

NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

SELECTION FROM SERMONS, LETTERS AND SAYINGS

OF

AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN, 'ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB

Selected and Compiled by :

**as-Sayyid Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn
ar-Raḍī al-Mūsawī**

Translated by :

Syed Ali Raza

W O F I S

**World Organization for Islamic Services
Tehran — IRAN**

Revised by:
Board of Writing, Translation and Publication

First edition 1401/1980
Second edition 1407/1987
Tehran — IRAN.

Published by:
World Organization for Islamic Services
P. O. Box No. 11165-1545,
Tehran — IRAN.

تصدير

حينما نقوم - بحول الله وقوته - بنشر الجزء الثاني من الترجمة الانجليزية هذه (لنهج البلاغة) بعد ان نشرنا الجزء الأول منه، نرى من الضروري أن ننبّه الى أننا قد وضعنا مدخلا لهذه الطبعة يستوعب أهمّ البحوث حول خطب الامام أمير المؤمنين عليه السّلام، وحول كتاب (نهج البلاغة) خاصّة، وترجمة مؤلفه الشّريف الرّضي (رضي الله عنه وأرضاه)، وقد استعرضنا فيه تفاصيل عملنا في هذه الترجمة: من اعادة للنظر فيها ومقابلتها مع النّص العربي، ومن اعادة النّظر في الشّروح والهوامش وحذف ما لا حاجة اليه و اضافة ما لا بدّ منه. وحيث أنّ هذا المدخل لم يتهيأ بعد للطبع، وحيث انّالم نشأ - لاعتبارات لا مجال لذكرها - تأخير طبع الترجمة، بعد أن تمّ العمل فيها الى حين اكتمال النّص العربي للمدخل و اكتمال ترجمته الانجليزية، سارعنا الى نشر الترجمة وستصدر تباعا في أجزاء ثلاثة، على أن يلحق بها المدخل في القريب العاجل باذن الله. كما وأنّ الفهارس الفنيّة للكتاب ستكون ملحقّة بالجزء الثالث منه.

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

المؤسسة العالمية للخدمات الاسلاميّة
(لجنة التّأليف والترجمة والنشر)
١٤٠٠/٢/١٨
١٩٨٠/١/٧
طهران - ايران

FOREWORD

We have made up our mind, with the power and strength of Allāh, to print the second part of the English translation of *Nahj al-balāghah* immediately after the printing of the first part.

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 was 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 decided to start the printing of this part with the hope that, by the will of Allāh, the introduction will be completed in the near future to be attached to the first part, and that the technical indexes will be printed with the third and final part.

Finally, we seek guidance and success from Allāh, the Almighty, 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)

18/2/1400

7/1/1980

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
إِهْدِنَا 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 وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ

TRANSLITERATION

ARABIC LETTERS

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ع	'	ك	k
ب	b	ل	l
ت	t	م	m
ث	th	ن	n
ج	j	ه	h
ح	ḥ	و	w
خ	kh	ي	y
د	d	ة	ah, at (construct state)
ذ	dh	ال	article al- and 'l (even before the antepalatals)
ر	r		
ز	z		
س	s		
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		
ط	ṭ		
ظ	ẓ		
ع	'		
غ	gh		
ف	f		

Long Vowels

آ	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short Vowels

a
u

C O N T E N T S

Page

SERMONS:—

122.	Amīr al-mu'minīn's address to his followers on the battlefield of Šiffīn : About supporting the weak and the low-spirited during the fighting	253
123.	To exhort his followers to fight	254
124.	About the Khārijites and their opinion on Arbitration	262
125.	In reply to objections on equal distribution from the <i>Bayt al-māl</i> (Muslim Public Treasury)	264
126.	About the Khārijites	264
127.	About important happenings at Baṣrah Referring to the Turks (Mongols)	266 266
128.	About measures and weights, the transience of this world and the condition of its people	271
129.	Delivered when Abū Dharr was exiled to ar-Rabadhah	272
130.	Grounds for accepting the caliphate and the qualities of a ruler and governor	275
131.	Warning about death and counselling	276

132.	On the Glory of Allāh	277
	About the Holy Qur'ān	278
	About the Holy Prophet	278
	About this world	278
	A caution	278
133.	In reply to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who consulted him about taking part in the battle against Byzantine	279
134.	Addressing al-Mughīrah ibn al-Akhnas when he wanted to speak in support of 'Uthmān (ibn 'Affān)	281
135.	About the sincerity of his own intention and support of the oppressed	282
136.	About Ṭalhah and az-Zubayr	283
137.	Referring to events in the future	284
138.	On the occasion of the Consultative Committee (after the death of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb)	285
139.	About backbiting and speaking ill of others	286
140.	Against reliance on heresy	289
141.	Against misplaced generosity	289
142.	Praying for rain	290
143.	Deputation of Prophets	292
	The position of <i>Ahlu'l-bayt</i> (the Household of the Holy Prophet)	292
	About those who are against the <i>Ahlu'l-bayt</i>	292
144.	About this world	293
	On innovation (<i>bid'ah</i>)	294

145.	Spoken when ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb consulted Amīr al-mu’minin about taking part in the battle of Persia	294
146.	The purpose of the deputation of the Holy Prophet and the condition of the time when people would go against the Qur’ān	296
	On the future	297
	About <i>Ahlu’l-bayt</i>	298
147.	About Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr and the people of Baṣrah	299
148.	Before his passing away (last will)	299
149.	About future events and some activities of the hypocrites	301
150.	The condition of the people during disorder, and advice against oppression and unlawful earning	302
151.	About the greatness and the attributes of Allāh	304
	About the Divine leaders (Imāms)	305
152.	About negligent persons and the characteristics of beasts, carnivores and women	307
153.	About the <i>Ahlu’l-bayt</i> (of the Holy Prophet) and their opposers	310
154.	About the wonderful creation of the bat	311
155.	About the malice borne by ‘Ā’ishah, and warning the people of Baṣrah about what was to occur	313
156.	Urging people towards Piety (<i>taqwā</i>)	317

157.	About the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'ān	319
	About the autocracy of the Umayyads	320
158.	Good behaviour with people and ignoring their faults	320
159.	Praise of Allāh	321
	Greatness of Allāh	321
	About hope and fear in Allāh	322
	The example of the Holy Prophet	322
	The example of Mūsā (Moses)	322
	The example of Dāwūd (David)	323
	The example of 'Īsā (Jesus)	323
	Following the example of the Holy Prophet	323
	The example of himself (Amīr al-mu'minīn)	325
160.	Deputation of the Holy Prophet	325
	Drawing lessons from this world	326
161.	Reasons for keeping Amīr al-mu'minīn away from the caliphate	327
162.	Attributes of Allāh	329
	Allāh, the Originator from nought	330
	About man's creation, and pointing towards the requirements of life	330
163.	Dialogue with 'Uthmān (ibn 'Affān)	331
164.	Describing the wonderful creation of the peacock; About the wonderful creation of birds	335
	About the peacock	336
	The magnificence of the Creator in great and small creation	338
	Describing Paradise	338
	Note explaining some of the wonderful and obscure portions of this sermon	339

165.	Advice for observing courtesy and kindness and keeping in and out of the same	340
	About the autocracy and oppression of the Umayyads and their fate	340
	The cause of tyranny	340
166.	At the beginning of his Caliphate : Fulfilment of rights and obligations, and advice to fear Allāh in all matters	341
167.	In reply to the people's demand for avenging 'Uthman's blood	342
168.	When the people of Jamal set off for Baṣrah	343
169.	In reply to a man who came from Baṣrah to enquire about Amīr al-mu'minīn's position vis-a-vis the people of Jamal	344
170.	When Amīr al-mu'minīn decided to fight the enemy face to face at Ṣiffīn	345
171.	About the Consultative Committee and the battle of Jamal	345
	About the Consultative Committee after the death of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb	346
	Describing the people of Jamal	346
172.	On eligibility for the caliphate	348
	The need for sagacity in fighting against Muslims	348
	The behaviour of this world with its adherents	349
173.	About Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubaydillāh. Delivered when he received the news that Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr had already left for Baṣrah to fight against him	350
174.	Warning to neglectful people, and about the	

	vastness of his own knowledge	351
175.	Preaching	356
	The greatness of the Holy Qur'ān	357
	About the believers and their good deeds; and the hypocrites and their bad deeds	359
	Following the <i>sunnah</i> and refraining from innovation	359
	Guidance from the Holy Qur'ān	360
	Categories of oppression	360
176.	About the two arbiters (after the battle of Şiffin)	361
177.	Praise of Allāh, transience of this world, and causes of the decline of Allāh's blessings. (Delivered at the beginning of his caliphate after the killing of 'Uthmān)	361
178.	In reply to Dhi'lib al-Yamānī's question about seeing Allāh	363
179.	Condemning his disobedient men	363
180.	About the group which was intended to join the Khārijites	365
181.	About Allāh's attributes, His creatures and His being above physical limitations	366
	An account of past peoples and about learning from them	368
	About the Imām al-Mahdī	369
	On the method of his ruling, and grief over the martyrdom of his companions	369
182.	Praise of Allāh for His bounties	379
	About the greatness and importance of the Holy Qur'ān	380

	Warning against punishment on the Day of Judgement	380
183.	About the Khārijites slogan “Command behoves only Allāh”	383
184.	Praise of Allāh and His wonderful creatures	383
	About the Holy Prophet	384
	About the creation of animal species	384
	The Creation of the Universe	385
	The wonderful creation of the locust	385
	About the Glory of Allāh	386
185.	About the Oneness of Allāh	387
186.	Regarding the vicissitudes of time (the mischiefs that are to occur and the absence of lawful ways of livelihood	391
187.	Allāh’s favours	393
	The condition of people while dying	393
	Transience of this world	393
188.	Steadfast and transient belief	394
	The challenge “Ask me before you miss me” and prophecy about the Umayyads	394
189.	Importance of fear of Allāh, desolateless of the graves, and about the death of the lovers of <i>Ahlu ’l-bayt</i> (the household of the Holy Prophet) being like that of a martyr	397
190.	Praise of Allāh	399
	Advice about fear of Allāh and an account of this world and its people	399
191.	Known as ‘ <i>al-Khuṭbah al-Qāsi‘ah</i> ’’ (The Sermon	

	of Disparagement [against Satan])	401
	Allāh's trial and the vanity of Iblīs	402
	Warning against Satan	403
	Caution against vanity and boasting about ignorance	405
	Caution against obeying haughty leaders and elders	405
	The humbleness of the Holy Prophet	406
	The Holy Ka'bah	407
	Caution against rebellion and oppressiveness	409
	Enthusiasm for attractive manners, respectable position, and taking lessons from the past	410
	Condemning his people	412
	Amīr al-mu'minīn's high position and wonderful deeds in Islam	413
192.	Qualities of the God-fearing, the effect of preaching on minds amenable to it, etc.....	422
193.	About the deputation of the Holy Prophet, the animosity of the Arab tribes and the position of the hypocrites	425
194.	Allāh's praise, advice about fear of Allāh and details about the Day of Judgement	427
195.	The condition of the world at the time of the proclamation of prophethood, the transience of this world and the state of its inhabitants	428
196.	Amīr al-mu'minīn's attachment to the Holy Prophet: The performance of his funeral rites	429
197.	Allāh's attributes of Omniscience	432
	Advantages of fear of Allāh	432
	About Islam	433
	About the Holy Prophet	434

	About the Holy Qur'ān	435
198.	Containing advice given by Amīr al-mu'minīn to his companions :	
	About Prayer	436
	About the Islamic tax (<i>zakāt</i>)	437
	Fulfilment of Trust	437
199.	Treason and treachery of Mu'āwiyah and the fate of those guilty of treason	438
200.	One should not be afraid of the scarcity of those who tread on the right path	440
201.	On the occasion of the burial of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h.)	442
202.	Transience of this world, and importance of collecting provisions for the next world	443
203.	Warning his companions about the dangers of the Day of judgement	444
204.	In reply to Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr's complaint about not consulting them	445
205.	When Amīr al-mu'minīn heard some of his men abusing the Syrians during the battle of Ṣiffīn	446
206.	On Imām al-Ḥasan when Amīr al-mu'minīn saw him proceeding rapidly to fight in the battle of Ṣiffīn	446
207.	When Amīr al-mu'minīn's army was on the verge of mutiny in connection with arbitration	447
208.	When Amīr al-mu'minīn went to enquire about the health of his companion al-'Alā' ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī	

	and noticed the vastness of his house	448
209.	Causes of difference in the traditions and categories of the relaters of traditions	453
	First : The lying hypocrites	453
	Second: Those who are mistaken	454
	Third: Those who are ignorant	454
	Fourth : Those who memorize truthfully	455
210.	The Greatness of Allāh and the creation of the Universe	461
211.	About those who give up supporting right	462
212.	The sublimity of Allāh and a eulogy of the Prophet	463
	About the Prophet	463
213.	The Prophet's nobility of descent	463
	The characteristics of the virtuous whose guidance must be followed	464
214.	A prayer which Amīr al-mu'minīn often recited	465
215.	Delivered at the battle of Şifḥīn : Mutual rights of the ruler and the ruled	466
216.	About the excesses of the Quraysh	470
	About those who went to Baṣrah to fight Amīr al-mu'minīn	471
217.	when Amīr al-mu'minīn passed by the corpses of Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubaydullāh and 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn 'Attāb ibn Asīd who were both killed in the battle of Jamal	471
218.	Qualities of the God-fearing and the pious	472

219.	Delivered after reciting the verse: <i>Engage (your) vying in exuberance, until ye come to the graves.</i> (Qur'ān, 102:1—2)	472
220.	Delivered after reciting the verse: . . . <i>therein declare glory unto Him in the mornings and the evenings; Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Allāh and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; they fear the day when the hearts and eyes shall writhe of the anguish.</i> (Qur'ān, 24:36-37)	476
221.	Delivered after reciting the verse : <i>O' thou man! what hath beguiled thee from thy Lord, the Most Gracious One.</i> (Qur'ān, 82:6)	478
222.	About keeping aloof from oppression and misappropriation. 'Aqīl's condition of poverty and destitution	480
223.	Supplication	482
224.	Transience of the world and the helplessness of those in graves	482
225.	Supplication	484
226.	About a companion who passed away from this world before the occurrence of troubles	484
227.	About allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn for the Caliphate	489
228.	Advice about fear of Allāh, and an account of those who remain apprehensive of death and adopt abstemiousness	490
	About ascetics	491

229.	Delivered (when he was marching) towards Baṣrah	492
230.	Delivered when ‘Abdullāh ibn Zama‘ah asked for some money (from the Public Treasury)	492
231.	On Ja‘dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzūmī’s inability to deliver a sermon: About speaking the truth	493
232.	Causes for difference in the features and traits of people	494
233.	Spoken when Amīr al-mu’inīn was busy in the funeral ablution (<i>ghusl</i>) of the Holy Prophet and shrouding him	496
234.	About following the Prophet after his immigration to Mecca	496
235.	About collecting provision for the next world while in this world and performing good acts before death	498
236.	About the two arbitrators (Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ) and disparagement of the people of Syria (ash-Shām)	499
237.	Describing the members of the Prophet’s family	499
238.	When ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān sent word through ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās that Amīr al-mu’minīn should leave for Yanbu‘	500
239.	Exhorting his men to <i>jihād</i> and asking them to refrain from seeking ease	500

PART TWO

NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

PART TWO

SELECTION FROM THE SERMONS OF AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN 'ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND HIS INJUNCTION

This selection also includes his utterances delivered in the form of sermons at various meetings, encounters and occasions that he faced.

SERMON 122

**Amīr al-mu'minīn's address to his followers
on the battlefield of Ṣiffīn
About supporting the weak and the
low-spirited during the fighting**

Whoever among you feels spiritedness of heart during the action and finds any of his comrades feeling disheartened should ward off (the enemies) from him just as he would do from himself, because of the superiority he enjoys over the other, for if Allāh had willed He would have made the former also like him. Certainly death is a quick seeker. Neither does the steadfast escape it nor can the runner-away defy it. The best death is to be killed. By Allāh in Whose hand (power) lies the life of the son of Abū Ṭālib, certainly a thousand strikings of the sword on me are easier to me than a death in bed which is not in obedience to Allāh.

A part of the same sermon

It is as if I see you uttering voices like the rustling sound of lizards! You do not seek your own claims nor do you defend against oppression. You have been let free on the path. He who rushes (into the battle) achieves salvation, while he who lags behind, hesitating, gets destruction.

* * * * *

SERMON 123

To exhort his followers to fight ¹

¹ Amīr al-mu'minīn delivered this Sermon on the occasion of the battle of Şıffīn. This battle was fought in the year 37 A.H. between Amīr al-mu'minīn and the Governor of Syria (ash-Shām), Mu'āwiyah, for the so-called avenging for the killing of Caliph 'Uthmān. But in reality it was nothing more than Mu'āwiyah who had been the Autonomous Governor of Syria from Caliph 'Umar's days not wanting to lose that position by swearing allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn but wanting to keep his authority intact by exploiting the killing of Caliph 'Uthmān, for later events proved that after securing the government he did not take any practical step to avenge 'Uthmān's blood, and never spoke, not even through omission, about the killers of 'Uthmān.

Although from the first day Amīr al-mu'minīn realized that war was inevitable, it was still necessary to exhaust all pleas. Therefore when on Monday the 12th *Rajah*, 36 A.H. he returned to Kūfah after the battle of Jamal he sent Jarīr ibn 'Abdillāh al-Bajalī with a letter to Mu'āwiyah at Damascus wherein he wrote that the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* had sworn allegiance to him and that he too should first swear him allegiance and thereafter place the case of 'Uthmān's killing before him so that he could pass verdict thereon according to the Qur'ān and *sunnah*. But Mu'āwiyah detained Jarīr on several pretexts and after consulting 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ staged a revolt on the excuse of 'Uthmān's killing, and with the help of important persons of Syria convinced the ignorant people that the liability for 'Uthmān's life lay on 'Alī (p.b.u.h.) and that he, with his conduct, had encouraged the beseigers and had given them protection. Meanwhile he hung the blood-stained shirt of 'Uthmān and the amputated fingers of his wife Nā'ilah bint al-Farāfiṣah on the pulpit in the Central Mosque of Damascus around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and swore the pledge to avenge 'Uthmān's blood. When Mu'āwiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, he secured their allegiance on the cause of avenging 'Uthmān's blood and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarīr and then sent him back mortified.

