraf*, al-Balādhurī, [concerning the biography of Amīr al-mu'minīn], pp.156-157; *al-A'lāq an-naḥṣah*, Ibn Rustah, p.221; *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*, ath-Tha'ālibī, pp.105-106; *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, ar-Rāghib, vol.3, p.293; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.4, p.74; *Arjaḥ al-maṭālib*, ash-Shaykh 'Ubaydullāh al-Ḥanafī, pp. 578, 579, 580).

In this connection, Ibn Qutaybah ('Abdullāh ibn Muslim ad-Dinawarī [213/828 — 276/889] writes :

People have related that Amīr al-mu'minīn asked Anas ibn Mālik about the Prophet's saying: "O' my Allāh, love him who loves 'Alī and hate him who hates 'Alī," and he replied, "I have grown old and I have forgotten it." Then 'Alī said : "If you are a liar, Allāh may afflict you with white spots which even the turban may not cover." (*al-Ma'ārif*, p.580)

Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has also supported this view and, denying the incident mentioned by as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī, writes :

The incident mentioned by as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī that Amīr al-mu'minīn sent Anas ibn Mālik to Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr is an unrecorded event. If Amīr al-mu'minīn had sent him particularly to recall to them the the Prophet's saying concerning them, then he could hardly have come back and said that he had forgotten it because when he left Amīr al-mu'minīn and went to these two persons he should have admitted and remembered the saying, and therefore how could he, on his return after an hour or a day, plead that he had forgotten it and deny it. This is something that cannot happen. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.19, pp.217 — 218)

323. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The Qur'ān contains news about the past, foretellings about the future and commandments for the present.

324. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Throw a stone in return from where one comes to you because evil can be met only with evil.

325. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to his secretary 'Ubaydullāh ibn Abī Rāfi': Put cotton flake in the inkpot, keep the nib of your pen long, leave space between lines and close up the letters because this is good for the beauty of the writing.

326. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: I am the *ya'sūb* (leader) of the believers, while wealth is the leader of the wicked.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: It means that the believers follow me while the wicked follow wealth just as the bees follow their '*ya'sūb*' who is their leader.¹

¹ We have already explained the meaning of the word '*ya'sūb*' in the foot-note of saying No.262—1, and pointed out that this title was given to Amīr al-mu'minīn by the Holy Prophet himself and we quoted some of his different utterances on this subject.

Here we quote one of the traditions in which this title appears. It is narrated by Abū Laylā al-Ghifārī, Abū Dharr, Salmān, Ibn 'Abbās and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamān that the Holy Prophet used to say :

Soon after my death there will be discord. When it occurs, adhere to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib since he will be the first person to see me and the first person to shake hands with me on the Day of Judgement. He is the greatest man of truth (*aṣ-ṣiddīq al-akbar*), and he is the discriminator (*fārūq*) from among this *ummah* who discriminates between right and wrong, and he is the *ya'sūb* (leader) of the believers while wealth is the *ya'sūb* of the hypocrites. (In addition to the references given in the above-mentioned foot-note, see also *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, vol.4, p.358; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.12, p.214; *Muntakhab al-kanz*, vol.5, p.33; Ibn Abi'l Ḥadīd, vol.13, p.228; *Tārīkh ash-Shām*, Ibn 'Asākir, (on the biography of

327. Some Jews said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: You had not buried your Prophet when you picked up differences about him, **when Amīr al-mu'minīn replied:** We did not differ about him but we differed after him (i.e. about his succession); whereas you had not dried up your feet after coming out of the river (Nile) when you began asking your Prophet: *Make you for us a god as they have gods of their own. Said he; 'Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly.*¹ (Qur'ān, 7:138)

328. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked: With what did you overpower your adversaries? **He answered:** When-ever I confronted a person he helped me against himself.

as-Sayyid ar-Radī says: Amīr al-mu'minīn is pointing out his striking of awe in the hearts.²

Amīr al-mu'minīn), vol.1, pp.74—78; *as-Sīrah al-ḥalabiyyah*, vol.1, p.380; *Dhakhā'ir al-'uqbā*, p.56; *Yanābī' al-mawaddah*, p.62, 82, 201 and 251).

¹ The purpose behind this criticism by the Jews was to show that the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad was a controversial matter, but Amīr al-mu'minīn clarified the exact focus of controversy by using the word “after him” as against “about him”, namely that the controversy was not about his prophethood but about his succession and vicegerency. Then, commenting on the position of the Jews he pointed out that those who were today criticising the mutual differences among Muslims after the Prophet were of the same kind as those who had begun to waver about belief in the Unity of Allāh even in the lifetime of Moses. Thus, when, on becoming free of the slavery of the Egyptians they reached the other side of the river and saw the figure of a calf in a temple in Sinā', they asked Moses to get a similar figure for them, whereupon Moses rebuked them for being still as stubborn as they were in Egypt. This meant that a people who were so immersed in desire for idol-worship that even after being initiated into the belief in the Unity of Allāh they became restless on seeing an idol and made the request for a similar idol to be made for themselves had no right to criticise any difference among Muslims.

² The man who is over-awed by his adversary is sure to be defeated because in facing a foe physical prowess is not enough but steadfastness of

329. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to his son Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah: O' my son, I fear lest destitution overtakes you. So, you should seek Allāh's protection from it, because destitution is deficiency of religious belief, perplexity of intelligence, and it is conducive to hatred of obstinate people.

330. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, replied to a man who had asked him a difficult question: Ask me for understanding but do not ask me for confusion, because the ignorant person who tries to learn is like the learned man, but the learned man who tries to create confusion is like the ignorant.

331. 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās once advised Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, against his views, so he said: You have only to advise me but then I have to see (what to do) ; and if I act against your advice you have to follow me.¹

332. When Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, returned to Kūfah from Ṣiffīn he passed by the residences of the Shibāmites (who belonged to the tribe of Shibām) and heard the women weeping over those killed in Ṣiffīn. At that time a Shibāmite, Ḥarb ibn Shuraḥbil ash-Shibāmi, who was one of the nobles of those

heart and strength of courage is also necessary. When the adversary loses courage and feels sure that he will be defeated then he will certainly be defeated. This is what happened to the adversary of Amīr al-mu'minīn; he was so affected by his acknowledged reputation that he was sure of death, in consequence of which his spiritual power and self confidence came to an end and eventually this mental state dragged him to his death.

¹ Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās had advised Amīr al-mu'minīn to issue a letter of appointment to Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr as the Governors of Kūfah and to retain Mu'āwīyah as the Governor of Syria till such time as his position became stabilized and the government gained strength. In reply to which Amīr al-mu'minīn said that he could not expose his own religion to danger for the sake of the worldly benefit of others, adding that "therefore instead of insisting on your own point you should listen to me and obey me."

people, came to him, and Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to him: Do your women have control over you as regards the weeping that I hear? Do you not refrain them from this crying? **Ḥarb** began to walk with him while Amīr al-mu'minīn was on horseback, so Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to him: Get back because the walking of a man like you with one like me is mischief for the ruler and disgrace for the believer.

333. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, passed by the dead bodies of the Khārijites on the day of the battle of Nahrawān and said: Woe unto you! You have been harmed by him who deceived you. **He was asked:** O' Amīr al-mu'minīn, who deceived them? **Then, he replied:** Satan, the deceiver, and the inner spirit that leads one to evil deceived them through passions, made it easy for them to get into sins, promised them victory and eventually threw them into the Fire.

334. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Beware of disobeying Allāh in solitude, because the witness (of that situation) is also the judge.

335. When the news of killing of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr¹

¹ In the year 38 A.H. Mu'āwiyah sent 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ to Egypt with a large force. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ called Mu'āwiyah ibn Ḥudayj for assistance. They brought together the supporters of 'Uthmān and waged a war against Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and captured him. Mu'āwiyah ibn Ḥudayj beheaded him and stitching his body into the belly of a dead ass, burnt it. Muḥammad was at that time twenty-eight years old. It is reported that when the news of the tragedy reached his mother, she fell into a great rage and indignation. And 'Ā'ishah, his paternal sister, took a vow that, as long as she was alive, she would never eat roasted meat. She cursed Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and Mu'āwiyah ibn Ḥudayj after every prayer.