When Amīr al-mu'minīn learnt of these matters through Jarīr ibn 'Abdillāh

al-Bajalī he was forced to rise against Mu‘āwiyah, and ordered Mālīk ibn Ḥabīb al-Yarbū‘ī to mobilize the forces in the valley of an-Nukhaylah. Consequently, people from the suburbs of Kūfah began arriving there in large numbers, till they exceeded eighty thousand. First of all, Amīr al-mu‘minīn sent a vanguard contingent, eight thousand strong, under Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī and another of four thousand strong under Shurayḥ ibn Hānī al-Ḥārithī towards Syria. After the departure of this vanguard contingent he himself set out for Syria at the head of the remaining army on Wednesday the 5th of *Shawwāl*. When he was out of the boundary of Kūfah he offered *ẓuhr* (noon) prayer and after staying at Dayr Abī Mūsā, Nahr (river) Nars, Qubbat Qubbīn, Bābil, Dayr Ka‘b, Karbalā’, Sābāt, Bahurasīnī, al-Anbār and al-Jazīrah arrived at ar-Riqqah. The people of this place were in favour of ‘Uthmān, and at this very place Simāk ibn Makhtamah al-Asadī was putting up with his eight hundred men. These people had left Kūfah to join Mu‘āwiyah after deserting Amīr al-mu‘minīn; when they had seen Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s force they had dismantled the bridge over the River Euphrates so that Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s army should not cross over to the other side of the River. But at the threatening of Mālīk ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha‘ī they were frightened, and after consultations among themselves they put the bridge together again and Amīr al-mu‘minīn passed over it with his army. When he alighted on the other side of the River he saw that Ziyād and Shurayḥ were also putting up there along with their men since both of them had adopted the land route. When, on reaching here, they found that Mu‘āwiyah was advancing with his armies towards the Euphrates and thinking that they would not be able to face him, they stopped there waiting for Amīr al-mu‘minīn. When they had given the reason for their stopping there, Amīr al-mu‘minīn accepted their plea and sent them forward. When they reached Sūr ar-Rūm they found that Abū al-A‘war as-Sulamī was camping there with his army. Both of them informed Amīr al-mu‘minīn of this, whereupon he despatched Mālīk ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha‘ī in their wake as the Officer in Command and cautioned him not to initiate the fighting but to try to counsel them and apprise them of the correct position as far as possible. In this way, on reaching there Mālīk al-Ashtar encamped a little distance away. Fighting could have commenced any moment, but he did not interfere with the other side nor did he take any step by which fighting could have been commenced. But Abū al-A‘war suddenly attacked them at night, whereupon they took their swords out of the sheaths and prepared to repulse them. Clashes between the two sides went on for sometime but in the end, taking benefit of the darkness of night Abū al-A‘war fled away. Since fighting had already commenced, soon after the appearance of dawn an Iraqi commander, Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah al-Mirqāl az-Zuhrī, took his position in the battlefield. From the other side also a contingent came to face him, and the flames of fighting rose high.

At last Mālik al-Ashtar challenged Abū al-A‘war to fight him, but he did not dare to face him, and towards the evening Mālik al-Ashtar went onwards with his men. The next day Amīr al-mu‘minīn reached there with his force and set off for Šiffīn with the vanguard contingent and other forces. Mu‘āwiyah had already reached there and had set up his bases. He had also placed a guard on the Euphrates and had occupied it. On reaching there Amīr al-mu‘minīn sent him word to remove the guard from the Euphrates, but he refused, whereupon the Iraqis took out their swords and in a courageous attack captured the Euphrates. When this stage was over Amīr al-mu‘minīn sent Bashīr ibn ‘Amr al-Anṣārī, Sa‘īd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī and Shabath ibn Rib‘ī at-Tamīmī to Mu‘āwiyah to apprise him of the consequences of war and to make him agree to settlement and allegiance. But his reply was that they could not by any means let ‘Uthmān’s blood remain neglected, and that now the sword alone would arbitrate between them. Consequently in the month of *Dhi’l-ḥijjah* 36 A.H. both the parties decided on war and warriors from each side came out into the field to face their adversary. Those who entered the battlefield from Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s side were: Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī al-Kindī, Shabath ibn Rib‘ī at-Tamīmī, Khālīd ibn al-Mu‘ammar, Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Hārithī, Ziyād ibn Khaṣafah at-Taymī, Sa‘īd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī, Qays ibn Sa‘d al-Anṣārī and Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha‘ī while from the Syrians there were, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Khālīd ibn Walīd al-Makhzūnī, Abū al-A‘war as-Sulamī, Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, ‘Abdullāh ibn Dhi’l-Kalā‘ al-Ḥimyarī, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Shuraḥbīl ibn Simṭ al-Kindī, and Ḥamzah ibn Mālik al-Hamdānī. When the month of *Dhi’l-ḥijjah* came to end the fighting had to be stopped for *Muḥarram*, but from the 1st of *Šafar* fighting was resumed and both parties arrayed themselves opposite each other, equipped with swords, spears and other weapons. On Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s side Mālik al-Ashtar was in command of the horsemen and ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir of the foot soldiers of Kūfah while Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī was in command of the horsemen and Qays ibn Sa‘d of the foot soldiers of Baṣrah. The banner of the army was given to Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah. In the army of the Syrians, on the right hand contingent Ibn Dhi’l-Kalā‘ was in command, while on the left hand contingent Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah, on horsemen ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and on foot soldiers aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihri were in command.

On the first day Mālik ibn al-Ashtar entered the battle-field with his men, and from the other side Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah came out with his men to face him and from both sides a fierce battle ensued. Throughout the day swords clashed with swords and spears with spears.

Next day, Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah came out with ‘Alī’s army and from the other side Abū al-A‘war with his footmen came to face him. When the two armies

approached near to each other, horsemen fell upon horsemen and footmen upon footmen and continued attacking each other, and they endured with great patience and steadfastness.

On the third day, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr came out with horsemen and foot soldiers and from the other side ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ came forward with a big force. Ziyād attacked the horsemen of the opposite side and Mālīk al-Ashtar attacked the foot soldiers so furiously that the enemy’s men lost ground and, failing to offer resistance, returned to their camps.

On the fourth day Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah appeared on the battle-field with his men. From the other side ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar came forward with the Syrian army and both the armies had a serious encounter.

On the fifth day ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās came forward and from the other side al-Walīd ibn ‘Uqba ibn Abī Mu‘ayṭ came to face him. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās carried the assaults with great steadfastness and courage and gave such a brave fight that the enemy left the field in retreat.

On the sixth day Qays ibn Sa’d al-Anṣārī came forward with the army and to face him Ibn Dhi’l-Kalā‘ came out with his contingent, and such a severe fighting ensued that at every step bodies were seen falling and blood flowing like streams. At last the darkness of the night separated the two armies.

On the seventh day Mālīk al-Ashtar came out and to face him, Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah came forward with his men, and fighting raged till *ẓuhr* (noon).

On the eighth day Amīr al-mu’mīnīn himself came out with the army and made such an assault that the entire battlefield quaked, and piercing through the ranks and warding off shots of arrows and spears he came and stood between both the lines. Then he challenged Mu‘āwīyah, whereupon the latter, along with ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, came a bit closer. Then Amīr al-mu’mīnīn said to him: “Come out and face me. Let whoever kills the other be the ruler.” Whereupon ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ said to Mu‘āwīyah: “‘Alī is right. Gather up a little courage and face him.” Mu‘āwīyah replied: “I am not prepared to waste my life at your taunting.” Saying this he went back. When Amīr al-mu’mīnīn saw him retreating he smiled and himself too returned. The daring with which Amīr al-mu’mīnīn led the attacks in Ṣiffīn can only be called a miraculous feat. Thus, whenever he came out challenging in the battlefield, the enemy lines were dispersed into utter

disarray and confusion, and even courageous combatants hesitated to appear against him. That is why on a few occasions he came onto the battlefield in changed dress so that the enemy should not recognize him and someone should be prepared to engage with him personally. Once ‘Arār ibn Ad’ham came from the other side to engage with al-‘Abbās ibn Rabī‘ah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭālib. They remained engaged but neither could defeat the other, until al-‘Abbās chanced to see that a link of his adversary’s armour was loose. With a swift stroke he entangled the point of his sword in it, and then with a quick jerk he cut through a few more links. Then with true aim he gave such a blow that his sword went straight into his bosom. Seeing this, people raised the call of *takbīr*. Mu‘āwiyah was startled at this noise and on coming to know that ‘Arār ibn Ad’ham had been slain he was much disturbed and shouted if there was anyone to take revenge for ‘Arār ibn Ad’ham and kill al-‘Abbās, whereupon some tired swordsmen of the tribe of Lakhm came out challenging al-‘Abbās. al-Abbās said he would come after taking his Chief’s permission. Saying this al-‘Abbās came to Amīr al-mu’mīnīn to seek permission. Amīr al-mu’mīnīn detained him, put on al-‘Abbās’s dress, and riding on al-‘Abbās’s horse entered the battlefield. Taking him to be al-‘Abbās, the Lakhms said: “So you have got your Chief’s permission.” In reply Amīr al-mu’mīnīn recited the following verse :

Permission (to fight) is given unto those upon whom war is made for they have been oppressed, and verily, to help them, Allāh is Most Potent. (Qur’ān, 22:39)

Now one man came out from the other side shouting like an elephant, ran amok and assaulted Amīr al-mu’mīnīn, but he avoided the blow and then gave such a clean cut with his sword to the other’s back that he was split into two. People thought the blow had gone without avail, but when his horse jumped his two separate parts fell on the ground. After him another man came out but he too was finished in the twinkling of an eye. Then Amīr al-mu’mīnīn challenged others but from the strokes of his sword the enemy came to know that it was Amīr al-mu’mīnīn in the dress of al-‘Abbās and so none dared come to face him.

On the ninth day the right wing was under the command of ‘Abdullāh ibn Budayl and the left wing under that of ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās. In the centre was Amīr al-mu’mīnīn himself. On the other side Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrian army. When both the lines had come face to face with each other, the valiant soldiers drew out their swords and pounced upon one

another like ferocious lions, and fighting raged on all sides. The banner of the right wing of Amīr al-mu'minīn's army was revolving in the hands of Banū Hamdān. Whenever anyone of them fell, martyred, someone else would pick up the banner. First of all Kurayb ibn Shurayḥ raised the banner, on his fall Shuraḥbīl ibn Shurayḥ took it up, then Marthad ibn Shurayḥ, then Hubayrah ibn Shurayḥ, then Yarīm ibn Shurayḥ, then Sumayr ibn Shurayḥ and after the killing of all these six brothers the banner was taken up by Sufyān, then 'Abd, then Kurayb, the three sons of Zayd, who all fell martyred. After that the banner was lifted by two brothers (sons) of Bashīr namely 'Umayr and al-Ḥārith and when they too fell martyred, Wahb ibn Kurayb took up the banner. On this day the enemy's greater attention was on the right wing and its assaults were so fierce that the men lost ground and began to retreat from the battlefield. Only three hundred men remained with the Officer in Command 'Abdullāh ibn Budayl. On seeing this Amīr al-mu'minīn asked Mālīk al-Ashtar to call them back and challenge them as to where they were fleeing. "If the days of life are over they cannot avoid death by running away." Now the defeat of the right wing could not be without effect on the left wing, so Amīr al-mu'minīn turned to the left wing and advanced forward, forcing through the enemy lines, whereupon a slave of Banū Umayyah named Aḥmar said to him, "Allāh may make me die if I fail to slay you today." On hearing this Amīr al-mu'minīn's slave Kaysān leapt over him but was killed by him. When Amīr al-mu'minīn saw this he caught him by the skirt of his armour and, picking him up, threw him down so forcefully that all his joints were smashed, whereupon Imām Ḥasan (p.b.u.h.) and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah came forward and dispatched him to Hell. Meanwhile, after having been called to Mālīk al-Ashtar and his having made them feel ashamed, the retreaters came back and again assaulted so steadily that pushing back the enemy they reached the place - here 'Abdullāh ibn Budayl was surrounded by the enemy. When he saw his own men he picked up courage and leapt towards Mu'āwīyah's tent with drawn sword. Mālīk al-Ashtar tried to stop him but he couldn't, and, killing seven Syrians, he reached the tent of Mu'āwīyah. When Mu'āwīyah noticed him close by he ordered him to be stoned, as a result of which he was overpowered and the Syrians crowded over him and killed him. When Mālīk al-Ashtar saw this he proceeded forward with the combatants of Banū Hamdān and Banū Madh'hij for an attack on Mu'āwīyah, and began dispersing the contingent on guard around him. When, out of the five circles of his guards only one remained to be dispersed, Mu'āwīyah put his foot in the stirrup of his horse in order to run away, but on someone's encouragement again stopped. On another side of the battlefield a tumult was raging from one end to the other by the swords of 'Ammār ibn Yāsir and Ḥāshim ibn 'Utbah.

From whatever side ‘Ammār passed, the companions (of the Holy Prophet) flocked around him and then made such a joint assault that destruction spread throughout the enemy lines. When Mu‘āwiyah saw them advancing he threw his fresh forces towards them. But he continued displaying the excellence of his bravery under the storm of swords and spears. At last Abū al-‘Ādiyah al-Juhanī hit him with a spear from which he could not balance himself and then Ibn Ḥawiy (Jawn as-Saksikī) came forward and slew him. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir’s death caused tumult in Mu‘āwiyah’s ranks because about him they had heard the Holy Prophet having said: “‘Ammār will be killed at the hands of a rebellious party.” Thus before he fell as martyr Dhu’l-Kalā‘ had said to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ : ‘I see ‘Ammār on ‘Alī’s side; are we that rebellious party?’ ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ had assured him that eventually ‘Ammār would join them, but when he was killed fighting on ‘Alī’s side the rebellious party stood exposed and no scope was left for any other interpretation. Nevertheless Mu‘āwiyah started telling the Syrians that: “We did not kill ‘Ammār, but ‘Alī did it because he brought him to the battlefield.” When Amīr al-mu’mīnīn heard this cunning sentence he remarked: “In that case the Holy Prophet killed Ḥamzah as he had brought him to the battlefield of Uḥud.” Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah also fell in this conflict. He was killed by al-Ḥārith ibn Mundhir at-Tanūkhī. After him the banner of the contingent was taken over by his son ‘Abdullāh.

When such fearless warriors were gone Amīr al-mu’mīnīn said to the warriors from the tribes of Hamdān and Rabī‘ah: “To me you are like armour and spear. Get up and teach these rebels a lesson.” Consequently, twelve thousand combatants of the tribes of Rabī‘ah and Hamdān stood up, swords in hand. The banner was taken up by Ḥuḍayn ibn al-Mundhir. Entering the lines of the enemy, they used their swords in such a way that heads began to drop, bodies fell in huge heaps and on every side streams of blood flowed. And the assaults of these swordsmen knew no stopping till the day began to end with all its devastation and the gloom of eve set in, ushering in that fearful night which is known in history as the night of al-Ḥarīr, wherein the clashing of weapons, the hoofs of horses and the hue and cry of the Syrians created such notice that even voices reaching the ears could not be heard. On Amīr al-mu’mīnīn’s side, his wrong-crushing slogans raised waves of courage and valour, and on the enemy’s side they shook the hearts in their bosoms. The battle was at its zenith. The quivers of the bowmen had become empty. The stalks of the spears had been broken. Hand to hand fighting went on with swords only and dead bodies collected in heaps, till by morning the number of killed had exceeded thirty thousand.

Put the armoured man forward and keep the unarmoured one behind. Grit your teeth because this will make the swords skip off the skull, and dodge on the sides of the spears for it changes the direction of their blades. Close the eyes because it strengthens the spirit and gives peace to the heart. Kill the voices because this will keep off spiritlessness.

Do not let your banner bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honour among you because they alone endure the befalling of troubles; they surround the banners and encircle them on both sides, their rear and their front. They do not separate from them lest they give them over (to the enemy). They do not go ahead of them lest they leave them alone. Everyone should deal with his adversary and also help his comrade by his own life, and should not leave the adversary to his comrade lest both his own adversary and his comrade's join against him.

By Allāh, even if you run away from the sword of today you would not remain safe from the sword of the next world. You are the foremost among the Arabs and great figures. Certainly in running away there is the wrath of Allāh, unceasing disgrace and lasting shame. And certainly a runner-away does not lengthen his life, nor does any thing come to intervene between him and his day (of death). Who is there to go towards Allāh like the thirsty going to the water? Paradise lies under the edges of spears. Today the reputations (about the valour of warriors)

On the tenth day Amīr al-mu'minīn's men showed the same morale. On the right wing Mālik al-Ashtar held the command and on the left wing 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās. Assaults went on like the assaults of new soldiers. Signs of defeat appeared on the Syrians, and they were about to leave the battlefield and run away, when five hundred Qur'āns were raised on spears changing the entire face of the battle. Moving swords stopped, the weapon of deceit was successful, and the way was clear for wrong to hold its sway.

In this battle forty-five thousand Syrians were killed while twenty-five thousand Iraqis fell as martyrs. (*Kitāb Šifḥīn* by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī [d. 212 A.H.] and *at-Tārīkh*, aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp.3256- 3349).

will be tested.

By Allāh! I am more eager to meet them (in combat) than they are for (returning to) their houses. O' my Allāh! If they reject truth disperse their group, divide their words (opinion) and destroy them on account of their sins.

They will not budge from their stand till the continuous striking of spears causes piercings (of wounds) through which wind may pass, and the hitting of swords cuts through the skull, cleaves bones and breaks forearms and legs, till they are attacked by contingent after contingent and assaulted by detachments which are followed by reserves for support, till their cities are continuously assailed by force after force, and till the horses trample even the extreme ends of the lands, the tracks of their beast and their meadows.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says : “*ad-da‘q*” means trampling, e.g., “*taduqqu’l-khuyūlu biḥawāfirihā arḍahum*” (the horses trample the ground with their hoofs). “*nawāḥini arḍihim*” means lands opposite each other, it is said, “*manāzilu banī fulānin tatanāḥaru*” meaning the ‘houses of so-and-so are opposite each other.’

* * * * *

SERMON 124

About the Khārijites and their opinion on Arbitration

We did not name people the arbitrators but we named the Qur’ān the arbitrator. The Qur’ān is a book, covered, between two flaps, and it does not speak. It should therefore necessarily have an interpreter. Men alone can be such interpreters. When these people invited us to name the Qur’ān as the arbitrator between us, we could not be the party turning away from the Book of Allāh, since Allāh has said :

. . . *And then if ye quarrel about anything refer it to Allāh and*

the Prophet . . . (Qur'ān, 4:59)

Reference to Allāh means that we decide according to the Qur'ān while reference to the Prophet means that we follow his *sunnah*. Now therefore, if arbitration were truly done through the Book of Allāh (Qur'ān), we would be the most rightful of all people for the Caliphate; or if it were done by the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet, we would be the most preferable of them.

Concerning your point why I allowed a time lag between myself and them with regard to the Arbitration, I did so in order that the ignorant may find out (the truth) and one who already knows may hold with it firmly. Possibly Allāh may, as a result of this peace, improve the condition of these people, and they will not be caught by the throats and will not, before indication of the right, fall into rebellion as before. Certainly the best man before Allāh is he who loves most to act according to right, even though it causes him hardship and grief, rather than according to wrong, even though it gives him benefit and increase.

So, where are you being mislead and from where have you been brought (to this state)? Be prepared to march to the people who have deviated from the right and do not see it, have been entangled in wrongdoing and are not corrected. They are away from the Book and turned from the (right) path. You are not trustworthy to rely upon, nor are you holders of honour to be adhered to. You are very bad in kindling the fire of fighting. Woe to you! I had to bear a lot of worries from you. Some day I call you (to *jihād*) and some day I speak to you in confidence, you are neither true free men at the time of call, nor trustworthy brothers at the time of speaking in confidence.

* * * * *

SERMON 125

When Amīr al-mu'minīn was spoken ill of for showing equality in the distribution (of shares from Bayt al-mad or the Muslim

Public Treasury) he said:

Do you command me that I should seek support by oppressing those over whom I have been placed? By Allāh, I won't do so as long as the world goes on, and as long as one star leads another in the sky. Even if it were my property, I would have distributed it equally among them, then why not when the property is that of Allāh. Beware; certainly that giving of wealth without any right for it is wastefulness and lavishness. It raises its doer in this world, but lowers him in the next world. It honours him before people, but disgraces him with Allāh. If a man gives his property to those who have no right for it or do not deserve it, Allāh deprives him of their gratefulness, and their love too would be for others. Then if he falls on bad days and needs their help, they would prove the worst comrades and ignoble friends.

* * * * *

SERMON 126

About the Khārijites

If you do not stop believing that I have gone wrong and been misled, why do you consider that the common men among the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) have gone astray like me, and accuse them with my wrong, and hold them unbelievers on account of my sins. You are holding your swords on your shoulders and using them right and wrong. You are confusing those who have committed sins with those who have not. You know that the Prophet stoned the protected (married) adulterer, then he also said his burial prayer and allowed his successors to inherit from him. He killed the murderer and allowed his successors to inherit from him. He amputated (the hand of) the thief and whipped the unprotected (unmarried) adulterer, but thereafter allowed their shares from the booty, and they married Muslim women. Thus the Prophet took them to task for their sins and also abided by Allāh's commands about them, but did not disallow them their rights created by Islam, nor did he remove their names from its followers

Certainly you are the most evil of all persons and are those whom Satan has put on his lines and thrown out into his wayless land. With regard to me, two categories of people will be ruined, namely he who loves me too much and the love takes him away from rightfulness, and he who hates me too much and the hatred takes him away from rightfulness. The best man with regard to me is he who is on the middle course. So be with him and be with the great majority (of Muslims) because Allāh's hand (of protection) is on keeping unity. You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf.

Beware; whoever calls to this course, kill him, even though he may be under this headband of mine. Certainly the two arbitrators were appointed to revive what the Qur'ān revives and to destroy what the Qur'ān destroys. Revival means to unite on it (in a matter) and destruction means to divide on a matter. If the Qur'ān drives us to them we should follow them, and if it drives them to us they should follow up. May you have no father! (Woe to you), I did not cause you any misfortune, nor have I deceived you in any matter, nor created any confusion. Your own group had unanimously suggested in favour of these two men and we bound them that they would not exceed the Qur'ān but they deviated from it and abandoned the right although both of them were conversant with it. This wrong-doing was the dictate of their hearts and so they trod upon it, although we had stipulated that in arbitrating with justice and sticking to rightfulness they would avoid the evil of their own views and the mischief of their own verdict (but since this has happened the award is not acceptable to us).

* * * * *

SERMON 127

About important happenings at Baṣrah

O' Aḥnaf ! It is as though I see him advancing with an army which

has neither dust nor noise, nor rustling of reins, nor neighing of horses. They are trampling the ground with their feet as if they are the feet of ostriches.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Amīr al-mu'minīn pointed to the Chief of the Negroes, (*Ṣāhibu 'z-Zanj*).¹ Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said:

Woe to you (the people of Baṣrah's) inhabited streets and decorated

¹ 'Alī ibn Muḥammad was born in the village of Warzanīn in the suburbs of Ray, and belonged to the Azāriqah sect of the Khārijites. He claimed to be a *sayyid* (descendant of the Holy Prophet) by showing himself the son of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Mukhtaḥī ibn 'Īsā ibn Zayd ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, but the experts on lineality and biographers have not accepted his claim to being a *sayyid* and have given his father's name as Muḥammad ibn 'Abd ar-Raḥīm instead of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. The former was from the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays and had been born of a Sindī maid-slave.

'Alī ibn Muḥammad rose as an insurgent in 255 A.H. in the reign of al-Muhtadī Billāh and associated with him the people from the suburbs of Baṣrah on promise of money, wealth and freedom. He entered Baṣrah on the 17th *Shuwwāl*, 255 A.H. killing and looting, and in only two days he put to death thirty thousand individuals, men, women and children, and displayed extreme oppression, bloodshed, savageness and ferocity. He dismantled houses, burnt mosques, and after continuous killing and devastation for fourteen years, was killed in the month of *Ṣafar*, 270 A.H. in the reign of Muwaffaq Billāh. Then people got rid of his devastating deeds.

Amīr al-mu'minīn's prophecy is one of those prophecies which throw light on his knowledge of the unknown. The details of his army given by Amīr al-mu'minīn namely that there would be neither neighing of horses nor rustling of weapons therein is a historical fact. The historian aṭ-Ṭabarī has written that when this man reached near al-Karkh (a sector of Baghdād) with the intention of insurrection, the people of that place welcomed him, and a man presented him a horse for which no rein could be found despite a search. At last he rode it using a rope for the rein. Similarly there were at that time only three swords in his force—one with himself, one with 'Alī ibn Abān al-Muhallabī, and one with Muḥammad ibn Salm, but later they collected some more weapons by marauding.

houses which possess wings like the wings of vultures and trunks like the trunks of elephants; they are the people from among whom if one is killed he is not mourned and if one is lost he is not searched for. I turn this world over on its face, value it only according to its (low) value, and look at it with an eye suitable to it.

A part of the same sermon

Referring to the Turks (Mongols)

I ¹ can see a people whose faces are like shields covered with rough-

¹ This prophecy of Amīr al-mu'minīn is about the attack of the Tartars (Mongols) who were inhabitants of the Mongolian desert in the north west of Turkistan. These semi-savage tribes lived by marauding, killing and devastating. They used to fight among themselves and attack neighbouring areas. Each tribe had a separate chief who was deemed responsible for their protection. Chingiz Khān (Temujin) who was one of the ruling chiefs of these tribes and was very brave and courageous had risen to organize all their divided tribes into one, and, despite their opposition he succeeded in overpowering them through his might and sagacity. Collecting a large number under his banner he rose in 606 A.H. like a torrent and went on dominating cities and ruining populations till he conquered the area upto North China.

When his authority was established he offered his terms of settlement to 'Alāu'd-Dīn Khwārazm Shāh, ruler of the neighbouring country of Turkistan, and through a deputation concluded an agreement with him that Tartar traders would be allowed to visit his country for trade and their life and property would not be subject to any harm. For some time they traded freely without fear but on one occasion 'Alāu'd-Dīn accused them of spying, seized their goods and had them killed by the Chief of Atrār. When Chingiz Khān learnt of the breach of the agreement and the killing of Tartar merchants his eyes cast forth flames and he began trembling with rage. He sent word to 'Alāu'd-Dīn to return the goods of the Tartar merchants and to hand over to him the ruler of Atrār. 'Alāu'd-Dīn, who was mad with power and authority, did not pay any heed, and acting short-sightedly killed even the plenipotentiary of Chingiz Khān. Now Chingiz Khān lost all patience and his eyes filled with blood. He rose with his sword in hand, and the Tartar warriors leapt towards Bukhārā on their speedy stallions. 'Alāu'd-Dīn came out with four hundred thousand

combatants to face him but could not resist the incessant assaults of the Tartars, and having been vanquished only after a few attacks ran away to Nīshābūr across the river Jaxartes (Sīhūn). The Tartars smashed Bukhārā and razed it to the ground. They pulled down schools and mosques, burning to ashes the houses and killing men and women without distinction. Next year they assaulted Samarqand and devastated it completely. After the flight of ‘Alāu’-d-Dīn, his son Jalālu’-d-Dīn Khwārazm Shāh had assumed the reins of government. The Tartars chased him also, and for ten years he fled from one place to the other but did not fall in their hands. At last he crossed over the river out of the boundaries of his realm. During this time the Tartars did their utmost to ruin populated lands and to annihilate humanity. No city escaped their ruining and no populace could avoid their trampling. Wherever they went they upset the kingdom, overthrown governments, and in a short time established their authority over the northern portion of Asia.

When Chingiz Khān died in 622 A.H. his own son Ogedei Khān succeeded him. He searched out Jalālu’-d-Dīn in 628 A.H. and killed him. After him Mongka Khān, the son of the other son of Chingiz Khān, occupied the throne. After Mongka Khān, Quhilai Khān succeeded to a part of the country and the control of Asia fell to the share of his brother Hūlāgū Khān. On the division of the whole realm among the grandsons of Chingiz Khān, Hūlāgū Khān was thinking of conquering Muslim areas when the Ḥanafīte of Khurāsān in enmity with the Shāfi‘ite invited him to attack Khurāsān. He therefore led an assault on Khurāsān, and the Ḥanafīte, thinking themselves to be safe from the Tartars, opened the city gates for them. But the Tartars did not make any distinction between Ḥanafīte and Shāfi‘ite and killed whoever fell to their hands. After killing most of its population they took it in occupation. These very differences between the Ḥanafīte and the Shāfi‘ite opened for him the door of conquest upto Iraq. Consequently, after conquering Khurāsān his courage increased and in 656 A.H. he marched on Baghdād with two hundred thousand Tartars. al-Musta‘ṣim Billāh’s army and the people of Baghdād jointly faced them, but it was not in their power to stop this torrent of calamity. The result was that the Tartars entered Baghdād on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ carrying with them bloodshed and ruin. They remained busy in killing for forty days. Rivers of blood flowed in the streets and all the alleys were filled with dead bodies. Hundred of thousands of people were put to the sword while al-Musta‘ṣim Billāh was trampled to death under foot. Only those people who hid themselves in wells or underground places and hid from their sight could survive. This was the devastation of Baghdād which shook the ‘Abbāsīd Kingdom to its

scraped skins. They dress themselves in silken and woollen clothes and hold dear excellent horses. Their killing and bloodshed shall take place freely till the wounded shall walk over the dead and the number of runners-away shall be less than those taken prisoner:

One of his companions said to him: O' Amīr al-mu'minīn, you have been given knowledge of hidden things. **Whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn laughed and said to the man who belonged to the tribe of Banū Kalb :**

O' brother of Kalb! This is not knowledge of hidden things (*'ilmul ghayb*),¹ these matters have been acquired from him (namely in

foundation, so that its flag could never fly thereafter.

Some historians have laid the blame of this ruin on Ibn al-'Alqamī (Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baghdādī), the minister of al-Musta'ṣim Billāh, by holding that, moved by the genral masses of the Shī'ahs and the ruin of al-Karkh sector (of Baghdād), he invited Hūlāgū Khān through the latter's minister, the great scholar Nasīru'd-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭūsī, to march on Baghdād. Even if it be so, it is not possible to ignore the historical fact that before this the 'Abbāsīd Caliph an-Nāsir Lidīnī'llāh had initiated the move for the attack on the Muslim areas. When the Khwārazm Shāhs declined to acknowledge the authority of the Caliphate he had sent word to Chingiz Khān to march on Khwārazm, from which the Tartars had understood that there was no unity and cooperation among the Muslims. Thereafter the Ḥanafite had sent for Hūlāgū Khān to crush the Shāfi'ite as a consequence of which the Tartars secured control over Khurāsān, and prepared the way to march towards Baghdād. In these circumstances to hol only Ibn al-'Alqamī responsible for the ruination of Baghdād and to ignore the move of an-Nāsir Lidīnī'llāh and the dispute between the Ḥanafite and the Shāfi'ite would be covering up the facts, when in fact the cause for the ruin of Baghdād was this very conquest of Khurāsān, whose real movers were the Ḥanafite inhabitants of the place. It was by this conquest that Hūlāgū Khān had the courage to march on the centre of Islam; otherwise it cannot have been the result of a single individual's message that he assaulted an old capital like Baghdād, the awe of whose power and grandeur was seated in the hearts of a large part of the world.

Prophet) who knew them. As regard knowledge of hidden things, that means knowledge of the Day of Judgement, and the things covered by Allāh in the verse.

Verily, Allāh is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour...
(Qur'ān, 31:34)

Therefore, Allāh alone knows what is there in the wombs, whether male or female, ugly or handsome, generous or miserly, mischievous or pious, and who will be the fuel for Hell and who will be in the company of the Prophets in Paradise. This is the knowledge of the hidden things which is not known to anyone save Allāh. All else is that whose knowledge Allāh passed on to His Prophet and he passed it on to me, and prayed for me that my bosom may retain it and my ribs may hold it.

* * * * *

¹ To know hidden things on a personal level is one thing, while to be gifted by Allāh with knowledge of any matter and to convey it to others is different. The knowledge of the future which the prophets and vicegerents possess is gained by them through Allāh's teaching and informing. Allāh alone has knowledge of events which are to happen in the future. Of course, He passes this knowledge on to whoever He wills. Thus He says :

(He alone is) the "Knower of the unseen, neither doth He reveal His secrets unto any (one else) save unto that one of the Messengers whom He chooseth . . ." (Qur'ān, 72:26—27)

In this way Amīr al-mu'minīn also received knowledge of the future through the instructions of the Prophet or inspiration from Allāh, for which these words of Amīr al-mu'minīn stand evidence. Of course, sometimes it is not proper or expedient to disclose certain matters and they are allowed to remain under a veil. Then no one can be acquainted with them as Allāh says:

Verily, Allāh is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour and He sendeth down the rain, and knoweth He what is in the wombs; and knoweth not any soul what he shall earn the morrow, and knoweth not any soul in what lands he shall die: Verily Allāh is All-knowing, All-aware. (Qur'ān, 31:34)

SERMON 128

About measures and weights, the transience of this world and the condition of its people

O' creatures of Allāh! You and whatever you desire from this world are like guests with fixed periods of stay, and like debtors called upon to pay. Life is getting short while (the records of) actions are being preserved. Many strivers are wasting (their efforts) and many of those who exert are heading towards harm. You are in a period when steps of virtue are moving backwards, steps of evil are moving forward and Satan is increasing his eagerness to ruin people. This is the time that his equipment is strong, his traps have been spread and his prey has become easy (to catch).

Cast your glance over people wherever you like, you will see either a poor man suffering from poverty, or a rich man ignoring Allāh despite His bounty over him, or a miser increasing his wealth by trampling on Allāh's obligations, or an unruly person closing his ears to all counsel. Where are your good people; where are your virtuous people? Where are your high spirited men and generous men? Where are those of you who avoid deceit in their business and remain pure in their behaviour? Have they not all departed from this ignoble, transitory and troublesome world? Have you not been left among people who are just like rubbish and so low that lips avoid mention of them and do not move even to condemn their low position.

. . . *“Verily we are Allāh's and verily unto Him shall we return.”* (Qur'ān, 2:156)

Mischief has appeared and there is no one to oppose and change it, nor anyone to dissuade from it or desist from it. Do you, with these qualities, hope to secure abode in the purified neighbourhood of Allāh and to be regarded His staunch lovers? Alas! Allāh cannot be deceived

about His paradise and His will cannot be secured save by His obedience. Allāh may curse those who advise good but they themselves avoid it, and those who desist others from evil but they themselves act upon it.

* * * * *

SERMON 129

Delivered when Abū Dharr ¹ was exiled

¹ Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī's name was Jundab ibn Junādah. He was an inhabitant of ar-Rabadhah which was a small village on the east side of Medina. When he heard about the proclamation of the Prophet, he came to Mecca and after making enquiries saw the Prophet and accepted Islam whereupon the unbelievers of Quraysh gave him all sorts of troubles and inflicted pain after pain, but he remained steadfast. Among the acceptors of Islam he is the third, fourth or fifth. Along with this precedence in Islam his renunciation and piety was so high that the Prophet said:

Among my people Abū Dharr is the like of 'Īsā (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) in renunciation and piety.

In the reign of Caliph 'Umar, Abū Dharr left for Syria and during 'Uthmān's reign also remained there. He spent his days in counselling, preaching, acquainting people with the greatness of the members of the Prophet's family and guiding the people to the rightful path. The traces of Shī'ism now found in Syria and Jabal 'Āmil (north of Lebanon) are the result of his preaching and activity and the fruit of seeds sown by him. The Governor of Syria, Mu'āwiyah, did not like the conduct of Abū Dharr and was much disgusted with his open criticism and mention of the moneymaking and other wrongful activities of 'Uthmān. But he could do nothing. At last he wrote to 'Uthmān that if he remained there any longer he would rouse the people against the Caliph. There should therefore be some remedy against this. On this, 'Uthmān wrote to him that Abū Dharr should be seated on an unsaddled camel and dispatched to Medina. The order was obeyed and Abū Dharr was sent to Medina. On reaching Medina he resumed his preaching of righteousness and truth. He would recall to the people the days of the Holy Prophet and refrain them from displays of kingly pageantry, whereupon

‘Uthmān was much perturbed and tried to restrict his speaking. One day he sent for him and said: “I have come to know that you go about propagating that the Holy Prophet said that :

‘When Banū Umayyah will become thirty in number they will regard the cities of Allāh as their property, His creatures their slaves and His religion the tool of their treachery.’ ”

Abū Dharr replied that he had heard the Prophet say so. ‘Uthmān said that he was speaking a lie and enquired from those beside him if any one had heard this tradition and all replied in the negative. Abū Dharr then said that enquiry should be made from Amīr al-mu’minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (p.b.u.h.). He was sent for and asked about it. He said it was correct and Abū Dharr was telling the truth. ‘Uthmān enquired on what basis he gave evidence for the correctness of this tradition. Amīr al-mu’minīn replied that he had heard the Holy Prophet say that :

There is no speaker under the sky or over the earth more truthful than Abū Dharr.

Now ‘Uthmān could do nothing. If he still held him to be a liar it would mean falsification of the Prophet. He therefore kept quiet despite much perturbation, since he could not refute him. On the other side Abū Dharr began speaking against the usurping of Muslims’ property quite openly and whenever he saw ‘Uthmān he would recite this verse :

And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allāh’s way; announce thou unto them a painful chastisement. On the lay (of Judgement) when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then shall be branded with it their foreheads and their sides and their backs; (saying unto them) “This is what ye hoarded up for yourselves, taste ye then what ye did hoard up.” (Qur’ān, 9:34 -35)

‘Uthmān promised him money but could not entrap this free man in his golden net, then resorted to repression but could not stop his truthspeaking tongue. At last he ordered him to leave and go to ar-Rabadhah and deputed Marwān, son of the man (al-Ḥakam) exiled by the Prophet, to turn him out of Medina. At the same time he issued the inhuman order that no one should speak to him nor see him off. But Amīr al-mu’minīn, Imām Ḥasan, Imām Ḥusayn, ‘Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja‘far and ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir did

towards ar-Rabadhah

O' Abū Dharr! You showed anger in the name of Allāh therefore have hope in Ifim for whom you became angry. The people were afraid of you in the matter of their (pleasure of this) world while you feared them for your faith. Then leave to them that for which they are afraid of you and get away from them taking away what you fear them about. How needy are they for what you dissuade them from and how heedless

not pay any heed to this order and accompanied him to see him off, and Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered these sentences (i.e., the above sermon) on that occasion.