When Amīr al-mu'minīn heard the news of Muḥammad's martyrdom he became immensely sad. He wrote in very grieved language to Ibn 'Abbās who was at Basrah about the tragic death of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr.

reached Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, he said: Our grief over him is as great as their (i.e. the enemy's) joy for it, except that they have lost an enemy and we have lost a friend.

336. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The age up to which Allāh accepts any excuse for a human being is sixty years.

337. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He whom sin overpowers is not victorious, and he who secures victory by evil is (in fact) vanquished.

338. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh, the Glorified, has fixed the livelihood of the destitute in the wealth of the rich. Consequently, whenever a destitute remains hungry it is because some rich person has denied (him his share). Allāh, the Sublime, will question them about it.

339. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Not to be in need

Hearing the news of Muḥammad's martyrdom Ibn 'Abbās came from Baṣrah to Kūfah to offer his condolences to Amīr al-mu'minīn.

One of the spies of Amīr al-mu'minīn came from Syria and said:

O' Amī al-mu'inī! When the news of Muḥammad's murder reached Mu'āwiyah, he went to the pulpit and praised the group who took part in his martyrdom. The people of Syria rejoiced so much at hearing the news that I had never seen them in such delight before.

Then, Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered the above saying. He further said that although Muḥammad was his stepson, he was like his own son. (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp.3400—3414; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, pp.352—359; Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, pp.313—317; Abu'l-Fidā', vol.1, p.179; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.6, pp.82—100; Ibn Khaldūn, vol.2, part2, pp.181—182; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, pp.1366—1367; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.3, pp.472—473; *al-Ghārāt*, ath-Thaqafī, vol.1, pp.276—322; *Tārīkh al-khamīs*, vol.2, pp.238 -239)

We have written before (in the foot-note to Sermon No.67) concerning the biography of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr.

of putting forth an excuse is better than putting forth a true excuse .¹

340. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The least right of Allāh on you is that you should not make use of His favours in committing His sins.²

341. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: When the disabled fall short in performing acts of obedience to Allāh, the Glorified, it is a good opportunity given by Allāh for the intelligent to perform such acts.

342. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The sovereign is the watchman of Allāh on earth.

343. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said describing a believer: A believer has a cheerful face, a sorrowful heart, a very broad chest (full of generosity), and a very humble heart. He hates high position and dislikes renown. His grief is long, his courage is far-reaching, his silence is much and, his time is occupied. He is grateful, enduring, buried in his thoughts, sparing in his friendship (with others), of bright demeanour and of soft temperament. He is stronger than stone but humbler than a slave.

¹ The meaning is that obligations should be so discharged that there is no occasion for putting forth excuses, because after all in making excuse there is a hint of shortcoming and humbleness, even though it may be true and correct.

² There are a few grades of denial of favours and ingratitude. The first is that a person may not be able to appreciate (the real significance of) a favour; for example, the sight of the eyes, the speech of the tongue, the hearing of the ears and the movements of the hands and feet. These are all favours bestowed by Allāh but many people do not realize them to be favours, and do not entertain feelings of gratitude. The second grade is that a person may see a favour and appreciate it but may not feel grateful for it. The third grade is that a person may oppose the Bestower of the favours. The fourth grade is that instead of using the favours granted by Him a person may use them in committing sins against Allāh. This is the highest grade of denial of favours.

344. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If a man happens to see the end of (his) life and his final fate, he will begin hating desires and their deception.

345. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There are two sharers in the property of every person — successors and accidents.

346. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The person who is approached with a request is free until he promises.

347. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who prays but does not exert effort is like the one who shoots without a bow-string.

348. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Knowledge is of two kinds — that which is absorbed and that which is just heard. The one that is heard does not give benefit unless it is absorbed.

349. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Correctness of decision goes together with power. The one emerges with the other's emergence and disappears when the other disappears.¹

350. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The beauty of destitution is chastity and the beauty of riches is gratefulness.

351. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The day of

¹ When anyone's star is auspicious and his luck is good, he steps automatically towards the goal in view, and his mind confronts no perplexity in determining the correct way of approach; but the person whose luck is about to ebb stumbles even in the light and his mental faculties become paralysed. Consequently, when the downfall of the Barmakids began, ten persons from among them assembled for consultation about a matter but were not able to take a decision even after long discussion. Seeing this Yaḥyā said, "By Allāh, it is a forerunner of our decline and a sign of our downfall that even ten of us have not been able to settle a matter, although while when we were in ascendancy one of us used to solve ten problems easily."

justice will be severer on the oppressor than the day of oppression on the oppressed.

352. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The biggest wealth is that one should not have an eye on what others possess.

353. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Utterances are preserved and actions are to be tried. *Every soul, for what it earned, is held in pledge!* (Qur'ān, 74:38). People are to be made deficient (as regards their bodies) and meddled with (as regards their minds) except those whom Allāh protects. The questioner among them aims at confusing and the answerer creates hardship. It is possible that the man who has the best views among them will be deviated from the soundness of his thinking by pleasure or displeasure, and it is possible that a single glance may affect even the man with the best wisdom among them or a single expression may transform him.

354. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' groups of people, fear Allāh, for there is many a man who aspires for what he does not get, many a builder of a house who does not live in it, and many a collector of that which he shall just leave behind. Possibly he may have collected it wrongfully or by denying a right. He acquired it unlawfully and had to bear the weight of sins on account of it. Consequently, he returned (from this world) with that weight and came before Allāh with sorrow and grief. *Loses he both this world and (also) the hereafter; that is a loss (which is) manifest.* (Qur'ān, 22:11)

355. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Lack of access to sins is also a kind of chastity.

356. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The dignity of your face is solid but begging dissolves it away; therefore, look carefully before whom you dissolve it.

357. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: To praise more than what is due is sycophancy; to do it less is either because of inability to speak or of envy.

358. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The most serious sin is that which the doer considers light.¹

359. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who sees his own shortcomings abstains from looking into other's shortcomings. He who feels happy with the livelihood with which Allāh provides him does not grieve over what he misses. He who draws out the sword of revolt gets killed with it. He who strives without means perishes. He who enters the depths gets drowned. He who visits places of ill-repute receives blame.

He who speaks more commits more errors. He who commits more errors becomes shameless. He who is shameless will have less fear of Allāh. He whose fear of Allāh is less, his heart dies. He whose heart dies enters the Fire. He who observes the shortcomings of others and disapproves of them and then accepts them for himself is definitely a fool. Contentment is a capital that does not dwindle. He who remembers death much is satisfied with small favours in this world. He who knows that his speech is also a part of his action speaks less except where he has some purpose.

360. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The oppressor among the people has three signs: he oppresses his superior by disobeying him, and his junior by imposing his authority and he supports other oppressors.

361. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: At the extremity of hardship comes relief, and at the tightening of the chains of tribulation comes ease.

362. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to one of his

¹ The result of lack of restraint and care in respect of small sins is that a man becomes rather careless in the matter of sins, and, by and by, this habit produces boldness for larger sins. Then, he begins to commit them without hesitation. Therefore, one should regard small sins as a harbinger of bigger sins, and avoid them, so that the stage for committing big sins does not come.

companions: Do not devote much of your activity to your wife and your children, because if your wife and children are lovers of Allāh then He will not leave His lovers uncared for, and if they be enemies of Allāh then why should you worry and keep yourself busy about the enemies of Allāh.

363. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The greatest defect is to regard that defect (in others) which is present in yourself.¹

364. Someone congratulated another person in the presence of Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, on the birth of a son saying: Congratulations for getting a rider of horses. **Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said:** Do not say so; but say: You have occasion to be grateful to Allāh, the Giver, and be blessed with what you have been given. May he attain full life and may you be blessed with His devotion.