In ar-Rabadhah, Abū Dharr had to put up with a very hard life. It was here that his son Dharr and his wife died and the sheep and goats that he was keeping for his livelihood also died. Of his children only one daughter remained, who equally shared his starvation and troubles. When the means of subsistence were fully exhausted and day after day passed without food she said to Abū Dharr: "Father, how long shall we go on like this. We should go somewhere in search of livelihood." Abū Dharr took her with him and set off for the wilderness. He could not find even any foliage. At last he was tired and sat down at a certain place. Then he collected some sand and, putting his head on it, lay down. Soon he began gasping, his eyes rolled up and pangs of death gripped him.

When the daughter saw this condition she was perplexed and said, "Father, if you die in this vast wilderness, how shall I manage for your burial quite alone." He replied, "Do not get upset. The Prophet told me that I shall die in helplessness and some Iraqis would arrange for my burial. After my death you put a sheet over me and then sit by the roadway and when some caravan passes that way tell there that the Prophet's companion Abū Dharr has died." Consequently, after his death she went and sat by the roadside. After some time a caravan passed that way. It included Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'i, Hujr ibn 'Abdī at-Tā'i, 'Alqamah ibn Qays an-Nakha'i, Sa'sa'ah ibn Ṣūhān al-'Abdī, al-Aswad ibn Yazīd an-Nakha'i etc. who were all fourteen persons in number. When they heard about the passing away of Abū Dharr they were shocked at his helpless death. They stopped their riding beasts and postponed the onward journey for his burial. Mālik al-Ashtar gave a sheet of cloth for his shroud. It was valued at four thousand Dirhams. After his funeral rites and burial they departed. This happened in the month of *Dhi'l-ḥijjah*, 32 A.H.

are you towards what they are denying you. You will shortly know who is the gainer tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement) and who is more enviable. Even if these skies and earth were closed to some individual and he feared Allāh, then Allāh would open them for him. Only rightfulness should attract you while wrongfulness should detract you. If you had accepted their worldly attractions they would have loved you and if you had shared in it they would have given you asylum.

* * * * *

SERMON 130

Grounds for accepting the Caliphate and the qualities of a ruler and governor

O' (people of) differing minds and divided hearts, whose bodies are present but wits are absent. I am leading you (amicably) towards truthfulness, but you run away from it like goats and sheep running away from the howling of a lion. How hard it is for me to uncover for you the secrets of justice, or to straighten the curve of truthfulness.

O' my Allāh! Thou knowest that what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world, We rather wanted to restore the signs of Thy religion and to usher prosperity into Thy cities so that the oppressed among Thy creatures might be safe and Thy forsaken commands might be established. O' my Allāh! I am the first who leaned (towards Thee) and who heard and responded (to the call of Islam). No one preceded me in prayer (*ṣalāt*) except the Prophet.

You certainly know that he who is in charge of honour, life, booty (enforcement of), legal commandments and the leadership of the Muslims should not be a miser as his greed would aim at their wealth, nor be ignorant as he would then mislead them with his ignorance, nor be of rude behaviour who would estrange them with his rudeness, nor should he deal unjustly with wealth thus

preferring one group over another, nor should he accept a bribe while taking decisions, as he would forfeit (others) rights and hold them up without finality, nor should he ignore *sunnah* as he would ruin the people.

* * * * *

SERMON 131

Warning about death and counselling

We praise Him for whatever He takes or gives or whatever He inflicts on us or tries us with. He is aware of all that is hidden and He sees all that is concealed. He knows all that breasts contain or eyes hide. We render evidence that there is no god except He and that Muḥammad — peace be upon him and his progeny — has been chosen by Him and deputed by Him — evidence tendered both secretly and openly, by heart and by tongue.

A part of the same sermon

By Allāh, certainly it is reality not fun, truth not falsehood. It is none else than death. Its caller is making himself heard and its dragsman is making haste. The majority of the people should not deceive you. You have seen those who lived before you, amassed wealth, feared poverty and felt safe from its (evil) consequences, the longerity of desires and the (apparent) distance from death. flow, then, death overtook them, turned them out of their homelands and took them out of their places of safety. They were borne on coffins, people were busy about them one after another, carrying them on their shoulders and supporting them with their hands.

Did you not witness those who engaged in long-reaching desires, built strong buildings, amassed much wealth but their

houses turned to graves and their collections turned into ruin. Their property devolved on the successors and their spouses on those who came after them. They cannot (now) add to their good acts nor invoke (Allāh's) mercy in respect of evil acts. Therefore, whoever makes his heart habituated to fear Allāh achieves a forward position and his action is successful. Prepare yourself for it and do all that you can for Paradise. Certainly this world has not been made a place of permanent stay for you. But it has been created as a pathway in order that you may take from it the provisions of your (good) actions for the permanent house (in Paradise). Be ready for departure from here and keep close your riding animals for setting off.

* * * * *

SERMON 132

On the Glory of Allāh

This world and the next have submitted to Him their reins, and the skies and earths have flung their keys towards Him. The thriving trees bow to Him in the morning and evening, and produce for Him — flaming fire from their branches, and at His command, turn their own feed into ripe fruits.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Qur'ān

The Book of Allāh is among you. It speaks and its tongue does not falter. It is a house whose pillars do not fall down, and a power whose supporters are never routed.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

Allāh deputed the Prophet after a gap from the previous prophets when there was much talk (among the people). With him Allāh exhausted the series of prophets and ended the revelation.

He then fought for Him those who were turning away from Him and were equating others with Him.

A part of the same sermon about this world

Certainly this world is the end of the sight of the (mentally) blind who see nothing beyond it. The sight of a looker (who looks with the eye of his mind) pierces through and realizes that the (real) house is beyond this world. The looker therefore wants to get out of it while the blind wants to get into it. The looker collects provision from it (for the next world) while the blind collects provision for this very world.

A part of the same sermon — A caution

You should know that a man gets satiated and wearied with everything except life, because he does not find for himself any pleasure in death. It is in the position of life for a dead heart, sight for the blind eye, hearing for the deaf ear, quenching for the thirsty and it contains complete sufficiency and safety.

The Book of Allāh is that through which you see, you speak and you hear. Its one part speaks for the other part, and one part testifies to the other. It does not create differences about Allāh nor does it mislead its own follower from (the path of) Allāh. You are joined together in hatred of each other and in the growing of herbage on your filth (i.e., for covering inner dirt by good appearance outside). You are sincere with one another in your love of desires and bear enmity against each other in earning wealth. The evil spirit (Satan) has perplexed you and deceit has misled you. I seek the help of Allāh for myself and you.

* * * * *

SERMON 133

Delivered when Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb consulted ¹

¹ About Arnīr al-mu’mīnīn, the strange position is adopted that on the one hand, it is said that he was ignorant of practical politics and unacquainted with ways of administration from which it is intended that the revolts created by the Umayyad’s lust for power should be shown to be the outcome of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn’s weak administration. On the other hand, much is made of the various occasions when the then Caliphs consulted Amīr al-mu’mīnīn in important affairs of State in the matter of wars with unbelievers. The aim in this is not to exhibit his correctness of thinking and judgement or deep sagacity but to show that there was unity and concord between him and the Caliphs so that attention should not be paid to the fact that in some matters they also differed and that mutual clashes had also occurred. History shows that Amīr al-mu’mīnīn did have differences of principles with the Caliphs and did not approve every step of theirs. In the sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah* he has expressed in loud words his difference of opinion and anger about each regime. Nevertheless, this difference does not mean that correct guidance should be withheld in collective Islamic problems. Again, Amīr al-mu’mīnīn’s character was so high that no one could imagine that he would ever evade giving counsel which concerned the common weal, or would give such counsel which would damage public interests. That is why, despite differences of principle, he was consulted. This throws light on the greatness of his character and the correctness of his thinking and judgement. Similarly, it is a prominent trait of the Holy Prophet’s character that despite rejecting his claim to prophethood the unbelievers acknowledged him the best trustee and could never doubt his trustworthiness. Rather, even during clashes of mutual opposition they entrusted to him their property without fear and never suspected that their property would be misappropriated. Similarly, Amīr al-mu’mīnīn was held to occupy so high a position of trust and confidence that friend and foe both trusted in the correctness of his counsel. So, just as the Prophet’s conduct shows his height of trustworthiness, and just as it cannot be inferred from it that there was mutual accord between him and the unbelievers, because trust has its own place while the clash of Islam and unbelief has another, in the same way, despite having differences with the Caliphs, Amīr al-mu’mīnīn was regarded as the protector of national and community interests and as the guardian of Islam’s well-being and prosperity. Thus when national interests were

**Amīr al-mu'minīn about himself, taking part in the march
towards Rome (Byzantine Empire).**

Allāh has taken upon himself for the followers of this religion the strengthening of boundaries and hiding of the secret places. Allāh helped them when they were few and could not protect themselves. He is living and will not die. If you will yourself proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send there an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Allāh

involved he was consulted and he tendered his unbiased advice raising himself above personal ends and keeping in view the Prophet's tradition to the effect that "He who is consulted is a trustee" never allowed any dishonesty or duplicity to interfere. When on the occasion of the battle of Palestine, the Caliph 'Umar consulted him about his taking part in it himself, then, irrespective of whether or not his opinion would accord with 'Umar's feelings, he kept in view Islam's prestige and existence and counselled him to stay in his place and to send to the battle-front such a man who should be experienced and well-versed in the art of fighting, because the going of an inexperienced man would have damaged the established prestige of Islam and the awe in which the Muslims were held which had existed from the Prophet's days would have vanished. In fact, in the Caliph 'Umar's going there Amīr al-mu'minīn saw signs of defeat and vanquishment. He therefore found Islam's interest to lie in detaining him and indicated his view in the words that:

"If you have to retreat from the battle-field, it would not be your personal defeat only, but the Muslims would lose heart by it and leave the battle-field and disperse here and there, because with the officer in command leaving the field the army too would lose ground. Furthermore, with the centre being without the Caliph there would be no hope of any further assistance from behind which could sustain courage of the combatants."

This is that counsel which is put forth as a proof of mutual accord, although this advice was tendered in view of Islam's prestige and life which was dearer to Amīr al-mu'minīn than any other interest. No particular individual's life was dear to him for which he might have advised against participation in the battle.

grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims.

SERMON 134

There was some exchange of words between ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and Amīr al-mu’minīn when al-Mughīrah ibn al-Akhnas¹ said to ‘Uthmān that he would deal with Amīr al-mu’minīn on his behalf whereupon Amīr al-mu’minīn said to al-Mughīrah:

O’ son of the accursed and issueless, and of a tree which has neither root nor branch. Will you deal with me? By Allāh, Allāh will not grant victory to him whom you support, nor will he be able to stand up whom you raise. Get away from us. Allāh may keep you away from your purpose. Then do whatever you like. Allāh may not have mercy on you if you have pity on me.

* * * * *

SERMON 135

**About the sincerity of his own intention
and support of the oppressed**

Your allegiance to me was not without thinking,² nor is my and your

¹ al-Mughīrah ibn al-Akhnas ath-Thaqafī was among the well-wishers of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and the son of his paternal aunt. His brother Abu’l-Ḥakam ibn al-Akhnas was killed at the hands of Amīr al-mu’minīn in the battle of Uḥud, because of which he bore malice against Amīr al-mu’minīn. His father was one of those people who accepted Islam at the time of fall of Mecca but retained heresy and hypocrisy in heart. That is why Amīr al-mu’minīn called him accursed, and he called him issueless because he who has a son like al-Mughīra deserves to be called issueless.

² Here Amīr al-mu’minīn points to the view of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb which he had on the allegiance of Abū Bakr on the day of Saqīfah when he said: “ . . . let me clarify this to you that the allegiance with Abū Bakr was

position the same. I seek you for Allāh's sake but you seek me for your own benefits. O' people! support me despite your heart's desires. By Allāh, I will take revenge for the oppressed from the oppressor and will put a string in the nose of the oppressor and drag him to the spring of truthfulness even though he may grudge it.

* * * * *

SERMON 136

About Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr

By Allāh, they did not find any disagreeable thing in me, nor (lid they do justice between me and themselves. Surely, they are now demanding a right which they have abandoned and blood which they have themselves shed. If I pertook in it with them then they too have a share in it, but if they committed it without me the demand should be against them. The first step of their justice should be that they pass verdict against themselves. I have my intelligence with me.

I have never mixed matters nor have they appeared mixed to me. Certainly, this is the rebellious group in which there is the near one (az-"Zubayr), the scorpion's venom ('Ā'ishah) and doubts which cast a veil (on facts). But the matter is clear, and the wrong has been shaken from its foundation. Its tongue has stopped uttering mischief. By Allāh, I will prepare for them a cistern from which I alone will draw water. They will not be able to drink from

a mistake and without thinking (*faltah*) but Allāh saved us from its evil. Therefore, whoever (intends to) acts like this you must kill him . . .” (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, vol.8, p.211; *as-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah*, Ibn Hishām, vol.4, pp.308-309; *at-Tārīkh*, aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1., p.1822; *al-Kāmil*, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.2, p.327; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr, vol.5, pp.245-246; *al-Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, p.55; *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, vol.3, pp.388, 392; *al-Anṣāb*, al-Balādhurī, vol.5, p.15; *at-Tarnhīd*, al-Baqilānī, p.196; *ash-Sharḥ*, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.2, p.23)

it nor would they be able to drink from any other place.

A part of the same sermon

You advanced towards me shouting ‘‘allegiance, allegiance’’ like she-camels having delivered newly horn young ones leaping towards their young. I held back my hand but you pulled it towards you I drew back my hand but you dragged it. O’ my Allāh ! these two have ignored my rights and did injustice to me. They both have broken allegiance to me, and roused people against me. Unfasten Thou what they have fastened, and do not make strong what they have woven. Show them the evil in what they aimed at and acted upon. Before fighting I asked them to be steadfast in allegiance and behaved with them with consideration but they belittled the blessing and refused (to adopt the course of) safety.

* * * * *

SERMON 137

Referring to events in the future

He will direct desires towards (the path of) guidance while people will have turned guidance towards desires, and he will turn their views to the direction of the Qur’ān while the people will have turned the Qur’ān to their views.

A part of the same sermon

(Before this Enjoiner of Good,¹ matters will deteriorate) till war will

¹ This prophecy of Amīr al-mu’minīn is with regard to the appearance of the Twelfth Imām, Abu’l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mahdī (p.h.u.h.).

rage among you with full force, showing forth its teeth, with udders full of sweet milk but with a sour tip. Beware, it will be tomorrow and the morrow will come soon with things which you do not know. The Man in power, not from this crowd, will take to task all those were formerly appointed for their ill deeds and the earth will pour forth its internal treasures and fling before him easily her keys. He will show you the just way of behaviour and revive the Qur'ān and *sunnah* which have become lifeless (among people).

A part of the same sermon

As if I see (him), he (the Enjoiner of Evil) ¹ is shouting in Syria (ash-Shām) and is extending his banners to the outskirts of Kūfah. He is bent towards it like the biting of the she-camel. He has covered the ground with heads. His mouth is wide open and (the trampling of) his footsteps on the ground have become heavy. His advance is broad and his attacks are severe.

By Allāh, he will disperse you throughout the earth till only a few of you remain, like kohl in the eye. You will continue like this till the Arabs return to their senses. You should therefore stick to established ways, clear signs and the early period which has the lasting virtues of the Prophethood. You should know that Satan makes his ways easy so that you may follow him on his heels.

¹ This refers to 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān who came to power in Syria (ash-Shām) after his father Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam and then after the killing of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd ath-Thaqafī in his encounter with Mus'ab ibn az-Zubayr he proceeded towards Iraq. He clashed with Mus'ab's force at Maskin near Uayru'l-jāthalīq in the outskirts of Kūfah. After defeating him he made a victorious entry into Kūfah and took allegiance from its inhabitants. Then he sent al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafī to Mecca to fight with 'Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr. Consequently this man besieged Mecca and stoned it, and shed the blood of thousands of innocent persons like water. He killed Ibn az-Zubayr and hung his body on the gallows. He perpetrated such atrocities on the people that one shudders at the thought of them.

SERMON 138

On the occasion of the Consultative Committee (after the death of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb)

No one preceded me in inviting people to truthfulness, in giving consideration to kinship and practising generosity. So, hear my word and preserve what I say. May-be you will see soon after today that over this matter swords will be drawn and pledges will be broken, so much so that some of you will become leaders of the people of misguidance and followers of people of ignorance.

* * * * *

SERMON 139

About backbiting and speaking ill of others¹

¹ The habit of fault finding and backbiting has become so common that even the feeling of its evilness has disappeared. And at present neither the high avoid it nor the low; neither the high position of the pulpit prevents it nor the sacredness of the mosque. Whenever a few companions sit together their topic of conversation and engaging interest is just to discuss the faults of their opponents with added colourisation, and to listen to them attentively. Although the fault finder is himself involved in the faults which he picks up in others, yet he does not like that his own faults should be exposed. In such a case, he should have consideration for similar feelings in others and should avoid searching for their faults and hurting their feelings. He should act after the proverb: “Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you.”

Backbiting is defined as the exposure of the fault of a brother-in-faith with the intent to vilify him in such a way as to irritate him, whether it be by speaking, acting, implication or suggestion. Some people take backbiting to cover only that which is false or contrary to fact. According to them to relate what was seen or heard, exactly as it was, is not backbiting, and they say that they are not backbiting but only relating

exactly what they saw or heard. But in fact backbiting is the name of this very relating of the facts, because if it is not factually correct it would be false accusation and wrong blame. It is related about the Prophet that he said :

“Do you know what backbiting is?” People said, “Allāh and His Prophet know better.” Then he said, “Backbiting means that you say about your brother a thing which pains him.” Someone said, “But what if I say what is actually true about him?” The Prophet replied, “It is backbiting only when it is factually true, otherwise you would be accusing him falsely.”

There are many causes for indulging in backbiting, and because of this a man commits it sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī has recounted these causes in detail in his book *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūmu’ d-dīn*. A few of the important ones are :

- 1) To make fun of anyone or to make him appear abased.
- 2) To make people laugh and to display one’s own jolliness and high spiritedness.
- 3) Expressing one’s feelings under the influence of rage and anger.
- 4) To establish one’s own superiority by speaking ill of others.
- 5) To disprove one’s connection or involvement in a matter; namely that a particular evil was not committed by oneself but by someone else.
- 6) To associate oneself with some group when in their company in order to avoid strangeness with them.
- 7) To belittle a person from whom it is feared that he will expose some fault of one’s.
- 8) To defeat a competitor in the same calling.
- 9) To seek position in the audience of someone in power.
- 10) To express sorrow by saying it is sad that so-and-so has fallen in such and such a sin.
- 11) To express astonishment, for example, to say it is wonderful that so and so has done this.
- 12) To name the committer of an act when expressing anger over it.

However, in some cases fault finding or criticising does not fall under backbiting:

- 1) If the oppressed complains of the oppressor in order to seek redress, it is not backbiting. Allāh says about it:
Loveth not Allāh open utterance of evil in speech except by one who hath been wronged . . . (Qur'ān, 4:148)
- 2) To relate anyone's fault while giving advice is not backbiting because dishonesty and duplicity is not permissible in counselling.
- 3) If in connection with seeking the requirements of a religious commandment the naming of a particular individual cannot be avoided, then to state the fault of such person to the extent necessary would not be backbiting.
- 4) To relate the misappropriation or dishonesty committed by someone with a view to saving a Muslim brother from harm would not be backbiting.
- 5) To relate the fault of someone before one who can prevent him from committing it is not backbiting.
- 6) Criticism and expression of opinion about a relater of traditions is not backbiting.
- 7) If a person is well acquainted with someone's shortcoming, then to relate such a fault in order to define his personality, for example, describing a deaf, dumb, lame or handless person as thus, is not backbiting.
- 8) To describe any fault of a patient before a physician for purposes of treatment is not backbiting.
- 9) If someone claims wrong lineage then to expose his correct lineage is not backbiting.
- 10) If the life, property or honour of someone can be protected only by informing him of some fault, it would not be backbiting.
- 11) If two persons discuss a fault of another which is already known to both it would not be backbiting, although to avoid discussing it is better, since it is possible one of the two might have forgotten it.
- 12) To expose the evils of one who openly commits evils is not backbiting As the tradition runs :

Those who do not commit sins and have been gifted with safety (from sins) should take pity on sinners and other disobedient people. Gratefulness should be mostly their indulgence and it should prevent them from (finding faults with) others. What about the backbiter who blames his brother and finds fault with him? Does he not remember that Allāh has concealed the sins which he committed while they were bigger than his brother's sins pointed out by him? How can he vilify him about his sins when he has himself committed one like it? Even if he has not committed a similar sin he must have committed bigger ones. By Allāh, even if he did not commit big sins but committed only small sins, his exposing the sins of people is itself a big sin.

O' creature of Allāh, do not be quick in exposing anyone's sin for he may be forgiven for it, and do not feel yourself safe even for a small sin because you may be punished for it. Therefore, every one of you who comes to know the faults of others should not expose them in view of what he knows about his own faults, and he should remain busy in thanks that he has been saved from what others have been indulging in.

* * * * *

SERMON 140

Against reliance on heresy

O' people! If a person knows his brother to be steadfast in faith and of correct ways he should not lend ear to what people may say about him. Sometimes the bowman shoots arrows but the arrow goes astray; similarly talk can be off the point. Its wrong perishes, while Allāh is the

“There is no backbiting in the case of he who has torn away the veil of shamefulness.”

Hearer and the Witness. There is nothing between truth and falsehood except four fingers.

Amīr al-mu'minīn was asked the meaning of this whereupon he closed his fingers together and put them between his ear and eye and said: It is falsehood when you say, ‘ ‘ I have heard so,’ ’ while it is truth when you say, ‘ ‘ I have seen.’ ’

* * * * *

SERMON 141

Against misplaced generosity

He who shows generosity to those who have no claim to it or who are not fit for it would not earn anything except the praise of the ignoble and appreciation of bad persons, although as long as he continues giving, the ignorant will say how generous his hand is, even though in the affairs of Allāh he is a miser.

Therefore, to whosoever Allāh gives wealth he should use it in extending good behaviour to his kinsmen, in entertaining, in releasing prisoners and the afflicted; in giving to the poor and to debtors, and he should endure (the troubles arising out of) the fulfilment of rights (of others) and hardships in expectation of reward. Certainly, the achievement of these qualities is the height of greatness in this world and achievement of the distinctions of the next world; if Allāh so wills.

* * * * *

SERMON 142

Praying for rain

Beware; the earth which bears you and the sky which overshadows

you are obedient to their Sustainer (Allāh). They have not been bestowing their blessings on you for any feeling of pity on you or inclination towards you, nor for any good which they expect from you, but they were commanded to bestow benefits on you and they are obeying, and were asked to maintain your good and so they are maintaining it.

Certainly, Allāh tries his creatures in respect of their evil deeds by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and closing the treasures of good, so that he who wishes to repent may repent, he who wishes to turn away (from evils) may turn away, he who wishes to recall (forgotten good) may recall, and he who wishes to abstain (from evil) may abstain. Allāh, the Glorified, has made the seeking of (His) forgiveness a means for the pouring down of livelihood and mercy on the people as Allāh has said:

... Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord! Verily, He is the Most forgiving, He will send (down) upon you the cloud raining in torrents, and help you with wealth and sons (children) . . . (Qur'ān, 71:10—12)

Allāh may shower mercy on him who took up repentance, gave up sins and hastened (in performing good acts before) his death.

O' my Allāh ! we have come out to Thee from under the curtains and coverings (of houses) when the beasts and children are crying, seeking Thy Mercy, hoping for the generosity of Thy bounty and fearing Thy chastisement and retribution. O' my Allāh! give us to drink from Thy rain and do not disappoint us, nor kill us by years (of drought) nor punish us for what the foolish among us have committed, O' the Most Merciful of all !

O' my Allāh! we have come out to Thee to complain to Thee what is (already) not hidden from Thee, when the seven troubles have forced us, droughty famines have driven us, distressing wants have made us helpless and troublesome mischiefs have incessantly befallen us. O' my Allāh! we beseech Thee not to send us back disappointed, nor to return

us with down-cast eyes, nor to address us (harshly) for our sins, nor deal with us according to our deeds.

O' my Allāh! do pour on us Thy mercy, Thy blessing, Thy sustenance and Thy pity, and make us enjoy a drink which benefits us, quenches our thirst, produces green herbage with which all that was lost gets a growing and all that had withered comes to life again. It should bring about the benefit of freshness and plentifulness of ripe fruits. With it plains may be watered, rivers may begin flowing, plants may pick up foliage and prices may come down. Surely, Thou art powerful over whatever Thou willest.

* * * * *

SERMON 143

Deputation of Prophets

Allāh deputed prophets and distinguished them with His revelation. He made them as pleas for Him among His creation, so that there should not remain any excuse for people. He invited people to the right path through a truthful tongue. You should know that Allāh fully knows creation. Not that He was not aware of what they concealed from among their hidden secrets and inner feelings, but in order to try them as to whom from among them performs good acts, so that there is reward in respect of good acts and chastisement in respect of evil acts.

The position of Ahlu'l-bayt (the Household of the Holy Prophet)

Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Allāh raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them, and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness. Surely Imams (divine

leaders) will be from the Quraysh. They have been planted in this line through Hāshim. It would not suit others nor would others be suitable as heads of affairs.

**A part of the same sermon about those who are
against the Ahlu'l-bayt**

They have adopted this world and abandoned the next world; left clean water and drunk stinking water. I can almost see their wicked one¹ who committed unlawful acts, associated himself with them, befriended them and accorded with them till his hair grew grey and his nature acquired their tinge. He proceeded onward emitting foam like a torrential stream not caring whom he drowned, or, like fire in straw, without realizing what he burnt.

Where are the minds which seek light from the lamps of guidance, and the eyes which look at minarets of piety? Where are the hearts dedicated to Allāh, and devoted to the obedience of Allāh? They are all crowding towards worldly vanities and quarrelling over unlawful issues. The ensigns of Paradise and Hell have been raised for them but they have turned their faces away from Paradise and proceeded to Hell by dint of their performances. Allāh called them but they showed dislike and ran away. When Satan called them they responded and proceeded (towards him).

* * * * *

SERMON 144

About this world

O' people, you are, in this world, the target for the arrows of death.

¹ Here the reference is to 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān who committed extreme atrocities through his officer al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf ath-Thaqafi.

With every drinking there is choking and with every eating there is suffocation. You do not get any benefit in it except by foregoing another (benefit) and no one among you advances in age by a day except by the taking away of a day from his life. Nothing more is added to his eating unless it reduces what was there before. No mark appears for him unless a mark disappears. Nothing new comes into being unless the new becomes old. No new crop comes up unless a crop has been reaped. Those roots are gone whose off-shoots we are. How can an off-shoot live after the departure of its root?

A part of the same sermon on innovation (bid‘ah)

No innovation is introduced unless one *sunnah* is forsaken, keep away from innovations and stick to the broad road. Surely the old tested ways are the best and the innovated ones are bad.

* * * * *

SERMON 145

**Spoken when ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb consulted Amīr al-mu‘minīn
about taking part in the battle of Persia.¹**

¹ When some people advised Caliph ‘Umar to partake in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah or Nahāwand, he finding it against his personal inclination, thought it necessary to consult Amīr al-mu‘minīn, so that if he advised against it he would plead before others that he had stayed back on Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s advice, but also if he advised partaking in the battle some other excuse would be found. However, unlike others, Amīr al-mu‘minīn advised him to stay back. The other people had advised him to join in fighting, because the Holy Prophet did not send only others to fight but took part in it himself as well, keeping his close relations also with him. What Amīr al-mu‘minīn had in view was that ‘Umar’s presence in the battle could not be beneficial to Islam, but rather his staying back would save the Muslims from dispersion.

Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s view that “the position of the head of government

is that of the axis around which the system of the government rotates'' is a point of principle and does not concern any particular personality. Whether the ruler is a Muslim or an unbeliever, just or despotic, virtuous or vicious, for the administration of the state his presence is a necessity, as Amīr al-mu'minīn has explained elsewhere at greater length :

The fact is that there is no escape for men from a ruler good or bad. Faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful enjoys (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, Allāh will carry everything to its end. Through the ruler tax is collected, the enemy is fought, roads are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoy peace and are allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked. (*Sermon 40*)

The words which Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered in his advice are not indicative of any quality of Caliph 'Umar except his being the ruler. There is no doubt that he held worldly authority, irrespective of the question of whether it was secured in the right way or wrong way. And where there is authority there is centering of people's affairs. That is why Amīr al-mu'minīn said that if 'Umar would go out the Arabs would follow him in large numbers towards the battlefield, because when the ruler is on the march the people will not like to stay behind. The result of their going would be that city after city would become vacant, while the enemy will infer from their reaching the battlefield that the Islamic cities are lying vacant, and that if these people were repulsed no assistance would reach the Muslims from the center. Again, if the ruler were killed the army would disperse automatically, because the ruler is as its foundation. When the foundation is shaken the walls cannot remain standing. The word ''aṣlu'l-'Arab'' (the root chief) of Arabia has not been used by Amīr al-mu'minīn as his own but he has taken it from the Persians. Obviously in his capacity as the head of the State, Caliph 'Umar was, in their view, the chief of Arabia. Besides, the reference is to the country, not to Islam or Muslims, so that there is no suggestion of any importance for him from the Islamic point of view.

When Amīr al-mu'minīn pointed out to Caliph 'Umar that on his reaching there the Persians would aim at him, and that if he fell into their hands they would not spare him without killing, although such words would have touched the brave to the quick and would have heightened their spirits, 'Umar liked the advice to stay back and thought it better to

In this matter, victory or defeat is not dependent on the smallness or greatness of forces. It is Allāh's religion which He has raised above all faiths, and His army which He has mobilised and extended, till it has reached the point where it stands now, and has arrived its present positions. We hold a promise from Allāh, and He will fulfil His promise and support His army.

The position of the head of government is that of the thread for beads, as it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken, they will disperse and be lost, and will never come together again. The Arabs today, even though small in number are big because of Islam and strong because of unity. You should remain like the axis for them, and rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you.

If the Persians see you tomorrow they will say, "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him we will be in peace." In this way this will heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you. You say that they have set out to fight against the Muslims. Well, Allāh detests their setting out more than you do, and He is more capable of preventing what He detests. As regards your idea about their (large) number, in the past we did not fight on the strength of large numbers but we fought on the basis of Allāh's support and assistance.

* * * * *

keep himself away from the flames of battle. If this advice had not been in accord with his personal inclination he would not have received it so heartily and would have tried to argue that the administration of the country could be maintained by leaving a deputy. Again when other people had already advised him to go out, what was the need for consulting Amīr al-mu'minīn except to get an excuse to stay back.

SERMON 146

The purpose of the deputation of the Holy Prophet and the condition of the time when people would go against the Qur'ān

Allāh deputed Muḥammad (p. b. u. h. a. h. p.) with Truth so that he may take out His people from the worship of idols towards His worship and from obeying Satan towards obeying Him and sent him with the Qur'ān which He explained and made strong, in order that the people may know their sustainer (Allāh) since they were ignorant of Him, may acknowledge Him since they were denying Him, and accept Him since they were refusing (to believe in) Him. Because He, the Glorified, revealed Himself to them through His Book without their having seen Him, by means of what He showed them out of His might and made them fear His sway. How He destroyed those whom He wished to destroy through His chastisement and ruined those whom He wished to ruin through His retribution !

On the future

Certainly, a time will come upon you after me when nothing will be more concealed than rightfulness, nothing more apparent than wrongfulness— and nothing more current than untruth against Allāh and His Prophet. For the people of this period nothing will be more valueless than the Qur'ān being recited as it ought to be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Qur'ān being misplaced from its position. And in the towns nothing will be more hated than virtue, nor anything more acceptable than vice.

The holders of the book will throw it away and its memorizers would forget it. In these days the Qur'ān and its people will be exiled and expelled. They will be companions keeping together on one path, but no one will offer them asylum. Consequently at this time the Qur'ān and its people will be among the people but not among them, will be with them but not with them, because misguidance cannot accord with guidance even though they may be together. The people will have united on division and will therefore have cut away from the

community, as though they were the leaders of the Qur'ān and not the Qur'ān their leader. Nothing of it will be left with them except its name, and they will know nothing save its writing and its words. Before that, they will inflict hardships on the virtuous, naming the latter's truthful views about Allāh false allegations, and enforcing for virtues the punishment of the vice.

Those before you passed away because of the lengthening of their desires and the forgetting of their death, till that promised event befell them about which excuses are turned down, repentance is denied and punishment and retribution is inflicted.

About Ahlu'I-bayt

O ' people, he who seeks counsel from Allāh secures guidance, and he who adopts His word as guide is led towards what is more straight, because Allāh's lover feels secure and His opponent feels afraid. It does not behoove one who knows His greatness to assume greatness, but the greatness of those who know His greatness is that they should know before Him, and the safety for those who know what His power is lies in submitting to Him. Do not be scared away from the truth like the scaring of the healthy from the scabbed person, or the sound person from the sick.

You should know that you will never know guidance unless you know who has abandoned it, you will never abide by the pledges of the Qur'ān unless you know who has broken them, and will never cling to it unless you know who has forsaken it. Seek these things from those who own them because they are the life spring of knowledge and death of ignorance. They are the people whose commands will disclose to you their (extent of) knowledge, their silence will disclose their (capacity of) speaking and their outer appearance will disclose their inner self. They do not go against religion, and do not differ from one another about it, while it is among them a truthful witness and a silent speaker.

* * * * *

SERMON 147

About Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr and the people of Baṣrah

Both of these two (Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr) wishes the Caliphate for himself, and is drawing towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Allāh nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them bears malice against the other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. By Allāh, if they achieve what they aim at, one of them will kill the other, and one will finish the other. The rebellious party has stood up. Where are the seekers of virtue; for the paths have already been determined and they have been given the news. For every misguidance there is a cause and for every break of pledge there is a misrepresentation. By Allāh, I shall not be like him who listens to the voice of mourning, hears the man who brings news of death and also visits the mourner yet does not take lesson.

* * * * *

SERMON 148

Before his passing away (last will)

O ' people, every one has to meet what he wishes to avoid by running away¹ Death is the place to which life is driving. To run away from it means to catch it. How many days did I spent in searching for the secret of this matter, but Allāh did not allow save its concealment. Alas! It is a treasured knowledge. As for my last will, it is that concerning Allāh , do not believe in a partner for Him, and concerning Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.), do not disregard his *sunnah*. Keep these two pillars and burn these two lamps. Till you are not divided, no evil will come to you.² Every one of you has to bear his own burden. It has been kept light for

¹ This means that during all the time spent in the attempts that a man makes to avoid death and in the means he adopts for it, it is only the span of life that is shortened. As the time passes the objective of death approaches near, so much so that in one's attempt to seek life one meets death.

the ignorant. Allāh is Merciful. Faith is straight. The leader (Prophet) is the holder of knowledge. Yesterday I was with you; today I have become the object of a lesson for you; and tomorrow I shall leave you. Allāh may forgive me and you.

If the foot remains firm in this slippery place, well and good . But if the foot slips, this is because we are under the shade of branches, the passing of the winds and the canopy of the clouds whose layers are dispersed in the sky, and whose traces disappeared¹ in the earth. I was your neighbour. My body kept you company for some days and shortly you will find just an empty body of mine which would be stationary after (all its) movement and silent after speech so that my calmness, the closing of my eyes, and the stillness of my limbs may provide you counsel, because it is more of a counsel for those who take a lesson (from it) than eloquent speech and a ready word. I am departing from you like one who is eager to meet (someone). Tomorrow you will look at my days, then my inner side will be disclosed to you and you will understand me after the vacation of my place and its occupation by someone else.

* * * * *

SERMON 149

About future events and some activities of the hypocrites

They took to the right and the left piercing through to the ways of evil and leaving the paths of guidance. Do not make haste for a matter which is to happen and is awaited, and do not wish for delay in what the morrow is to bring

² “*wa khalākum dhammun*” (No evil will come to you). This sentence is used as a proverb. It was first employed by Qaṣīr, slave of Jadhīmah ibn Mālik al-Abrash.

¹ The intention is that when all these things die, how can those who inhabit them remain safe? Certainly they too, like every thing else, have to pass away, some day or other. Then why should there be any wonder at my life coming to an end?

for you. For, how many people make haste for a matter, but when they get it they begin to wish they had not got it. How near is today to the dawning of tomorrow. O' my people, this is the time for the occurrence of every promised event and the approach of things which you do not know. Whoever from among us will be during these days will move through them with a burning lamp and will tread on the footsteps of the virtuous, in order to unfasten knots, to free slates, to divide the united and to unite the divided. He will be in concealment from people. The stalker will not find his footprints even though he pursues with his eye. Then a group of people will be sharpened like the sharpening of swords by the blacksmith. Their sight will be brightened by revelation, the (delicacies of) commentary will be put in their ears and they will be given drinks of wisdom, morning and evening.

A part of the same sermon

Their period became long in order that they might complete (their position of) disgrace and deserve vicissitudes, till the end of the period was reached, and a group of people turned towards mischief and picked up their arms for fighting. The virtuous did not show any obligation to Allāh but calmly endured, and did not feel elated for having engaged themselves in truthfulness. Eventually the period of trial came to an end according to what was ordained. Then they propagated their good views among others and sought nearness to Allāh according to the command of their leader.