365. One of the officers of Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, built a stately house, about which Amīr al-mu'minīn said: This is silver coins showing forth their faces. Certainly, this house speaks of your riches.

366. It was said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: If a man is left in his house and the door is closed, from where will his livelihood reach him. **And he replied:** From whatever way his death reaches him.²

¹ What worse defect can there be than that a man should criticise those defects in others which exist in himself. The requirement of justice is that before casting one's eye on the defects of others one should look at his own defects and realize that a defect is a defect whether it be in others or in oneself.

A Persian couplet says :

Looking at other's defects is neither property nor manliness. Better look at your own self since you are full of defects.

² If Allāh considers it appropriate to keep a man living while he is confined to a closed house, then He is certainly powerful enough to provide

367. Condoling with people among whom one had died, Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: This thing has not started with you nor does it end with you. This fellow of yours was used to journeying and therefore it is better to think him still to be journeying. Either he will rejoin you or else you will rejoin him.

368. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' people, let Allāh see you fearing at the time of happiness just as you fear Him at the time of distress. Certainly, he who is given ease (of life) and does not consider it as a means of slow approach towards tribulation (wrongly), considers himself safe against what is to be feared while he who is afflicted with straitened circumstances but does not perceive them to be a trial loses the coveted reward.

369. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' slaves of desires, cut them short because he who leans on the world gets nothing out of it except the pain of hardships. O' people, take upon yourselves your own training and turn away from the dictates of your natural inclinations.

370. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not regard an expression uttered by any person as evil if you can find it capable of bearing some good.

371. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If you have a

the means of living to him, and just as a closed door cannot prevent death in the same way it cannot prevent the entry of livelihood, because the Might of Allāh, the Almighty is equally capable of either.

The meaning is that a man should be content in the matter of livelihood because whatever is destined for him will in any case reach him wherever he may be.

A Persian couplet says :

Livelihood like death will reach a man even if the door be closed, but greed keeps people (unnecessarily) anxious.

need from Allāh, the Glorified, then begin by seeking Allāh's blessing on His Messenger, may Allāh bless him and his descendants, then ask your need, because Allāh is too generous to accept one (seeking His blessing on His Messenger) of the two requests made to Him and deny the other.

372. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: He who is jealous of his esteem should keep from quarrelling.

373. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: To make haste before the proper time or to delay after a proper opportunity, in either case is folly.

374. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not ask about things which may not happen because you have enough to worry about with what happens.

375. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Imagination is a clear mirror, and the taking of lessons (from things around) provides warning and counsel. It is enough for improving yourself that you should avoid what you consider bad in others.

376. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Knowledge is associated with action. Therefore, he who knows should act, because knowledge calls for action; if there is a response well and good, otherwise it (i.e., knowledge) departs from him.

377. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' people, the wealth of this world is broken orts that brings an epidemic; therefore keep off this grazing land, leaving it is a greater favour than peacefully staying in it, and its part enough for subsistence is more blissful than its riches. Destitution has been ordained for those who are rich here, while comfort has been destined for those who keep away from it. If a person is attracted by its dazzle, it blinds both his eyes; and if a person acquires eagerness towards it, then it fills his heart with griefs which keep alternating in the black part of his heart, some grief worrying him and another giving him pain. This goes on till the suffocation of death

overtakes him. He is flung in the open while both the shrines of his heart are severed. It is easy for Allāh to cause him to die and for his comrades to put him in the grave.

The believer sees the world with eyes that derive instruction, and takes from it food enough for his barest needs. He hears in it with ears of hatred and enmity. If it is said (about someone) that he has become rich, it is also said that he has turned destitute; and if pleasure is felt on one's living, grief is felt over his death. This is the position, although the day has not yet approached when they will be disheartened.

378. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh, the Glorified, has laid down reward for obedience to Him and punishment for committing sins against Him in order to save men from His chastisement and to drive them towards Paradise.

379. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A time will come when nothing will remain of the Qur'ān except its writing, and nothing of Islam except its name. The mosques in those days will be busy with regards to construction but desolate with regard to guidance. Those staying in them and those visiting them will be the worst of all on earth. From them mischief will spring up and towards them all wrong will turn. If anyone isolates himself from it (mischief) they will fling him back to it and if anyone steps back from it they will push him towards it. Says Allāh, the Glorified, (in *ḥadīth qudsī* — i.e., the tradition in which Allāh Himself speaks) : *I swear by Myself that I shall send upon them an evil wherein the endurer would be bewildered*, and He would do so. We seek Allāh's pardon from stumbling through neglect.

380. It is related that it was seldom that Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, ascended the pulpit and did not utter the following before his sermon: O' people, fear Allāh for man has not been created for naught so that he may waste himself, nor has he been left uncared for so that he may commit nonsensical acts. This world which appears beautiful to him cannot be the replacement of the next world which appears bad in his eyes, nor is the vain person who is successful in this world through his high courage like him who is successful in the next

world even to a small extent.

381. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is no distinction higher than Islam; no honour more honourable than fear of Allāh; no asylum better than self restraint; no intercessor more effective than repentance; no treasure more precious than contentment; and no wealth is a bigger remover of destitution than being satisfied with mere sustenance. He who confines himself to what is just enough for maintenance achieves comfort and prepares abode in ease. Desire is the key of grief and the conveyance of distress. Greed, vanity and jealousy are incentives to falling into sins and mischief-mongering is the collection of all bad habits.

382. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī: O' Jābir, the mainstay of religion and the world are four persons: The scholar who acts on his knowledge; the ignorant who does not feel ashamed of learning ; the generous who is not niggardly in his favours; and the destitute who does not sell his next life for his worldly benefits. Consequently, when the scholar wastes his knowledge, the ignorant feels shame in learning; and when the generous is niggardly with his favours, the destitute sells his next life for the worldly benefits.

O' Jābir, if favours of Allāh abound on a person the people's needs towards him also abound. Therefore, he who fulfils for Allāh all that is obligatory on him in this regard will preserve them (Allāh's favours) in continuance and perpetuity, while he who does not fulfil those obligations will expose them to decay and destruction.

383. Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī has, in his history (vol.2, p.1086; also Ibn al-Athīr in his history, vol.4, p.478), related from 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā, a1-faqīh (the theologian), who was one of those who had risen with ('Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad) Ibn al-Ash'ath to fight al-Ḥajjāj (ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafī), that he (Ibn Abī Laylā) was exhorting people to *jihād* by recalling: On the occasion of encounter with the people of Syria I heard Amīr al-mu'minīn, may Allāh exalt his degree of rank among the righteous and may He reward him the reward of martyrs and men of truth, saying:

O' believers, whoever observes excesses being committed and people being called towards evil and disapproves it with his heart is safe and free from responsibility for it, and whoever disapproves of it with his tongue would be rewarded and he is in a higher position than the former but whoever disapproves it with his sword in order that the word of Allāh may remain superior and the word of the oppressors may remain inferior, catches hold of the path of guidance and stands on the right way, while his heart is lighted with conviction.

384. Another saying in the same strain runs as follows: So, among them (the Muslim community) there is he who disapproves evil with his hand, tongue and heart. This man has perfectly attained the virtuous habits. And among them there is he who disapproves evil with his tongue and heart but not with his hand. This man has attained only two virtuous habits but lacks one. And among them there is the third one who disapproves evil with his heart but not with his tongue and hand. This is the one who lacks the two better qualities out of three and holds only one. Then, among them there is also he who does not disapprove evil either with his tongue, heart or hand. He is just a dead man among the living.

All the virtuous deeds including war in the way of Allāh as compared to the persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil are just like spitting in the deep ocean. The persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil do not bring death nearer nor do they lessen the livelihood. And better than all this is to utter a just expression before the tyrannical ruler.

385. It is related from Abū Juḥayfah who said: I heard Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, saying:

The first fighting with which you will be overpowered is the fighting with hands, thereafter with your tongues and then with your hearts. Consequently, he who does not recognize virtue with his heart or does not disapprove evil will be turned upside down. Thus, his upside will be turned downwards and his lowside will be turned upwards.

386. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Certainly, right

is weighty and wholesome while wrong is light and epidemical.

387. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him said: Do not feel safe from the punishment of Allāh even about the best man in the whole community because Allāh, the Sublime, says: *But no one feels secure against the plan of Allāh save the people (who are the) losers.* (Qur'ān, 7:99). Again, do not lose hope even for the worst man of the community because Allāh, the Sublime says : *Verily, despairs not of Allāh's mercy but the disbelieving people.* (Qur'ān, 12:87).

388. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Miserliness contains all other evil vices and is the rein with which one can be led to every evil.

389. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: O' son of Adam, livelihood is of two kinds: the livelihood which you seek and the livelihood which seeks you; if you do not reach it, it will come to you. Therefore, do not turn your one day's worry into a year's worry. Whatever you get every day should be enough for you for the day. If you have a whole year of your life even then Allāh, the Sublime, will give you every next day what He has destined as your share. If you do not have a year in your life then why should you worry for what is not for you. No seeker will reach your livelihood before you nor will anyone overpower you in the matter of livelihood. Similarly, whatever has been destined as your share will not be delayed for you.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This saying has already appeared elsewhere in this chapter except that here it is clearer and more detailed. This is why we have repeated it according to the principle laid down in the beginning of the book.

390. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Many a man faces a day after which he finds no day and many a man is in an enviable position in the earlier part of the night but is wept over by bewailing women in its later part.

391. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Words are in

your control until you have not uttered them; but when you have spoken them out you are under their control. Therefore, guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for often one expression snatches away a blessing and invites punishment.

392. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not say what you do not know; rather do not say all that you know, because Allāh has laid down some obligations for all your limbs by means of which He will put forth arguments against you on the Day of Judgement.

393. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear lest Allāh sees you while committing His sins or misses you when it is time to obey Him and as a result thereof you become a loser. Therefore, when you are strong be strong in obeying Allāh and when you are weak be weak in committing sins of Allāh.

394. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Leaning towards this world despite what you see of it, is folly, and lagging behind in good deeds when you are convinced of good reward for them is obvious loss, while trusting in every one before trying is weakness.

395. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is (the proof of the) humbleness of the world before Allāh that He is disobeyed only herein and His favours cannot be achieved except by abandoning it.

396. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: One who is in search of something will obtain it, at least a part of it.

397. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: That good is no good after which there is the Fire, and that hardship is no hardship after which there is Paradise. Every bliss other than Paradise is inferior and every calamity other than the Fire is comfort.

398. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Beware that destitution is a calamity, but worse than destitution is ailment of the body, while worse than bodily ailment is the disease of the heart. Beware that plenty of wealth is a blessing, but better than plenty of wealth is the health of the body, while still better than the health of the body is the

chastity of heart.

399. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whomever his action detains behind, his lineage cannot put him forward. **In another version it is thus:** Whoever misses personal attainment cannot be benefited by his forefathers' attainments.

400. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The believer's time has three periods : The period when he is in communion with Allāh; the period when he manages for his livelihood; and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant. It does not behove a wise person to be away (from his house) save for three matters, namely for purposes of earning, or going for something for the next life or for enjoying what is not prohibited.

401. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Abstain from the world so that Allāh may show you its real evils and do not be neglectful because (in any case) you will not be neglected.

402. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Speak so that you may be known, since man is hidden under his tongue.

403. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Take off the favours of the world whatever comes to you and keep away from what keeps away from you. If you cannot do so be moderate in your seeking.

404. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Many an expression is more effective than an attack.

405. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Every small thing that is contented upon, suffices.

406. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Let it be death but not humiliation. Let it be little but not through others. He who does not get while sitting will not get by standing either. The world has two days one for you and the other against you. When the day is for you, do not feel proud but when it is against you endure it.

407. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The best scent is musk; its weight is light while its smell is scented.

408. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Put off boasting, give. Up self-conceit and remember your grave.

409. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The child has a right on the father while the father too has a right on the child. The right of the father on the child is that the latter should obey the former in every matter save in committing sins of Allāh, the Glorified, while the right of the child on the father is that he should give him a beautiful name, give him good training and teach him the Qur'ān.

410. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Evil effect of sight is right; charm is right; sorcery is right, and *fa'l* (auguring good) is right, while *ṭiyarah* (auguring evil)¹ is not right, and spreading of a

¹ “*fa'l*” means something from which one augurs well while “*ṭiyarah*” means something from which one augurs evil. From the point of view of religious law auguring evil from anything has no basis and it is just the product of whim.

However, auguring well is not objectionable. For example, when after the immigration of the Prophet (from Mecca to Medina), the Quraysh announced that whoever apprehended the Prophet would be given one hundred camels as prize. Thereupon, Buraydah ibn al-Ḥuṣayb al-Aslamī set off in his search with seventy of his men and when they met at a halting place the Prophet asked him who he was and he said he was Buraydah ibn al-Ḥuṣayb al-Aslamī. Buraydah said: “The Holy Prophet was not auguring evil instead he used to augur good.” On hearing this, the Prophet remarked: “*barada amrunā wa ṣalaḥa*” (our consequence will be wholesome). Then he asked him what tribe he came from and on his replying that he was from Aslam, the Prophet remarked: “*salimnā*” (we would be safe). Then he asked from which scion he was and when he replied that he was from Banū Sahl, the Prophet remarked: “*kharaja sahmuka*” (your arrow has missed the aim). Buraydah was much impressed by this pleasing conversation and inquired from the Prophet who he was. The Prophet replied, “Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh”. Hearing this, he spontaneously exclaimed, “I do stand witness that you are the Messenger of Allāh”, and forsaking the prize announced by

disease from one to the other is not right. Scent gives pleasure, honey gives pleasure, riding gives pleasure and looking at greenery gives pleasure.

411. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Nearness with people in their manners brings about safety from their evil.

412. Someone uttered an expression above his position, then Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to him: You have started flying soon after growing feathers (*shakīr*) and commenced grumbling before attaining youth (*saqb*).

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Here “*shakīr*” means the first feathers that grow on a bird before it is strong enough to fly. And *saqb* means the young camel who does not grumble unless it becomes major.

413. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever hankers after contraries gets no means of success.

414. On being asked the meaning of the expression: “*lā ḥawla walā quwwata illā bi'llāh*” (there is no strength nor power but by means of Allāh). **Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** We are not master of anything along with Allāh, and we are not master of anything save what He makes us master of. So, when He makes us master of anything of which He is a superior Master over us He also assigns some duties to us; and when He takes it away He will take away those duties as well.¹

the Quraysh acquired the wealth of Belief. (*al-Istī'ab*, vol.1, pp.185 -186; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.1, pp.175 -176).

¹ What Amīr al-mu'minīn means is that man does not enjoy regular mastery over anything, but such mastery as he is assigned by Allāh, and so long as this mastery lasts the obligations of the *sharī'ah* also continue, whereas when the mastery is taken away the obligations too are lifted off, since in such a case the laying of obligations would mean placing of responsibility beyond capacity which cannot be allowed by any wise or prudent person. This is why Allāh has placed the responsibility of performing various acts after having conferred the necessary energy in the

415. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, heard 'Ammār ibn Yāsir (may Allāh have mercy on him) conversing with al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah and said: Let him alone O' 'Ammār, for he has entered religion only to the extent of his deriving advantage of the world, and he has illfully involved himself in misgivings in order to adopt them as cover for his shortcomings.

416. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is good for the rich to show humility before the poor to seek reward from Allāh, but better than that is the haughtiness of the poor towards the rich with trust in Allāh.

417. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh does not grant wisdom to a person except that some day He will save him from ruin with its help.

418. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever clashes with Truth would be knocked down by it.

419. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The heart is the book of the eye.

420. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Fear of Allāh is the chief trait of human character.

421. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do not try the sharpness of your tongue against Him Who gave you the power to speak, nor the eloquence of your speaking against Him Who set you on the right path.

422. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is enough for

limbs. It follows that this responsibility would remain only so long as the energy subsists and that on the disappearance of the energy the responsibility for action would also disappear. For example, the obligation to pay *zakāt* (tax) applies only when there is wealth; but when Allāh would take away the wealth He would lift off the liability to pay *zakāt* because in such a case the laying of obligation is against prudence.

your own discipline that you abstain from what you dislike from others.

423. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: One should endure like free people, otherwise one should keep quite like the ignorant.

In another tradition it is related that Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays by way of condolence on the death of his son: Either endure like great people or else you will forget like animals.

424. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said about the world: It deceives, it harms and it passes away. Allāh, the Sublime, did not approve it as a reward for His lovers nor as a punishment for His enemies. In fact, the people of this world are like those riders that as soon as they alighted the driver called out to them and they marched off.

425. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to his son al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him): O' my son, do not leave anything of this world behind you, because you will be leaving it for either of two sorts of persons: Either a person who uses it in obeying Allāh, in this case he will acquire virtue through what was evil for you, or it will be a person who uses it in disobeying Allāh and in that case he will be earning evil with what you collected for him, and so you will be assisting him in his sinfulness; and neither of these two deserves to be preferred by you over yourself.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This saying is also related in another version namely:

Whatever of this world is now with you was with others before you and it will pass to some others after you. Thus, you are collecting things for either of two sorts of men: either a man who uses whatever you collected in obedience of Allāh and so acquires virtues with what was evil for you, or a man who uses it in disobedience of Allāh and so you will be getting evil for what you collected. And neither of these two is such that you may prefer him over yourself or you may burden yourself

for him. Therefore, hope for the mercy of Allāh for him who has passed away and for Divine livelihood for him who survives.

426. Someone said before Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: *“astaghfiru'llāh”* (I ask Allāh's forgiveness), **then Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** Your mother may lose you! Do you know what *“istighfār”* (asking Allāh's forgiveness) is? *“istighfār”* is meant for people of a high position. It is a word that stands on six supports. The first is to repent over the past; the second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it; the third is to discharge all the rights of people so that you may meet Allāh quite clean with nothing to account for; the fourth is to fulfil every obligation which you ignored (in the past) so that you may now do justice with it; the fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning, so that you may melt it by grief (of repentance) till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them; and the sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you (previously) made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. On such an occasion you may say *“astaghfiru'llāh”*.

427. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Clemency is (like) a kinsfolk.

428. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: How wretched the son of Adam (man) is! His death is hidden, his ailments are concealed, his actions are preserved, the bite of a mosquito pains him, choking causes his death and sweat gives him a bad smell.

429. It is related that Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was sitting with his companions when a beautiful woman passed by them and they began to look at her whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The eyes of these men are covetous and this glancing is the cause of their becoming covetous. Whenever anyone of you sees a woman who attracts him, he should meet his wife because she is a woman like his wife.

Then, one of the Khārijites said: Allāh may kill this heretic.

How logical he is ! **The people then leapt towards him to kill him but Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** Wait a bit. There should either be abuse for abuse or else pardon from the offence.

430. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is enough if your wisdom distinguishes for you the ways of going astray from those of guidance.

431. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Do good and do not regard any part of it small because its small is big and its little is much. No one of you should say that another person is more deserving than I in doing good. Otherwise, by Allāh, it would really be so. There are people of good and evil. When you would leave either of the two, others will perform them.

432. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever set right his inward self, Allāh sets right his outward self. Whoever performs acts for his religion, Allāh accomplishes his acts of this world. Whoever's dealings between himself and Allāh are good, Allāh turns the dealings between him and other people good.

433. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Forbearance is a curtain for covering, and wisdom is a sharp sword. Therefore, conceal the weaknesses in your conduct with forbearance and kill your desires with your wisdom.

434. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There are some creatures of Allāh whom Allāh particularizes with favours for the benefit of the people, therefore He stays them in their hands so long as they give them to others; but when they deny them to others He takes away the favours from them and sends them to others.

435. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon them, said: It does not behove a man to have trust in two positions, health and riches, because there is many a man whom you see healthy but he soon falls sick and many a man whom you see rich but soon turns destitute.

436. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever complains about a need to a believer, it is as though he has complained about it to Allāh; but whoever complains about it to an unbeliever it is as though he complained about Allāh.

437. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said on the occasion of an 'īd (Muslim feast day): It is an 'īd for him whose fasting Allāh accepts and for whose prayers He is grateful; and (in fact) every day wherein no sin of Allāh is committed is an 'īd.¹

438. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: On the Day of Judgement the greatest regret will be felt by the man who earned wealth through sinful ways, although it is inherited by a person who spends it in obeying Allāh, the Glorified, and he will be awarded Paradise on that account while the first one will go into the Fire on account of it.

439. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worst in bargaining and the most unsuccessful in striving is the man who exerts himself in seeking riches although fate does not help him in his aims and consequently he goes from this world in a sorrowful state while in the next world too he will face its ill consequences.²

¹ If feeling and conscience is alive even the remembrance of a sin destroys peace of mind because tranquility and happiness are achieved only when the spirit is free from the burden of sin and one's robe is not polluted with disobedience. And this real happiness is not bound by time, but on whatever day a man desires he can avoid sin and enjoy this happiness, and this very happiness will be the real happiness and the harbinger of 'īd.

A Persian hemistich says:

Every night is the Grand Night provided you appreciate its worth.

² Despite efforts throughout life a man does not always achieve all the successes of life. If on some occasions he succeeds as a result of effort and seeking, on many others he has to face defeat and to give up his objectives admitting defeat before fate. A little thinking can lead to the conclusion that when things of this world cannot be achieved despite effort and seeking how can the success of the next world be achieved without striving and seeking.

440. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Livelihood is of two kinds: the seeker and the sought. Therefore, he who hankers after this world death traces him till it turns him out of it; but he who hankers after the next world, worldly ease itself seeks him till he receives his livelihood from it.

441. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The lovers of Allāh are those who look at the inward side of the world while the other people look at its outward side, they busy themselves with its remoter benefits while the other people busy themselves in the immediate benefits. They kill those things which they feared would have killed them, and they leave here in this world what they think would leave them. They took the amassing of wealth by others as a small matter and regarded it like losing. They are enemies of those things which others love while they love things which others hate. Through them, the Qur'ān has been learnt and they have been given knowledge through the Qur'ān. With them the Qur'ān is staying while they stand by the Qur'ān. They do not see any object of hope above what they hope and no object of fear above what they fear.

442. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Remember that pleasures will pass away while the consequences will stay.

443. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Try (a man) and you will hate him.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Some people say this saying is of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.), but what confirms that it is the saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn (p.b.u.h.), is the statement related by Tha'lab from Ibn al-A'rābī namely that (Caliph) al-Ma'mūn said: "If 'Alī had not said '*ukhbur taqlihi*' (Try a man and you will hate him)," I would have said, '*aqlihi takhbur* (Hate a man in order to try him)."

A Persian couplet says:

You hankered after the world but did not attain the object. O' Allāh, what would be the result when the good of the next world has not even been sought.

444. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: It is not that Allāh, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, may keep the door of gratitude open for a person and close the door of plenty upon him, or to open the door of prayer to a person and close the door of acceptance upon him, or to open the door of repentance on a person and close the door of forgiveness upon him.

445. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The most appropriate person for an honourable position is he who descends from the people of honour.

446. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked: Which of the two is better; justice or generosity? **Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, replied:** Justice puts things in their places while generosity takes them out from their directions; justice is the general caretaker while generosity is a particular benefit. Consequently, justice is superior and more distinguished of the two.

447. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: People are enemies of what they do not know.

448. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The whole of asceticism is confined between two expressions of the Qur'ān. Allāh, the Glorified says : *Lest distress you yourselves for what escapes you, and be overjoyous for what He has granted you* (Qur'ān, 57:23). Whoever does not grieve over what he misses and does not revel over what comes to him acquires asceticism from both its sides.

449. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: What a breaker is sleep for resolutions of the day !

450. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Governing power is the proving ground for people.

451. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: No town has greater right on you than the other. The best town for you is that which bears you.

452. When the news of the death of (Mālik) al-Ashtar (may Allāh have mercy on him), reached Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, he said: Mālik, what a man Mālik was! By Allāh, if he had been a mountain he would have been a big one (*find*), and if he had been a stone he would have been hard; no horseman could have reached it and no bird could have flown over it.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: “*find*” means a lonely mountain (rising in height above the range).

453. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A little that lasts is better than much that brings grief.

454. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If a man possesses a revealing quality wait and see his other qualities.¹

455. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said to Ghālib ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah, the father of al-Farazdaq (the famous Arabic poet) during a conversation between them: What about the large number of your camels? **The man replied:** They have been swept away by (discharging of) obligations, O' Amīr al-mu'minīn! **Whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said:** That is the most praiseworthy way of (losing) them.

456. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever trades without knowing the rules of religious law will be involved in usury.

457. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever regards small distresses as big, Allāh involves him in big ones.

¹ The good or bad quality that is found in a man springs from his natural temperament. If the temperament produces one quality, his other qualities will also be akin to this one because the dictates of temperament will be equally effective in either. Thus, if a man pays *zakāt* and *khums* it means that his temperament is not miserly. Therefore, it is expected that he would not be niggardly in spending in other items of charity as well. Similarly, if a man speaks a lie it can be expected that he will indulge in backbiting too, because these two habits are similar to each other.

458. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whoever maintains his own respect in view, his desires appear light to him.

459. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Whenever a man cuts a joke he separates away a bit from his wit.

460. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Your turning away from him who inclines towards you is a loss of your share of advantage while your inclining towards him who turns away from you is humiliation for yourself.

461. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Riches and destitution will follow presentation before Allāh.

462. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: az-Zubayr remained a man from our house till his wretched son 'Abdullāh came forth.¹

¹ 'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām (1/622-73/692), whose mother was Asmā', sister of 'Ā'ishah (daughter of Abū Bakr), had grown in his dislike of the Banū Hāshim especially towards Amīr al-mu'minīn to such a stage that he was able to change the opinion of his father, az-Zubayr, against Amīr al-mu'minīn although the latter was the son of his father's aunt. That is why Amīr al-mu'minīn said:

az-Zubayr had always been from us the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (our household), until his ill-owned son 'Abdullāh grew up. (*al-Isṭī'āb*, vol.3, p.906; *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vol.3, pp.162-163; Ibn 'Asākir, vol.7, p.363; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.2, p.167; vol.4, p.79; vol.20, p.104)

'Abdullāh was one of the instigators of the battle of Jamal. His aunt 'Ā'ishah, his father, az-Zubayr, and the son of his mother's uncle Ṭalḥah, had fought against Amīr al-mu'minīn.

Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes :

It was 'Abdullāh who urged az-Zubayr to fight (in the battle of Jamal), and made the march to Baṣrah seem attractive to 'Ā'ishah. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.4 p.79)

‘Ā’ishah loved her nephew ‘Abdullāh very much. To her he was like the only child of a mother, and none in those days was more beloved to her than him. (*al-Aghānī*, Abu’l-Faraj, vol.9, p.142, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.20, p.120; Ibn Kathīr, vol.8, p.336).

Hishām ibn ‘Urwah relates :

I have not heard her (‘Ā’ishah) praying for anyone as she used to pray for him (‘Abdullāh). She gave ten thousand Dirhams (as a gift) to the one who informed her of ‘Abdullāh’s safety from getting killed (by al-Ashtar in the fight of the battle of Jamal), and prostrated to Allāh in thanks-giving for his safety. (Ibn ‘Asākir, vol.7, pp.400,402; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.20, p.111)

This was the reason of ‘Abdullāh’s authority over her and his complete command over her affairs. He was the one who directed and guided her in the direction he wished.

However, ‘Abdullāh’s hatred against the Banū Hāshim had reach such a stage that according to the narrations of a group of historians :

During his (‘Abdullāh’s) Caliphate (in Mecca) he did not send blessings on the Holy Prophet in his Friday prayer speech (*khutbah*) for forty Fridays. He used to say: ‘‘Nothing prevents me from mentioning the Prophet’s name except that there are a certain men (i.e. Banū Hāshim) who become proud (when his name is mentioned).

In another interpretation :

Nothing prevents . . . except that the Prophet has a bad household who will shake their heads on the mention of his name (*Maqātil at-ṭālibiyyīn*, p.474; *Murūj adh-dhahab*, vol.3, p.79; *at-Tārīkh*, al-Ya‘qūbī, vol.2, p.261; *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, vol.4, p.413; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.4, p.62; vol.19, pp.91-92; vol.20, pp.127-129)

‘Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr said to ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās:

I have been concealing my hatred toward you, the people of this house (i.e. the Household of the Prophet) for the last forty years. (*al-Mas‘ūdī*, vol.3, p.80; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.4, p.62; vol.20, p.148)

He also used to hate Amīr al-mu'minīn in particular, defame his honour, abuse and curse him. (al-Ya'qūbī, vol.2, pp.261—262; al-Mas'ūdī, vol.3, p.80; Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, vol.4, pp.61, 62—63, 79)

He gathered Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah (the son of Amīr al-mu'minīn) and 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās with seventeen men from the Banū Hāshim including al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and imprisoned them in the *shi'b* (a small mountain valley) of 'Ārim. He intended to burn them with fire, so he placed plenty of wood at the entrance of the *shi'b*. Meanwhile, al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd ath-Thaqafī dispatched four thousand soldiers to Mecca. On their arrival, they attacked 'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr unexpectedly and rescued the Banū Hāshim. 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr made an excuse for his brother's ('Abdullāh) deed saying that this action of his brother's was a result of the Banū Hāshim's refusal to swear allegiance to him ('Abdullāh), like the action of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb towards the Banū Hāshim when they gathered in the house of Fāṭimah and refused to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr. So, 'Umar brought wood and intended to burn the house on them. (*Maqātil at-ṭālibiyyīn*, p.474; al-Mas'ūdī, vol.3, pp.76—77; al-Ya'qūbī, vol.2, p.261; Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, vol.19, p.91; vol.20, pp.123—126, 146—148; Ibn 'Asākir, vol.7, p.408; *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, vol.4, p.413; Ibn Sa'd, vol.5, pp.73—81; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.2, pp.693—695; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, pp.249—254; Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, pp.26—28)

In this connection, Abu'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī writes:

'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr always instigated others against the Banū Hāshim and persued them (in his aim) by every worst method; he inspired against them and spoke against them on the pulpits; and remonstrated against them. Sometime Ibn 'Abbās or someone else from them (Banū Hāshim) raised an objection against him. But afterwards, he changed his way and imprisoned Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah in a prison at the *shi'b* 'Ārim. Then, he gathered Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah along with other members of the Banū Hāshim who were present (in Mecca) in a prison and collected wood to set fire to it. This was because of the news that had reached him that Abū 'Abdillāh al-Jadalī and other followers of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah had arrived (in Mecca) to support Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah and fight 'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr. Therefore, he hastened to do away with the prisoners. But when this news reached Abū 'Abdillāh al-Jadalī, he came there at the time when the fire was already set on them, then he put out the fire and rescued them. (*al-Aghānī*, p.15)

463. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: What has a man to do with vanity. His origin is semen and his end is a carcass while he cannot feed himself nor ward off death.¹

464. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about the greatest poet and he said: The whole group of them did not proceed on the same lines in such a way that we can know the height of their glory; but if it has to be done then it is the "*al-Mālik aḍ-ḍillīl*" (the mislead king).

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says : Amīr al-mu'minīn means Imriū'l-Qays²

So, all these prove the word of Amīr al-mu'minīn about him.