When Allāh took the Prophet (to himself) a group of men went back on their tracks. The ways (of misguidance) ruined them and they placed trust in deceitful intriguers, showed consideration to other than kinsmen, abandoned the kin whom they had been ordered to love, and shifted the building from its strong foundation and built it in other than its (proper) place. They are the source of every shortcoming and the door of gropers in the dark. They were moving to and fro in amazement and lay intoxicated in the way of the people of the Pharaohs. They were either bent on this world and taking support on it or away from the faith and removed from it.

SERMON 150

The condition of the people during disorder, and advice against oppression and unlawful earning

I praise Allāh and seek His help from (what led to the) punishment of Satan and his deceitful acts, and (I seek His) protection from Satan's traps and way-layings. I stand witness that there is no god but Allāh and I stand witness that Muḥammad is His slave and His Prophet — peace be upon him and his progeny — and his chosen and his selected one. Muḥammad's (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) distinction cannot be paralleled nor can his loss be made good. Populated places were brightened through him when previously there was dark misguidance, overpowering ignorance and rude habits, and people regarded unlawful as lawful, humiliated the the man of wisdom, passed lives when there were no prophets and died as unbelievers.

You, O' people of Arabia, will be victims of calamities which have come near. You should avoid the intoxication of wealth, fear the disasters of chatisement, keep steadfast in the darkness and crookedness of mischief when its hidden nature discloses itself, its secrets become manifest and its axis and the pivot of its rotation gain strength. It begins in imperceptible stages but develops into great hideousness. Its youth is like the youth of an adolescent and its marks are like the marks of beating by stone.

Oppressors inherit it by (mutual) agreement. The first of them serves as a leader for the latter one and the latter one follows the first one. They vie with each other in (the matter of) this lowly world, and leap over this stinking carcass. Shortly the follower will denounce his connection with the leader, and the leader with the follower. They will disunite on account of mutual and curse one another when they meet. Then after this there will appear another arouser of mischief who will destroy ruined things. The heart will become wavering after being normal, men will be misled after safety, desires will multiply and become diversified and views will become confused.

Whoever proceeds towards this mischief will be ruined and whoever strives for it will be annihilated. They will be biting each other during it as the wild asses bite each other in the herd. The coils of the rope will be disturbed and the face of affairs will be blinded. During it sagacity will be on the ebb, and the oppressors will (get the opportunity to) speak. This mischief will smash the Bedouins with its hammers and crush them with its chest. In its dust the single marchers will be lost, and in its way the horsemen will be destroyed. It will approach with the bitterness of destiny and will give pure blood (instead of milk). It will breach the minarets of faith and shatter the ties of firm belief. The wise will run away from it while the wicked will foster it. It will thunder and flash (like lightning). It will create a severe disaster. In it kinship will be forsaken and Islam will be abandoned. He who declaims it will also be affected by it, and he who flees from it will (be forced to) stay in it.

A part of the same sermon

Among them some will be unavenged martyrs and some will be stricken with fear and seek protection. They will be deceived by pledges and fraudulent belief. You should not become landmarks of mischiefs and signs of innovations but should adhere to that on which the rope of the community has been wound and on which the pillars of obedience have been founded. Proceed towards Allāh as oppressed and do not proceed to Him as oppressors. Avoid the paths of Satan and the places of revolt. Do not put in your bellies unlawful morsels because you are facing Him Who has made disobedience unlawful for you, and made the path of obedience easy for you.

* * * * *

SERMON 151

About the greatness and the attributes of Allāh¹

¹ The first part of this sermon consists of important issues concerning the science of knowledge about Allāh, wherein Amīr al-mu'minīn has thrown light on the matter that Allāh is from ever and His attributes are the same as He

Himself. When we cast a glance at creation, we see that for every movement there is a mover, from which every man of ordinary wisdom is compelled to conclude that no effect can appear without a cause, so much so, that even an infant a few days old, when his body is touched, feels in the depth of his consciousness that someone has touched him. He indicates it by opening his eyes or turning and looking. How then can the creation of the world and the system of all creation be arranged without a Creator or Organiser? Once it is necessary to believe in a Creator, then He should exist by Himself, because everything which has a beginning must have a centre of existence from which it should terminate. If that too needed a creator, there would be the question of whether this creator is also the creation of some other creator or exists by itself. Thus unless a Self-created Creator is believed in, who should be the cause of all causes, the mind will remain groping in the unending labyrinth of cause and effect, and never attain the idea of the last extremity of the series of creation. It would fall into the fallacy of circular arguing and would not reach any end. If the creator were taken to have created himself, then there would be (one of the two positions, namely) either he should be non-existent or existent. If he were not existent, then it would not be possible for something non-existent to create any existent being. If he were existent before creating himself, there would be no sense in coming into being again. Therefore it is necessary to believe that the Creator should be a Being not dependent on any other creator for His own existence, and everything else should be dependent on Him. This dependence of the entire creation is a proof that the existence of the Source of all creation is from ever and eternal. And since all beings other than He are subject to change, are dependent on position and place and are similar to one another in qualities and properties, and since similarity leads to plurality whereas unity has no like save itself, therefore nothing can be like Him. Even things called one cannot be reckoned after His Unity because He is One and Singular in every respect. He is free and pure from all those attributes which are found in body or matter because He is neither body, nor colour, nor shape, nor does He lie in any direction, nor is He bounded within some place or locality. Therefore, man cannot see or understand Him through his senses or feelings, because senses can know only those things which accord with the limitations of time, place and matter. To believe that He can be seen is to believe that He has body, but since He is not a body, and He does not exist through a body, and He does not lie in any direction or place, there is no question of His being seen. But His being unseen is not like that of subtle material bodies, due to whose delicacy the eye pierces through them and eyes remain unable to see them; as for example the wind in the vast firmament. But He is unseen by His very existence. Nevertheless, nothing is unseen for Him. He sees as well as hears, but is not

Praise be to Allāh who is proof of His existence through His creation, of His being external through the newness of His creation, and through their mutual similarities of the fact that nothing is similar to Him. Senses cannot touch Him and curtains cannot veil Him, because of the difference between the Maker and the made, the Limiter and the limited and the Sustainer and the sustained.

He is One but not by the first in counting, is Creator but not through activity or labour, is Hearer but not by means of any physical organ, is Looker but not by a stretching of eyelids, is Witness but not by nearness, is Distinct but not by measurement of distance, is Manifest but not by seeing and is Hidden but not by subtilty (of body). He is Distinct from things because He overpowers them and exercises might over them, while things are distinct from Him because of their subjugation to Him and their turning towards Him.

He who describes Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him rejects His eternity. He who said “how”

dependent on instruments of seeing or hearing, because if He were in need of organs of the body for hearing and seeing He would be in need of external things for His perfection and would not be a perfect Being, whereas He should be perfect in all respects and no attribute of perfection should be apart from His Self. To believe in attributes separately from His Self would mean that there would be a self and a few attributes and the compound of the self and the attributes would be Allāh. But a thing which is compounded is dependent on its parts and these parts must exist before their composition into the whole. When the parts exist from before, how can the whole be from ever and eternal because its existence is later than that of its parts. But Allāh had the attributes of knowledge, power and sustaining even when nothing was existent, because none of His attributes were created in Him from outside, but His attributes are His Self and His Self is His attributes. Consequently, His knowledge does not depend on the object of knowledge existing first and then His knowledge, because His Self is prior to things coming into existence. Nor is it necessary for His power that there should first exist the object to be over-powered and then alone He would be called Powerful, because Powerful is that who has power equally for doing or abandoning and as such the existence of the object to be over-powered is not necessary. Similarly Sustainer means master. Just as He is the Master of the non-existent after its coming into existence, in the same way He has power to bring it into existence from non-existence, namely if He so wills He may bestow existence upon it.

sought a description for Him. He who said “where” bounded him. He is the Knower even though there be nothing to be known. He is the Sustainer even though there be nothing to be sustained. He is the Powerful even though there be nothing to be overpowered.

A part of the same sermon about the Divine leaders (Imāms)

The riser has risen, the sparkler has sparkled, the appearer has appeared and the curved has been straightened. Allāh has replaced one people with another and one day with another. We awaited these changes as the famine-stricken await the rain. Certainly the Imāms are the vicegerents of Allāh over His creatures and they make the creatures know Allāh. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and knows Him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and denies Him.

Allāh the Glorified, has distinguished you with Islam and has chosen you for it. This is because it is the name of safety and the collection of honour. Allāh the Glorified, chose its way and disclosed its pleas through open knowledge and secret maxims. Its (Qur’ān) wonders are not exhausted and its delicacies do not end. It contains blossoming bounties and lamps of darkness. (The doors of) virtues cannot be opened save with its keys, nor can gloom be dispelled save with its lamps. Allāh has protected its inaccessible points (from enemies) and allowed grazing (to its followers) in its pastures. It contains cover (from the ailment of misguidance) for the seeker of cure and full support for the seeker of support.

* * * * *

SERMON 152

**About negligent persons and the characteristics
of beasts, carnivores and women**

He has been allowed time by Allāh. He is falling into error along with

negligent persons and goes early in the morning with sinners, without any road to lead or any Imām to guide.

A part of the same sermon

At last when Allāh will make clear to them the reward for their sins, and take them out from the veils of their neglectfulness they will proceed to what they were running away from, and run away from what they were proceeding to. They will not benefit from the wants they will satisfy or the desires they would fulfil.

I warn you and myself from this position. A man should derive benefit from his own self. Certainly, prudent is he who hears and ponders over it, who sees and observes and who benefits from instructive material and then treads on clear paths wherein he avoids falling into hollows and straying into pitfalls, and does not assist those who misguide him by turning away from truthfulness, changing his words, or fearing truth.

O' my listener! be cured from your intoxication, wake up from your slumber, decrease your hasty activity and ponder over what has come to you through the Holy Prophet, the Ummī¹ which is inevitable and inescapable. You should turn away from him who opposes him and leave him and leave whatever he has adopted for himself. Put off your vanity, drop your haughtiness and recall your grave because your way passes over it. You will be dealt with as you deal with others, you will reap what you sow, and what you send today will meet you tomorrow. So provide for your future and send (some good acts) for your day (of reckoning). Fear, fear, O' listener! Act, act, O' careless! No one will warn you like him who knows.

One of the firm decisions of Allāh in the Wise Reminder (Qur'ān) upon which He bestows reward or gives punishment, and through which

¹ The word “*ummī*” has been used in the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the Holy Prophet in chap. 7:157-158. For better understanding of the word refer to the books of commentary on the Holy Qur'ān.

He likes or dislikes is that it will not benefit a man, even though he exerts himself and acts sincerely if he leaves this world to meet Allāh with one of these acts without repenting, namely that he believed in a partner with Allāh during his obligatory worship, or appeased his own anger by killing an individual, or spoke about acts committed by others, or sought fulfilment of his needs from people by introducing an innovation in his religion, or met people with a double face, or moved among them with a double tongue. Understand this because an illustration is a guide for its like.

Beasts are concerned with their bellies. Carnivores are concerned with assaulting others. Women are concerned with the adornments of this ignoble life and the creation of mischief herein.¹ (On the other hand) believers are humble, believers are admonishers and believers are afraid (of Allāh).

* * * * *

¹ The intention is to say that the cause of all mischief and evil is the passion to satisfy bodily needs and the passion to subdue. If a human being is subjugated by the passion to satisfy bodily needs and considers filling the stomach as his aim there will be no difference between him and a beast, because a beast too has no aim except to fill its belly. But if he is over-powered by the passion to subdue others and takes to killing and devastation there will be no difference between him and a carnivorous beast, because the latter's aim is also tearing and devouring. If both the passions are at work in him then he is like a woman, because in a woman both these passions act side by side and because of this she is extremely eager of adornment and is active in fanning mischief and disturbance. However, a true believer will never agree to adopt these habits as his mode of behaviour, rather he keeps his passions suppressed so that he neither allows pride and vanity to approach near him nor does he fan mischief or disturbance for fear of Allāh.

Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadid has written that Amīr al-mu'minīn delivered this sermon at the time of marching towards Baṣrah, and since the trouble of Baṣrah was the result of a woman's instigation, Amīr al-mu'minīn has, after mentioning beasts and carnivore, held a woman also to possess such qualities. Thus the battle of Baṣrah was the result of these qualities, whereby thousands of persons were involved in death and destruction.

SERMON 153

About the Ahlu'l-bayt (of the Holy Prophet) and their opposers

He who has an intelligent mind looks to his goal. He knows his low road as well as his high road. The caller has called. The shepherd has tended (his flocks). So respond to the caller and follow the shepherd.

They (the opposers) have entered the oceans of disturbance and have taken to innovations instead of the *sunnah* (the Prophet's holy deeds, utterances and his unspoken approvals), while the believers have sunk down, and the misguided and the liars are speaking. We are the near ones, companions, treasure holders and doors (to the *sunnah*). Houses are not entered save through their doors. Whoever enters them from other than the door is called a thief.

A part of the same sermon

The delicacies of the Qur'ān are about them (*Ahlu'l-bayt*, the descendants of the Prophet) and they are the treasurers of Allāh. When they speak they speak the truth, but when they keep quiet no one can speak unless they speak. The forerunner should report correctly to his people, should retain his wits and should be one of the children (a man) of the next world, because he has come from there and would return to it.

The beginning of the action of one who sees with heart and acts with eyes is to assess whether the action will go against him or for him. If it is for him he indulges in it, but if it is against him he keeps away from it. For, he who acts without knowledge is like one who treads without a path. Then his deviation from the path keeps him at a distance from his aim. And he who acts according to knowledge is like he who treads the clear path. Therefore, he who can see should see whether he should proceed or return.

You should also know that the outside (of every thing) has a similar inside. Of whatever the outside is good, its inside too is good, and whatever the outside is bad, its inside too is bad. The truthful Prophet — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny — has said that : “Allāh may love a man but hate his action, and may love the action but hate the man.” You should also know that every action is like a vegetation, and a vegetation cannot do without water while waters are different. So where the water is good the plant is good and its fruits are sweet, whereas where the water is bad, the plant will also be bad and its fruits will be bitter.

* * * * *

SERMON 154

About the wonderful creation of the bat

Praise be to Allāh who is such that it is not possible to describe the reality of knowledge about Him, since His greatness has restrained the intellects, and therefore they cannot find the way to approach the extremity of His realm. He is Allāh, the True, the Manifest of Truth. He is more True and more manifest than eyes can see. Intellects cannot comprehend Him by fixing limits for Him since in that case to Him would be attribute shape. Imagination cannot catch Him by fixing quantities for Him for in that case to Him would be attributed body. He created creatures without any example, and without the advice of a counsel, or the assistance of a helper. His creation was completed by His command, and bowed to His obedience. It responded (to Him) and did not defy (Him). It obeyed and did not resist.

An example of His delicate production, wonderful creation and deep sagacity which He has shown us is found in these bats which keep hidden in the daylight although daylight reveals every thing else, and are mobile in the night although the night shuts up every other living being ; and how their eyes get dazzled and cannot make use of the light of the sun so as to be guided in their movements and so as to reach their

known places through the direction provided by the sun.

Allāh has prevented them from moving in the brightness of the sun and confined them to their places of hiding instead of going out at the time of its shining. Consequently they keep their eyelids down in the day and treat night as a lamp and go with its help in search of their livelihood. The darkness of night does not obstruct their sight nor does the gloom of darkness prevent them from movement. As soon as the sun removes its veil and the light of morning appears, and the rays of its light enter upon the lizzards in their holes, the bats pull down their eyelids on their eyes and live on what they had collected in the darkness of the night. Glorified is He who has made the night as day for them to seek livelihood and made the day for rest and stay.

He has given them wings of flesh with which, at the time of need, they rise upwards for flying. They look like the ends of ears without feathers or bones. Of course, you can see the veins quite distinctly. They have two wings which are neither too thin so that get turned in flying, nor too thick so that they prove heavy. When they fly their young ones hold on to them and seek refuge with them, getting down when they get down and rising up when they rise. The young does not leave them till its limbs become strong, its wings can support it for rising up, and it begins to recognize its places of living and its interest. Glorified is He who creates everything without any previous sample by someone else.

* * * * *

SERMON 155

**About the malice borne by ‘Ā’ishah; and warning the
people of Baṣrah about what was to occur**

Whoever can at this time keep himself clinging to Allāh should do so. If you follow me I shall certainly carry you, if Allāh so wills, on the path of Paradise, even though it may be full of severe hardship and of bitter taste.

As regards a certain woman,¹ she is in the grip of womanly views, and

¹ There is no denying the fact that ‘Ā’ishah’s behaviour towards Amīr al-mu’minīn was throughout inimical, and very often her heart’s turbidity expressed itself on her face, and her hatred and dislike became quite apparent, so much so that if in connection with some affair Amīr al-mu’minīn’s name came up a frown appeared on her forehead and she did not relish pronouncing it with her tongue. For example, when ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Utbah mentioned to ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās the narration by Ā’ishah namely that “in his death-illness the Prophet, taking support on al-Faḍl ibn ‘Abbās and another person, came to her (‘Ā’ishah’s) house,” ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās said :

“Do you know who this ‘other man’ was?” He said, “No.” Then he said, “ ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, but she is averse to name him in a good context.” (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol.6, pp.34,228; Ibn Sa’d, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol.2, part 2, p.29; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.1, pp.1800-1801; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol.1, pp.544-545; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.3, p.396).

One cause for this hatred and malice was the presence of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h.) whose wholesome dignity and esteem pricked her heart like a thorn. Her jealousy towards the other wives (of the Prophet) did not allow her to let the Prophet love the daughter of his other wife to such a degree that he should stand on her approach, seat her in his own place, declare her most honourable of all the women of the world and bear such love towards her children as to call them his own sons. All these things pained her much and naturally her feelings on such an occasion were that if she had borne children they would have been the Prophet’s sons and they would have been the pivot of the Prophet’s affection instead of Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn. But she was not gifted with any issue and she gratified her own desire to be a mother by adopting the surname Umm ‘Abdillāh (mother of the slave of Allāh) after her sister’s son. In short all these things created the passion of hatred in her heart, as a result of which she off and on complained to the Prophet against Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah but could not succeed in diverting the Prophet’s attention from her. News about this mortification and estrangement also reached the ears of Abū Bakr. That would only perturb him as he too could do nothing, except that his verbal sympathies were with his daughter. At last the Prophet left this world and the reins of Government fell into his hands. Now was the opportunity for him to avenge as best as he could and to perpetrate whatever violence he had in mind. Consequently the first step he took was that, in order to deprive Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah

of inheritance, he denied the principle of inheritance in the case of the prophets and held that neither do the prophets inherit nor are they inherited from, but the property left by them escheats to the state. Fāṭimah was so much affected that she gave up speaking to him and passed away from this world with these very feelings. ‘Ā’ishah did not even take the trouble to express any sorrow at her tragic death. Thus Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd has written.