¹ If a man ponders over his original condition and the eventual breaking up and ruining of his body he will be compelled to admit his lowliness and humble position instead of being proud and vain, because he will see that there was a time when he did not exist and Allāh originated his existence with a humble drop of semen which took the shape of a piece of flesh in the mother's womb and continued feeding and growing on thick blood. When on completion of the body he set foot on the earth he was so helpless and incapable that he had neither control over his hunger and thirst nor on sickness and health, nor any command over benefit or harm, or any authority over life and death, not knowing when the energy of limbs may exhaust, feeling and sense may leave, eyesight may be taken away, power of hearing may be snatched and when death may separate the spirit from the body and leave the latter to be cut into pieces by vultures and kites or for worms to eat it in the grave.

An Arabic couplet says :

How does one whose origin is semen and whose end is a carcass dare be vain?

² This means that a comparison can be made among the poets when their imagination runs in the same field; but when the expression of one differs from the other, and the style of one varies from that of the other it is difficult to decide who is defeated and who has won the field. Consequently, from various considerations one is preferred over the other and someone is considered greater for one consideration and the other for

465. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Is there no free man who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who like it? Certainly, the only price for yourselves is Paradise. Therefore, do not sell yourself except for Paradise.

466. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Two greedy persons never get satiated, the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this world.

467. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Belief means that you should prefer truth (even) when it harms you rather than falsehood (even) when it benefits you; that your words should not be more than your action and that you should fear Allāh when speaking about others.

468. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Destiny holds sway over (our) predetermination till effort itself brings about ruin.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Something of this meaning has already appeared earlier though in words different from these.

469. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Forbearance and endurance are twins and they are the product of high courage.

470. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Backbiting is the

other consideration, as the famous saying goes :

The greatest poet of Arabia is Imriū'l-Qays when he rides; al-A'shā when he is eager for something and an-Nābighah when he is afraid.

Nevertheless, despite this categorization Imriū'l-Qays is regarded to be in a high position among poets of the first era because of the beauty of his imagination, the excellence of his description, his inimitable similes and rare metaphors, although many of his couplets are below moral standards and speak about obscene subjects. But in spite of this obscenity the greatness of his art cannot be denied, because an artist looks at a poetic production from the point of view of art ignoring the other factors which do not affect art.

tool of the helpless.

471. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Many a man gets into mischief because of being spoken well about.

472. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: This world has been created for other than itself and has not been created for itself.

473. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The Banū Umayyah (Umayyids) have a fixed period (*mirwad*) wherein they are having their way. But when differences arise among them then even if the hyena attacks them it will overpower them.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Herein "*mirward*" is a form derived from "*irwād*" which means to allow time, to wait for. It is an extremely eloquent and wonderful expression. It is as though Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, has likened the period of Banū Umayyah to a limited area meant for the training of horses for racing where they are running towards the limit, so that when they reach its extremity their organization will be destroyed.¹

¹ This is the prophecy about the decline and fall of the Umayyads that proved true, word for word. This rule was founded by Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and ended with Marwān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥimār in 132 A.H. after a life of ninety years, eleven months and thirteen days. The Umayyads period was second to none in tyranny, oppression, harshness and despotism. The despotic rulers of this period perpetrated such tyranny that it put blots on Islam, blackened the pages of history and injured the spirit of humanity. They allowed every kind of ruin and destruction only to retain their own personal authority. They led armies to Mecca, hurled fire on the Ka'bah, made Medina the victim of their brute passions, and shed streams of Muslim blood. At last, this bloodshed and ruthlessness resulted in revolts and conspiracies from all sides and their internal strife and agitation and their mutual fighting paved the way for their ruin. Although political unrest had set in among them earlier yet during the days of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd open disturbances began to occur. On the other side Banū al-'Abbās (the 'Abbāsids) also started preparations and during the reign of Marwān al-Ḥimār they started a movement under the name of "*al-khilāfah al-Ilāhiyyah*" (the Caliphate of Allāh). For successful piloting of this movement they got a

474. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said eulogizing the anṣār: By Allāh, they nurtured Islam with their generous hands and eloquent tongues as a year old calf is nurtured.

475. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The eye is the strap of the rear.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is a wonderful metaphor, it is as though Amīr al-mu'minīn has likened the rear part of the body with a bag and the eye with a strap. When the strap is let loose the bag cannot retain anything. According to the well-known and reputed view it is the saying of the Prophet but some people have stated it to be of Amīr al-mu'minīn. al-Mubarrad has mentioned it in his book *al-Muqtaḍab* under the chapter 'Words of single letters'. We too have discussed this metaphor in our book named *Majāzāt al-āthār an-nabawiyyah*.

476. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said in one of his speeches: A ruler came into position over them. He remained upright and made them upright till the entire religion put its bosom on the ground.

477. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: A severe time will come upon the people wherein the rich will seize their possessions with their teeth (by way of miserliness) although they have not been commanded to do so. Allāh the Glorified, says: *Forget not generosity among yourselves* (Qur'ān, 2:237). During this time the wicked will rise up while the virtuous will remain low and purchases will be made from the helpless although the Prophet, peace be upon him and his descendants, has prohibited purchasing from the helpless.¹

martial leader Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī who, in addition to his knowledge of political events and occurrences, was also an expert in the art of warfare. Making Khurāsān as the base he spread a whole net against the Umayyads and succeeded in bringing the 'Abbāsids to power.

In the beginning this man was quite unknown and it is for this unknowness and low position that Amīr al-mu'minīn likened him and his associates to the hyena as this simile is used for low and humble people.

¹ Generally purchases are made from helpless people in such a way

478. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Two types of persons will fall into ruin over me: The one who loves exaggerates and the other who lays false and baseless blames.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is on the lines of Amīr al-mu'minin's own saying which runs as: "Two categories of persons will be ruined over me: the one who loves exaggeratingly and the hater and malice-bearer."¹

that taking advantage of their need and necessity, things are purchased from them at cheap rates and are sold to them at high prices. No religion allows taking advantage of such helplessness and extreme need, nor is it permissible in ethics that profiteering should be resorted to at the time of others' helplessness.

¹ The Holy Prophet used often to urge and order the *ummaḥ* to love Amīr al-mu'minīn and forbid them to bear any hatred against him. Moreover, the Holy Prophet used to regard the love of Amīr al-mu'minīn as the sign of Faith (*īmān*) and the hatred of him as the sign of hypocrisy (*nifāq*) (as we have already mentioned on the foot-note of No.45).

Now, we quote one of the traditions of the Holy Prophet with regard to this subject. It has been narrated through fourteen companions that the Holy Prophet said :

Whoever loves 'Alī, he surely loves me; and whoever loves me, he surely loves Allāh, and whoever loves Allāh, He will cause him to enter Paradise.

Whoever hates 'Alī, he surely hates me; and whoever hates me, he surely hates Allāh, and whoever hates Allāh, He will cause him to enter the Fire.

And whoever hurts 'Alī, he surely hurts me, and whoever hurts me, he surely hurts Allāh, (*surely, those who hurt Allāh and His Messenger, Allāh has cursed them in the present world and the world to come, and has prepared for them a humbling chastisement [Qur'ān, 33 :57]*). (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.127—128; 130; *Ḥilyah al-awliyā'*, vol.1, pp.66-67; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p.1101; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p. 383; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.3, pp.496-497; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, pp. 108—109, 129, 131, 132,

133; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.12, pp.202, 209, 218—219; vol.15, pp.95—96; vol.17, p.70; *ar-Riyaḍ an-naḍīrah*, vol.2, pp.166, 167, 209, 214; *al-Manāqib*, Ibn al-Maghāzilī, pp.103,196, 382)

At the same time, the Holy Prophet used to caution the *ummah* against exaggeration in (Amīr al-mu'minīn's) love of him in exceeding the bounds of Islam in love for him. One who does so is called *ghālī*, i.e. he who believes that the Holy Prophet or Amīr al-mu'minīn or any of the Shi'īte Imāms is god, or attributes to them the special attributes of Allāh, or believes that the twelve Imāms are prophets, or makes any claim which they (the Holy Prophet and Imāms) did not make about themselves.