When Fāṭimah expired all the wives of the Prophet came to Banī Hāshim in condolence except ‘Ā’ishah. She did not come and showed herself sick and words from her reached ‘Alī which displayed her joy. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.9, p.198)

As long as she bore so much malice against Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah, how could Fāṭimah’s spouse be spared similar enmity and malice. Particularly when such events also occurred which worked like a fan and roused her feeling of hatred, such as the incident of “If k” when Amīr al-mu’minīn said to the Prophet. “She is no better than the buckles of your shoe, leave her and divorce her away.” On hearing this ‘Ā’ishah must have felt miserable in her bed, and must have developed the severest feeling of hatred against him. There were also moments when distinction was conferred on Amīr al-mu’minīn in preference to Abū Bakr. For instance, in connection with the dispatch of the Qur’ānic verses on *Barā’ah* (innocence), the Prophet removed Abū Bakr from the job, recalled him and assigned it to Amīr al-mu’minīn saying that he had been commanded by Allāh to take it himself or send it through a member of his family. Similarly the Prophet closed all the doors opening into the mosque including that of Abū Bakr but allowed the door of Amīr al-mu’minīn’s house to continue to open thereinto.

‘Ā’ishah could not relish Amīr al-mu’minīn’s distinction over her father, and whenever there was any occasion for such distinction she did her best to undo it. When in his last days the Prophet ordered the contingent under Usāmah ibn Zayd to march, and ordered Abū Bakr and ‘Umar also to go under his command, they received a message from the wives of the Prophet that his condition was serious and therefore the contingent should come back instead of proceeding further. This was because their far-reaching sight had realized that the only purpose in getting Medina vacated by the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* could be that after the death of the Prophet no one should stand in Amīr al-mu’minīn’s way and that he should get the caliphate without any trouble. On receipt of this message the contingent under Usāmah came back. When the Prophet learnt this he again ordered Usāmah to march with the

malice is boiling in her bosom like the furnace of the blacksmith. If she were called upon to deal with others as she is dealing with me she would not have done it. (As for me), even hereafter she will be allowed her original respect, while the reckoning (of her misdeeds) is an obligation on Allāh.

A part of the same sermon

This path is the lightest course and the brightest lamp. Guidance towards virtuous actions is sought through faith while guidance towards faith is achieved through virtuous actions. Knowledge is made to prosper through faith, and death is feared because of knowledge. This world comes to an end with death, while the next world is secured (by virtuous actions) in this world. For people there is no escape from resurrection. They are heading for this last end in its appointed course.

A part of the same sermon

They have got up from the resting places in their graves and have set off for

contingent and even said, “Allāh may curse him who keeps away from the contingent,” whereupon they again set off, but they were again called back till the Prophet’s illness assumed serious proportions, but Usāmah’s contingent did not go out as it did not want to. After this Abū Bakr was sent word through Bilāl that he should deputise the Prophet in leading the prayers in order to pave the way for his Caliphateship. Accordingly keeping this in view he was first shown as the Prophet’s caliph (deputy) in prayers and eventually was accepted as his caliph for all purposes. Thereafter matters were so contrived that Amīr al-mu’minīn could not get the Caliphate. However, after the reign of the third caliph circumstances took such a turn that people were obliged to swear allegiance at Amīr al-mu’minīn’s hand. On this occasion ‘Ā’ishah was present in Mecca. When she learnt about Amīr al-mu’minīn’s caliphate her eyes began emitting flames, and rage and anger perturbed her mind, and her hatred for Amīr al-mu’minīn assumed such seriousness that she rose against him on the excuse of avenging blood of the same man (‘Uthmān) whom she had herself proclaimed fit to be killed, and openly declared war as a result of which so much bloodshed occurred that the whole land of Baṣrah was smeared with the blood of those killed, and the door of disunity was opened for good. (*Sharḥ*, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.9, pp.190-200)

the final objectives. Every house has its own people. They are not changed nor shifted from there. Commanding for good and refraining from evil are two characteristics of Allāh, the Glorified. They can neither bring death near nor lessen sustenance.

You should adhere to the Book of Allāh because it is the strong rope, a clear light, a benefiting cure, a quenching for thirst, protection for the adherent and deliverance for the attached. It does not curve so as to need straightening and does not deflect so as to be corrected. Frequency of its repetition and its falling on ears does not make it old. Whoever speaks according to it, speaks truth and whoever acts by it is forward (in action).

A man stood up and said : O' Amīr al-mu'minīn tell us about this disturbance and whether you enquired about it from the Holy Prophet. **Thereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn said :**

When Allāh, the Glorified sent down the verse :

Alif lām mīm (A.L.M.) What! Do people imagine that they will be let off on (their) saying: " We believe!" and they will not be tried? (Qur'ān, 29:1—2)

I came to know that the disturbance would not befall us so long as the Prophet — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny — is among us. So I said, ‘ ‘O’ Prophet of Allāh, what is this disturbance of which Allāh, the Sublime, has informed you?’ ’ and he replied, ‘ ‘O’ ‘Alī, my people will create trouble after me.’ ’ I said, ‘ ‘O’ Prophet of Allāh on the day of *Uḥud*, when people had fallen martyrs and I was not among them, and this had been very annoying to me, did you not say to me, ‘cheer up, as martyrdom is for you hereafter?’ ’ The Prophet replied, ‘ ‘Yes it is so, but what about your enduring at present?’ ’ I said, ‘ ‘O’ Prophet of Allāh, this is not an occasion for endurance, but rather an occasion for cheering up and gratefulness.’ ’ Then he said :

‘ ‘O’ ‘Alī, people will fall into mischief through their wealth,

will show obligation to Allāh on account of their faith, will expect His mercy, will feel safe from His anger and regard His unlawful matters as lawful by raising false doubts and by their misguiding desires. They will then hold lawful (the use of) wine by calling it barley water, a bribe by calling it a gift, and taking of usurious interest by calling it sale.” I said, “O’ Prophet of Allāh, how should I deal with them at the time, whether to hold them to have gone back in heresy or just in revolt.” He said, “in revolt.”

* * * * *

SERMON 156

Urging people towards Piety (taqwā)

Praise be to Allāh who made praise the Key for His remembrance, a means for increase of His bounty and a guide for His Attributes and Dignity.

O’ creatures of Allāh! Time will deal with the survivors just as it dealt with those gone by. The time that has passed will not return and whatever there is in it will not stay for ever. Its later deeds are the same as the former ones. Its trouble try to excell one another. Its banners follow each other. It is as though you are attached to the last day which is driving you as rapidly as are driven the she-camels which are dry for seven months. He who busies himself with things other than improvement of his ownself becomes perplexed in darkness and entangled in ruination. His evil spirits immerse him deep in vices and make his bad! actions appear handsome. Paradise is the end of those who are forward (in good acts) and Hell is the end of those who commit excesses.

Know O’ creatures of Allāh! that piety is a strong house of protection while impiety is a weak house which does not protect its people, and does not give security to him who takes refuge therein. Know that the sting of sins is cut by piety and the final aim is achieved by conviction of belief.

O' creatures of Allāh! (fear) Allāh, (fear) Allāh, in the matter of your own selves, which are the most beloved and dear to you, because Allāh has clarified to you the way of truthfulness and lighted its paths. So (you may choose) either ever-present misfortune or eternal happiness. You should therefore provide in these mortal days for the eternal days. You have been informed of the provision, ordered to march and told to make haste in setting off. You are like staying riders who do not know when they would be ordered to march on. Beware, what will he, who has been created for the next world, do with this world? What will a person do with wealth which he would shortly be deprived of while only its ill effects and reckoning would be left behind for him?

O' creatures of Allāh! the good which Allāh has promised should not be abandoned and the evil from which He has refrained should not be coveted. O' creatures of Allāh!, fear the day when actions will be reckoned; there will be much quaking and even children will get old.

Know, O' creatures of Allāh! that your ownself is a guard over you; your limbs are watchmen and truthful vigil-keepers who preserve (the record of) your actions and the numbers of your breaths. The gloom of the dark night cannot conceal you from them, nor can closed doors hide you from them. Surely tomorrow is close to today.

Today will depart with all that it has and tomorrow will come in its wake. It is as though every one of you has reached that place on earth where he would be alone, namely the location of his grave. So, what to say of the lonely house, the solitary place of staying and the solitary exile. It is as though the cry (of the Horn) has reached you, the Hour has overtaken you and you have come out (of your graves) for the passing of judgement. (The curtains of) falsehood have been removed from you and your excuses have become weak. The truth about you has been proved. All your matters have proceeded to their consequences. Therefore, you should (now) take counsel from examples, learn lessons from vicissitudes and take advantage of the warners.

SERMON 157

About the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'ān

Allāh deputed the Prophet at a time when there had been no prophets for some time. People had been in slumber for a long time and the twist of the rope had loosened. The Prophet came with (a Book containing) testification to what (books) were already there and also with a light to be followed. It is the Qur'ān. If you ask it to speak it won't do so; but I will tell you about it. Know that it contains knowledge of what is to come about, stories of the past, cure for your ills and regulation for whatever faces you.

A part of the same sermon.

About the autocracy of the Umayyads

At that time there will remain no house or tent but oppressors would inflict it with grief and inject sickness in it. On that day no one in the sky will listen to their excuse and no one on the earth will come to their help. You selected for the governance (caliphate) one who is not fit for it, and you raised him to a position which was not meant for him. Shortly Allāh will take revenge from every one who has oppressed, food for food and drink for drink, namely (they will be given) colocynth for eating, myrrh and aloes for drinking, and fear for an inner and the sword for an outer covering.

They are nothing but carrierbeasts laden with sins and camels laden with evil deeds. I swear and again swear that the Umayyads will have to spit out the caliphate as phlegm is spat and there after they will never taste it nor relish its flavour so long as day and night rotate.

* * * * *

SERMON 158

Good behaviour with people and ignoring their faults

I lived as a good neighbour to you and tried my best to look after you, and I freed you from the snare of humbleness and the fetters of oppression through my gratefulness for the little good (from your side) and closed my eyes to your many misdeeds which my eyes had observed and my body had witnessed.

* * * * *

SERMON 159

Praise of Allāh

Allāh's verdict is judicious and full of wisdom. His pleasure implies protection and mercy. He decides with knowledge and forgives with forbearance.

O' my Allāh! praise be to Thee for what Thou takest and givest and for that from which Thou curest or with which Thou afflictest; praise which is the most acceptable to Thee, the most liked by Thee and the most dignified before Thee; praise which fills all Thy creation and reaches where Thou desirest; praise which is not veiled from Thee and does not end, and whose continuity does not cease.

Greatness of Allāh

We do not know the reality of Thy greatness except that we know that Thou art Ever-living and Self-subsisting by Whom all things subsist. Drowsiness or sleep do not overtake Thee, vision does not reach Thee and sight does not grasp Thee. Thou seest the eyes and countest the ages. Thou holdest (people as slaves) by foreheads and feet. We see Thy creation and wonder over it because of Thy might, and describe it as (a result of) Thy great authority; whereas what is hidden from us, of which our sight has fallen short, which our intelligence has not attained, and between which and ourselves curtains of the unknown have been cast, is far greater.

He who frees his heart (from all other engagements) and exerts his

thinking in order to know how Thou established Thy throne, how Thou created Thy creatures, how Thou suspended the air in Thy skies and how Thou spread Thy earth on the waves of water, his eyes would return tired, his intelligence defeated, his ears eager and his thinking awander.

A part of the same sermon about hope and fear in Allāh

He claims according to his own thinking that he hopes from Allāh. By Allāh, the Great, he speaks a lie. The position is that his hope (in Allāh) does not appear through his action although the hope of every one who hopes is known through his action. Every hope is so, except the hope in Allāh, the Sublime, if it is impure; and every fear is established except the fear for Allāh if it is unreal.

He hopes big things from Allāh and small things from men but he gives to man (such consideration as) he does not give to Allāh. What is the matter with Allāh, glorified be His praise? He is accorded less (consideration) than what is given to His creatures. Do you ever fear to be false in your hope in Allāh? Or do you not regard Him the centre of your hope? Similarly, if a man fears man he gives him (such consideration) out of his fear which he does not give to Allāh. Thus, he has made his fear for men ready currency while his fear from the Creator is mere deferment or promise. This is the case of every one in whose eye this world appears big (and important) and in whose heart its position is great. He prefers it over Allāh, so he inclines towards it, and becomes its devotee.

The example of the Holy Prophet

Certainly, in the Prophet of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny — was sufficient example for you and a proof concerning the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils, because its sides had been constricted for him, while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived of its milk and turned away from its adornments.

The example of Mūsā (Moses)

If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Mūsā, the

Interlocutor of Allāh (p.b.u.h.) when he said: *O' Allāh! I need whatever good Thou mayest grant me.* (Qur'ān, 28:24) By Allāh, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and paucity of his flesh.

The example of Dāwūd (David)

If you desire I can give you a third example of Dāwūd (p. b. u. h.). He is the holder of the Psalms and the reciter among the people of Paradise. He used to prepare baskets of date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions : “Which of you will help me by purchasing it?” He used to eat barley bread (bought) out of its price.

The example of ‘Īsā (Jesus)

If you desire I will tell you about ‘Īsā (p.b.u.h.) son of Maryam (Mary). He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to give him grief, nor wealth to deviate (his attention), nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance and his two hands his servant.

Following the example of the Holy Prophet

You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Allāh bless him and his descendants. In him is the example for the follower, and the consolation for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Allāh is he who follows His Prophet and who treads in his footsteps. He took the least (share) from this world and did not take a full glance at it. Of all the people of the world he was the least satiated and the most empty of stomach. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it. When he knew that Allāh, the Glorified, hated a thing, he too hated it; that Allāh held a thing low, he too held it low; that Allāh held a thing small, he too held it small. If we love what Allāh and His Prophet hate and hold great what Allāh and His

prophet hold small that would be enough isolation from Allāh and transgression of His commands.

The Prophet used to eat on the ground, and sat like a slave. He repaired his shoe with his hand, and patched his clothes with his hand. He would ride an unsaddled ass and would seat someone behind him. If there was a curtain on his door with pictures on it he would say to one of his wives, ‘ ‘ O ’ such-and-such, take it away out of my sight because if I look at it I recall the world and its allurements.’ ’ Thus, he removed his heart from this world and destroyed its remembrance from his mind. He loved that its allurements should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not secure good dress from it, should not regard it a place of stay and should not hope to live in it. Consequently he removed it from his mind, let it go away from his heart and kept it hidden from his eyes. In the same way he who hates a thing should hate to look at it or to hear about it.

Certainly there was in the Prophet of Allāh all that would apprise you of the evils of this world and its defects, namely that he remained hungry along with his chief companions, and despite his great nearness the allurements of the world remained remote from him. Now, one should see with one’s intelligence whether Allāh honoured Muḥammad — the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — as a result of this or disgraced him. If he says that Allāh disgraced him, he certainly lies and perpetrates a great untruth. If he says Allāh honoured him, he should know that Allāh dishonoured the others when He extended the (benefits of the) world for him but held them away from him who was the nearest to Him of all men.

Therefore, one should follow His Prophet, tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance. Otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Allāh made Muḥammad — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — a sign for the Day of Judgement, a conveyor of tidings for Paradise and a warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world safe. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) till he departed and responded to the call of Allāh. How great is Allāh’s blessing in that He blessed us with

the Prophet as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader behind whom we tread.

The example of himself

By Allāh, I have been putting patches in my shirts so much that now I feel shy of the patcher. Someone asked me whether I would not put it off, but I said, “Get away from me.” Only in the morning do people (realize the advantage of and) speak highly of the night journey.

* * * * *

SERMON 160

Deputation of the Holy Prophet

Allāh deputed the Prophet with a sparkling light, a clear argument, an open path and a guiding book. His tribe is the best tribe and his lineal tree the best lineal tree whose branches are in good proportion and fruits hanging (in plenty). His birth-place was Mecca, and the place of his immigration Ṭaybah (Medina), from where his name rose high and his voice spread far and wide.

Allāh sent him with a sufficing plea, a convincing discourse and a rectifying announcement. Through him Allāh disclosed the ways that had been forsaken, and destroyed the innovations that had been introduced. Through him He explained the detailed commands. Now, whoever adopts a religion other than Islam, his misery is definite, his stick (of support) will be cracked, his fate will be serious, his end will be long grief and distressing punishment.

Drawing lessons from this world

I trust in Allāh, the trust of bending towards Him, and I seek His guidance for the way that leads to His Paradise and takes to the place of His pleasure. I advise you, O’ creatures of Allāh, to exercise fear of Allāh

and to obey Him because it is salvation tomorrow and deliverance for ever. He warned (you of chastisement) and did so thoroughly. He persuaded (you towards virtues) and did so fully. He described this world, its cutting away from you, its decay and its shifting. Therefore keep aloof from its attractions, because very little of it will accompany you. This house is the closest to the displeasure of Allāh and the remotest from the pleasure of Allāh.

So close your eyes, O' creatures of Allāh, from its worries and engagements, because you are sure about its separation and its changing conditions. Fear it like a sincere fearer and one who struggles hard, and take a lesson from what you have seen about the falling places of those before you, namely that their joints were made to vanish, their eyes and ears were destroyed, their honour and prestige disappeared and their pleasure and wealth came to an end. The nearness of their children changed into remoteness. The company of their spouses changed into separation with them. They do not boast over each other, nor do they beget children nor meet each other nor live as neighbours. Therefore, fear O' creature of Allāh, like the fear of one who has control over himself, who can check his passions and perceive with his wisdom. Surely, the matter is quite clear, the banner is standing, the course is level and the way is straight.

* * * * *

SERMON 161

One of Amīr al-mu'minīn's companions (from Banū Asad) asked him: "How was it that your tribe (Quraysh) deprived you of this position (Caliphate) although you deserved it most." Then in reply he said:

O' brother of Banū Asad! Your girth is loose and you have put it on the wrong way. Nevertheless you enjoy in-law kinship and also the right to ask, and since you have asked, listen. As regards the oppression against us in this matter although we were the highest as regards

descent and the strongest in relationship with the Messenger of Allāh. It was a selfish act over which the hearts of people became greedy, although some people did not care for it. The Arbiter is Allāh and to Him is the return on the Day of Judgement.

‘Now¹ leave this story of devastation about which there is hue and cry all round.

Come and look at the son of Abū Sufyān (Mu‘āwiyah). Time has

¹ This is a hemistich from the couplet of the famous Arab poet Imriu’l-Qays al-Kindī. The second hemistich is:

And let me know the story of what happened to the riding camels.