On the contrary, the Holy Prophet had also forbidden any offence or denigration concerning them (Imāms); and he used to blame those who lay false and baseless accusations against them as well as those who hate and bear malice.

It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet sometimes used to refrain from mentioning some of the excellent qualities of Amīr al-mu'minīn as Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī narrates:

When Amīr al-mu'minīn approached the Holy Prophet with the news of the conquering of Khaybar by himself (Amīr al-mu'minīn), the Holy Prophet said to him: "O 'Alī, had it not been for some groups of my *ummah* who may say about you, what the Christians say about 'Īsā, son of Maryam. I would have said (something) about you so that you would not pass before any Muslim but that he would seize the dust from the tracks of your feet demanding blessing from it. But it suffices to say that you hold the same position in relation to me as Hārūn held in relation to Mūsā except that there shall, in all certainty, be no prophet after me." (*Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, p. 131; Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, vol.5, p.4; vol.9, p.168; vol.18, p.282; *Manāqib 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, Ibn al-Maghāzilī, pp.237—239; *Manāqib 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, al-Khwārazmī, pp.75—76, 96, 220; *Kifāyah at-ṭālib fī manāqib 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, al-Ganjī, pp.264—265; *Arjaḥ al-maṭālib*, pp.448, 454; *Yanābi' al-mawaddah*, pp.63—64, 130—131)

The Holy Prophet had also informed the Muslim *ummah* that there will appear two types of deviated groups among the Muslims who will exceed the bounds of Islamic principles towards understanding Amīr al-mu'minīn, as he himself has related:

479. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked on the Unity of Allāh and His justice, when he replied: Unity means that you do not subject Him to the limitations of your imagination and

The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants, called upon me and said: “O ‘Alī, there is a resemblance between you and ‘Īsā son of Maryam, whom the Jews hated so much that they laid a false accusation against his mother, and whom the Christians loved so much that they assigned to him the position which is not for him.”

(Then, Amīr al-mu'minīn continues) Beware ! two types of persons will fall into ruin over me: The one who loves (me) who will eulogize me for what is not in me; and the one who hates (me) whose detestation against me will lead him to lay false and baseless accusations on me. Beware ! I am not a prophet, and nothing has been revealed to me. But I act according to the Book of Allāh and the *sunnah* of His Prophet as far as I can. (*al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, p.160; *al-Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim, vol.3, p.123; *Mishkāṭ al-maṣābīḥ*, vol.3, pp.245—246; *Majma‘ az-zawā'id*, vol.9, p.133 ; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.12, p.219; vol.15, p.110; Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.356)

The above mentioned sayings of Amīr al-mu'minīn (in this foot-note) as well as in the text have been reported from the Holy Prophet when he said to Amīr al-mu'minīn:

O' 'Alī, two types of persons will fall into ruin over you: The one who loves exaggeratingly and the liar who lays false accusation. (*al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p.1101)

Also, he said to him:

Two categories will be ruined over you: The one who loves exaggeratingly and the hater who bears malice. (Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.5, p.6)

The famous scholar of tradition 'Āmir ibn Sharāḥīl ash-Sha'bī (19/ 640 — 103/721) has confirmed this saying that these two categories appeared and both became disbelievers and were ruined. (*al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p.1130; *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, vol.4, p.312)

justice means that you do not lay any blame on Him.¹

480. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: There is no good in silence over matters involving wisdom just as there is no good in speaking with ignorance.

481. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said in his prayer for seeking rain: O' my Allāh, send us rain by submissive clouds not by unruly ones.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is an expression of wonderful eloquence, because Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, has likened the cloud which is accompanied by thunder, lighting, wind and flashes with unruly camels who throw away their saddles and throw down their riders, and likened the clouds free from these terrible things to the submissive camels which are easy to milk and obedient to ride.

¹ The belief in the Unity of Allāh is not complete unless it is supported by belief in freedom of Allāh from all imperfection; that is, one should regard Him above the limitations of body, shape, place or time and should not subject Him to one's own imagination and whims, because the being who is contained within imagination and whims cannot be Allāh, but a creation of the human mind, while the field of mental activity remains confined to things which are seen and observed. Consequently, the greater man would try to appreciate Him through illustrations connected by the human mind or his imaginative efforts and the remoter he would get from reality. In this connection, al-Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir says :

Whenever you contain Him in your imagination and whim he will not be Allāh but a creation like yourself and revertable towards you.

Justice means that whatever the form of injustice and inequity it should be denied about Allāh and He should not be given such attributes which are evil and useless and which the mind can in no way agree to attribute to Him. In this connection, Allāh says :

And perfect is the word of your Lord in truth and justice; There is none who can change His words, and He is the All-hearing and the All-knowing. (Qur'ān, 6:115)

482. It was said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: We wish you had changed your grey hair, O' Amīr al-mu'minīn **Then he said:** Dye is a way of adornment while we are in a state of grief.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, is referring to the death of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants.

483. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The fighter in the way of Allāh who gets martyred would not get a greater reward than he who remains chaste despite means. It is possible that a chaste person may become one of the angels.

484. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Contentment is a wealth that does not exhaust.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Some people have related that this is the saying of the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his descendants.

485. When Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, put Ziyād ibn Abīh in place of 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās over Fārs (in Persia) and its revenues, he had a long conversation with him in which he prohibited him from advance recovery of revenue. Therein he said: Act on justice and keep aloof from violence and injustice because violence will lead them to forsake their abodes while injustice will prompt them to take up arms.

486. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worst sin is that which the committer takes lightly.

487. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: Allāh has not made it obligatory on the ignorant to learn till He has made it obligatory on the learned to teach.

488. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: The worst comrade is he for whom formality has to be observed.¹

¹ The friendship that is based on love and sincerity makes a man free

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is because formality is inseparable from hardship and it is an evil that is caused by a comrade for whom formality is observed. Consequently, he is the worst of all comrades.

489. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: If a believer enrages (*iḥtashama*) his brother, it means that he leaves him.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: It is said “*ḥashamahu*” or “*aḥshamahu*” to mean “He enraged him”. According to another view it means “He humiliated him”. While “*iḥtashamahu*” means “He sought these for him”, and that is most likely to cause him to separate.

This is the end of our selection of the utterances of Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, We are praiseful to Allāh, the Glorified, for having enabled us to collect the scattered utterances from various sides and to bring together from different places the material that was lying far away. We intend, as we stipulated in the beginning, to leave some blank pages at the end of every chapter for the insertion of whatever we may get and the addition of whatever comes to us, for it is possible that some material which is not in our view at present or which is not available may become known to us and fall in our hands. We have no ability save through Allāh. In Him we trust, and He is Sufficient for us. He is the best Supporter.

This book was completed in the month of *Rajab*, in the year 400 A.H.

May Allāh send blessings on our master Muḥammad the last of the prophets who guided us towards the best path, and his chaste descendants and his companions who are the stars of conviction.

from ceremonial formalities, but the friendship for which formalism is necessary is unstable and such a friend is not a true friend, because true friendship requires that a friend should not be a cause of trouble for the friend. If he is a cause of trouble he will prove tedious and harmful and this harmfulness is a sign of his being the worst friend.

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2. The index follows the alphabetical order of personal proper names, and agnomens (*kunyah*), like Abu'l-Qāsim and Ibn Jarīr, and titles (*laqab*), like al-Baghdādī, have not been taken into account. If a person is famous by his agnomen or title, he is entered under this, but the reader is referred to the appropriate entry under his personal name. An exception is made for persons mentioned in the text only by their agnomens or titles, like Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī and al-Bukhārī, who are entered only under their agnomens and titles.

3. The article "al-", which comes in Arabic nouns like al-Ḥasan and az-Zubayr, is not taken into account in the order of the index; thus al-Ḥasan is entered under 'h' and az-Zubayr under 'z'. Similarly, titles of respect, like Shaykh or al-'Allāmah, are also not taken into account.

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