The incident behind this couplet is that when the father of Imriu’l-Qays namely Hujr ibn al-Ḥārith was killed, he roamed about the various Arab tribes to avenge his father’s life with their help. In this connection he stayed with a man of Jadīlah (tribe) but finding himself unsafe left that place, and stayed with Khālīd ibn Sadūs an-Nabhānī. In the meantime a man of Jadīlah named Bā‘ith ibn Ḥuwayṣ drove away some of his camels. Imriu’l-Qays complained of this matter to his host and he asked him to send with him his she-camels then he would get back his camels. Consequently Khālīd went to those people and asked them to return the camels of his guest which they had robbed. They said that he was neither a guest nor under his protection. Thereupon Khālīd swore that he was really his guest and showed them his she-camels that he had with him. They then agreed to return the camels. But actually instead of returning the camels they drove away the she-camels as well. One version is that they did return the camels to Khālīd but instead of handling them over to Imriu’l-Qays he kept them for himself. When Imriu’l-Qays came to know this he composed a few couplets out of which this is one. It means ‘now you leave the story of these camels which were robbed but now let me know about the she-camels snatched from my hands.’

Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s intention in quoting this verse as an illustration is that “Now that Mu‘āwiyah is at war, we should talk about it and should leave the discussion about the devastation engendered by those who had usurped my rights. That time has gone away. Now is the time for grappling with the mischiefs of the hour. So discuss the event of the moment and do not start untimely strain.” Amīr al-mu‘minīn said this because the marl had put the question to him at the time of the battle of Ṣiffīn, when the battle was raging and bloodshed was in full swing.

made me laugh after weeping. No wonder, by Allāh; what is this affair which surpasses all wonder and which has increased wrongfulness. These people have tried to put out the flame of Allāh's light from His lamp and to close His fountain from its source. They mixed epidemic-producing water between me and themselves. If the trying hardships were removed from among us, I would take them on the course of truthfulness other wise:

. . . So let not thy self go (in vain) in grief for them; verily Allāh knoweth all that they do. (Qur'ān, 35:8)

* * * * *

SERMON 162

Attributes of Allāh

Praise be to Allāh, Creator of people; He has spread the earth. He makes streams to flow and vegetation to grow on high lands. His primality has no beginning, nor has His eternity any end. He is the First and from ever. He is the everlasting without limit. Foreheads bow before Him and lips declare His oneness. He determined the limits of things at the time of His creating them, keeping Himself away from any likeness.

Imagination cannot surmise Him within the limits of movements, limbs or senses. It cannot be said about Him: "whence;"? and no time limit can be attributed to Him by saying "till". He is apparent, but it cannot be said "from what". He is hidden, but it cannot be said "in what". He is not a body which can die, nor is He veiled so as to be enclosed therein. He is not near to things by way of touch, nor is He remote from them by way of separation.

The gazing of people's eyes is not hidden from Him, nor the repetition of words, nor the glimpse of hillocks, nor the tread of a footstep in the dark night or in the deep gloom, where the shining moon

casts its light and the effulgent sun comes in its wake, through its setting and appearing again and again with the rotation of time and periods, by the approach of the advancing night or the passing away of the running day.

He precedes every extremity and limit, and every counting and numbering. He is far above what those whose regard is limited attribute to Him, such as the qualities of measure, having extremities, living in houses and dwelling in abodes, because limits are meant for creation and are attributable only to other than Allāh.

Allāh, the Originator from nought

He did not create things from eternal matter nor after every existing examples, but He created whatever He created and then He fixed limits thereto, and He shaped whatever He shaped and gave the best shape thereto. Nothing can disobey Him, but the obedience of something is of no benefit to Him. His knowledge about those who died in the past is the same as His knowledge about the remaining survivors, and His knowledge about whatever there is in the high skies is like His knowledge of whatever there is in the low earth.

A part of the same sermon

About man's creation, and pointing towards the requirements of life.

O ' creature who has been equitably created and who has been nurtured and looked after in the darkness of wombs with multiple curtains. You were originated *from the essence of clay* (Qur'ān, 23:12) and placed *in a still place for a known length* (Qur'ān, 77:21-22) and an ordained time. You used to move in the womb of your mother as an embryo, neither responding to a call nor hearing any voice.

Then you were taken out from your place of stay to a place you had not seen, and you were not acquainted with the means of

awaiting its benefits, or with who guided you to eke out your sustenance from the udder of your mother, and, when you were in need, appraised you of the location of what you required or aimed at. Alas ! Certainly he who is unable to understand the qualities of a being with shape and limbs is the more unable to understand the qualities of the Creator and the more remote from appreciating Him through the limitations of creatures.

* * * * *

SERMON 163

When people went to Amīr al-mu'minīn in a deputation and complained to him through what they had to say against 'Uthmān, and requested him to speak to him on their behalf and to admonish him for their sake, he went to see him and said:¹

¹ During the Caliphate of 'Uthmān when the Muslims were weary of the oppression of the Government and its officials collected in Medina to complain to the senior companions of the Prophet, they came to Amīr al-mu'minīn in a peaceful manner and requested him to see 'Uthmān and advise him not to trample on the Muslims' rights and to put an end to the troubles which were proving the cause of the people's ruin, whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn went to him and uttered these words.

In order to make the bitterness of the admonition palatable Amīr al-mu'minīn adopted that way of speech in the beginning which would create a sense of responsibility in the addressee and direct him towards his obligations. Thus, by mentioning his companionship of the Prophet, his personal position, and his kinship to the Prophet as against the two previous Caliphs, his intention was to make him realize his duties; in any case, this was obviously not an occasion for eulogizing him, so that its later portion can be disregarded and the whole speech be regarded as an eulogy of his attainments, because from its very beginning it is evident that whatever 'Uthmān did, he did it wilfully, that nothing was done without his knowledge or his being informed, and that he could not be held unaccountable for it because of his being unaware of it. If the adoption of a line of action which made the whole Islamic world raise hue and cry in spite of his having being a companion

of the Prophet, having heard his instructions, having seen his behaviour and having been acquainted with the commandments of Islam can be regarded as a distinction, then this taunt may also be regarded as praise. If that is not a distinction then this too cannot be called an eulogy. In fact, the words about which it is argued that they are in praise are enough to prove the seriousness of his crime, because a crime in ignorance and unawareness is not so serious as the weight given to the seriousness of the commission of a crime despite knowledge and awareness. Consequently a person who is unaware of the rise and fall of a road and stumbles in the dark night is excusable but a person who is aware of the rise and fall of the road and stumbles in broad day light is liable to be blamed. If on this occasion he is told that he has eyes and is also aware of the rise and fall of the way, it would not mean that his vastness of knowledge or the brightness of his eye-sight is being praised, but the intention would be that he did not notice the pitfalls despite his eyes, and did not walk properly, and that therefore for him, having or not having eyes is the same, and knowing or not knowing is equal.

In this connection great stress is laid on his being a son-in-law, namely that the Prophet married his two daughters Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthūm to him one after the other. Before taking this to be a distinction, the real nature of ‘Uthmān’s son-in-lawship should be seen. History shows that in this matter ‘Uthmān did not enjoy the distinction of being the first, but before him Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthūm had been married to two sons of Abū Lahab namely ‘Utbah and ‘Utaybah, but, despite their being sons-in-law, they have not been included among people of position of pre-prophethood period. How then can this be regarded as a source of position without any personal merit, when there is no authority about the importance of this relationship, nor was any importance attached to this matter in such a way that there might have been some competition between ‘Uthmān and some other important personality in this regard and that his selection for it might have given him prominence, or that these two girls might have been shown to possess an important position in history, tradition or biography as a result of which this relationship could be given special importance and regarded as a distinction for him? If the marriage of these two daughters with ‘Utbah and ‘Utaybah in the pre-prophethood period is held as lawful on the ground that marriage with unbelievers had not till then been made unlawful, then in ‘Uthmān’s case also the condition for lawfulness was his acceptance of Islam, there is no doubt that he had pronounced the *kalimah ash-shahādatayn* (there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger) and had accepted Islam outwardly. As such this marriage can be held a proof of his outward Islam, but no other honour can be proved through it. Again, it is also not agreed that these two were the real daughters of the Messenger of Allāh, because there is one group which

denies them to be his real daughters, and regards them as being the daughters of Khadījah's sister Hālah, or the daughters of her own previous husband. Thus, Abu'l-Qāsim al-Kūfī (d. 352 A.H.) writes:

When the Messenger of Allāh married Khadījah, then some time there after Hālah died leaving two daughters, one named Zaynab and the other named Ruqayyah and both of them were brought up by the Prophet and Khadījah and they maintained them, and it was the custom before Islam that a child was assigned to whoever brought him up. (*al-Istighāthah*, p.69)

Ibn Hishām has written about the issues of Ḥaḍrat Khadījah as follows:

Before marriage with the Prophet she was married to Abī Hālah ibn Mālik. She delivered for him Hind ibn Abī Hālah and Zaynab bint Abī Hālah. Before marriage with Abī Hālah she was married to 'Utayyiq ibn 'Ābid ibn 'Abdillāh ibn 'Amr ibn Makhzūm and she delivered for him 'Abdullāh and a daughter. (*as-Sīrah an-nabawiyyah*, vol.4, p.293)

This shows that Ḥaḍrat Khadījah had two daughters before being married to the Prophet and according to all appearance they would be called his daughters and those to whom they were married would be called his sons-in-law, but the position of this relationship would be the same as if those girls were his daughters. Therefore, before putting it forth as a matter for pride the real status of the daughters should be noted and a glance should be cast at 'Uthmān's conduct. In this connection, al-Bukhārī and other narrators (of traditions) and historians record this tradition as follows:

Anas ibn Malik relates that: "We were present on the occasion of the burial of the Prophet's daughter Umm Kulthūm, while the Prophet was sitting beside her grave. I saw his eyes shedding tears. Then he said, 'Is there any one among you who has not committed a sin last night?' Abū Ṭalḥah (Zayd ibn Sahl al-Anṣārī) said, 'I', then the Prophet said, 'Then you get into the grave,' consequently he got down into the grave."

The commentators said about 'committed sin' that the Holy Prophet meant to say 'one who had not had sexual intercourse.' On this occasion the Holy Prophet unveiled the private life of 'Uthmān and prevented him from getting down into the grave, although it was a prominent merit of the

The people are behind me and they have made me an ambassador between you and themselves; but by Allāh, I do not know what to say to you. I know nothing (in this matter) which you do not know, nor can I lead you to any matter of which you are not aware. You certainly know what we know, we have not come to know anything before you which we could tell you; nor did we learn anything in secret which we should convey to you. You have seen as we have seen and you have heard as we have heard. You sat in the company of the Prophet of Allāh as we did. (Abū Bakr) Ibn Abī Quḥāfah and (‘Umar) Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb were no more responsible for acting righteously than you, since you are nearer than both of them to the Prophet of Allāh through kinship, and you also hold relationship to him by marriage which they do not hold.

Then (fear) Allāh, in your own self; for, by Allāh, you are not being shown anything as if you are blind or being apprised of anything as if you are ignorant. The ways are clear while the banners of faith are fixed. You should know that among the creatures of Allāh, the most distinguished person before Allāh is the just Imām who has been guided (by Allāh) and guides others. So, he stands by the recognized ways of the

Prophet’s character that he did not disgrace or belittle any one by making public his private life, and despite of knowledge of others’ shortcomings, ignored them; but in this case the filth was such that it was deemed necessary to disgrace him before the whole crowd.

Since ‘Uthmān did not show any regard for the demise of his wife (Umm Kulthūm) nor was he moved or felt sorry (for this event), and paid no heed to the cutting off his relationship with the Holy Prophet (for being his son-in-law), he (‘Uthmān) had sexual intercourse on the same night, therefore the Holy Prophet deprived him of this right and honour. (al-Bukhārī, *aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.2, pp.100—101,114; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol.3, pp.126,228,229,270; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, vol.4, p.47; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.4, p.53; Ibn Sa’d, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol.8, p.26; as-Suhaylī, *ar-Rawḍ al-unuf*, vol.2, p.107; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah*, vol.4, p.489; *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, vol.3, p.122; al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdah al-qārī*, vol.4, p.85; Ibn al-Athir, *an-Nihāyah*, vol.3, p.276; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 9, pp.280—281; az-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘arūs*, vol.6, p.220)

Prophet's behaviour and destroys unrecognized innovations. The (Prophet's) ways are clear and they have signs, while innovations are also clear and they too have signs. Certainly, the worst man before Allāh is the oppressive Imām who has gone astray and through whom others go astray. He destroys the accepted *sunnah* and revives abandoned innovations. I heard the Messenger of Allāh saying: "On the Day of Judgement the oppressive Imām will be brought without anyone to support him or anyone to advance excuses on his behalf, and then he will be thrown into Hell where he will rotate as the hand-mill rotates, then (eventually) he will be confined to its hollow."

I swear to you by Allāh that you should not be that Imām of the people who will be killed because it has been said that, "An Imām of this people will be killed after which killing and fighting will be made open for them till the Day of Judgement, and he will confuse their matters and spread troubles over them. As a result, they will not discern truth from wrong. They will oscillate like waves and would be utterly misled." You should not behave as the carrying beast for Marwān so that he may drag you wherever he likes, despite (your) seniority of age and length of life.

Then 'Uthmān said to Amīr al-mu'minīn:

Speak to the people to give me time until I redress their grievances.
Amīr al-mu'minīn then said : So far as Medina is concerned there is no question of time. As for remoter areas you can have the time needed for your order to reach there.

* * * * *

SERMON 164

**Describing the wonderful creation of the peacock
 About the wonderful creation of birds**

Allāh has provided wonderful creations including the living, the lifeless, the stationary, and the moving. He has established such clear

proofs for His delicate creative power and great might that minds bend down to Him in acknowledgement thereof and in submission to Him, and arguments about His oneness strike our ears. He has created birds of various shapes which live in the burrows of the earth, in the openings of high passes and on the peaks of mountains.

They have different kinds of wings, and various characteristics. They are controlled by the rein of (Allāh's) authority. They flutter with their wings in the expanse of the vast firmament and the open atmosphere. He brought them into existence from nonexistence in strange external shapes, and composed them with joints and bones covered with flesh. He prevented some of them from flying easily in the sky because of their heavy bodies and allowed them to use their wings only close to the ground. He has set them in different colours by his delicate might and exquisite creative power.

Among them are those which are tinted with one hue and there is no other hue except the one in which they have been dyed. There are others which are tinted with one colour, and they have a neck ring of a different colour than that with which they are tinted.

About the Peacock

The most amazing among them in its creation is the peacock, which Allāh has created in the most symmetrical dimensions, and arranged its hues in the best arrangement with wings whose ends are inter-leaved together and whose tail is long. When it moves to its female it spreads out its folded tail and raises it up so as to cast a shade over its head, as if it were the sail of a boat being pulled by the sailor. It feels proud of its colours and swaggers with its movements. It copulates like the cocks. It leaps (on the female) for fecundation like lustful energetic men at the time of fighting.

I am telling you all this from observation, unlike he who narrates on the basis of weak authority, as for example, the belief of some people that it fecundates the female by a tear which flows from its eyes and when it stops on the edges of the eyelids the female swallows it and

lays its eggs thereby and not through fecundation by a male other than by means of this flowing tear. Even if they say this, it would be no amazing than (what they say about) the mutual feeding of the crows (for fecundation). You would imagine its feathers to be sticks made of silvers and the wonderful circles and sun-shaped feathers growing thereon to be of pure gold and pieces of green emerald. If you likened them to anything growing on land, you would say that it is a bouquet of flowers collected during every spring. If you likened them to cloths, they would be like printed apparels or amazing variegated cloths of Yemen. If you likened them to ornaments then they would be like gems of different colours with studded silver.

The peacock walks with vanity and pride, and throws open its tail and wings and laughs admiring the handsomeness of its dress and the hues of its necklace of gems. But when it casts its glance at its legs it cries loudly with a voice which indicates its call for help and displays its true grief, because its legs are thin like the legs of Indo-Persian cross-bred cocks. At the end of its shin there is a thin thorn and on the crown of its head there is a bunch of green variegated feathers. Its neck begins in the shape of a goblet and its stretch upto its belly is like the hair-dye of Yemen in colour or like silk cloth put on a polished mirror which looks as if it has been covered with a black veil, except that on account of its excessive lustre and extreme brightness it appears that a lush green colour has been mixed with it. Along the openings of its ears there is a line of shining bright daisy colour like the thin end of a pen. Whiteness shines on the black background. There is hardly a hue from which it has not taken a bit and improved it further by regular polish, lustre, silken brightness and brilliance. It is therefore like scattered blossoms which have not been seasoned by the rains of spring or the sun of the summer.

It also sheds its plumage and puts off its dress. They all fall away and grow again. They fall away from the feather stems like the falling of leaves from twigs, and then they begin to join together and grow till they return to the state that existed before their falling away. The new hues do not change from the previous ones, nor does any colour occur in other than its own place. If you carefully look at one hair from the hairs of its feather stems it would look like red rose, then emerald green and then

golden yellow.

How can sharpness of intellect describe such a creation, or faculty of mind, or the utterances of describers manage to tell of it. Even its smallest parts have made it impossible for the imagination to pick them out or for tongues to describe them. Glorified is Allāh who has disabled intellects from describing the creation which He placed openly before the eyes and which they see bounded, shaped, arranged and coloured. He also disabled tongues from briefly describing its qualities and also from expanding in its praise.

The magnificence of the Creator in great and small creation

Glorified is Allāh who has assigned feet to small ants and gnats and also to those above them, the serpents and the elephants. He has made it obligatory upon Himself that no skeleton in which He infuses the spirit would move, but that death is its promised place and destruction its final end.

A part of the same sermon Describing Paradise

If you cast your mind's eye at what is described to you about Paradise, your heart would begin to hate the delicacies of this world that have been displayed here, namely its desires and its pleasures, and the beauties of its scenes, and you would be lost in the rustling of the trees whose roots lie hidden in the mounds of musk on the banks of the rivers in Paradise and in the attraction of the bunches of fresh pearls in the twigs and branches of those trees, and in the appearance of different fruits from under the cover of their leaves. These fruits can be picked without difficulty as they come down at the desire of their pickers. Pure honey and fermented wine will be handed round to those who settle down in the courtyards of its palaces.

They are a people whom honour has always followed till they were

made to settle in the house of eternal abode, and they obtained rest from the movement of journeying. O' listener! If you busy yourself in advancing towards these wonderful scenes which will rush towards you, then your heart will certainly die due to eagerness for them, and you will be prepared to seek the company of those in the graves straight away from my audience here and hasten towards them. Allāh may, by His mercy, include us and you too among those who strive with their hearts for the abodes of the virtuous.

**Note explaining some of the wonderful and obscure
portions of this sermon**

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: In Amīr al-mu'minīn's words '*ya'urru bimalāqihī*', '*al-arr*' implies "copulation", e.g. When it is said '*arra'r-rajulu al-mar'ata ya'urruhā* ', it means "he copulated with the woman."

In his words '*ka'annahu qal'u dāriyyin 'anajahu nūtiyyuhu* ', '*al-qal*' means the sail of a boat. '*dārī*' means belonging to Dārīn which is a small town on the coast from where scents are bought. And '*anajahu*' means "turned it". It is said '*anajtun'n-nāqata* — like *naṣartu* — a '*najuhā 'anjan* '. "When you turn the she-camel." And '*an-nūti* ' means sailor. His words '*ḍaffatay jufūnihi*' means edges of the eyelids, since '*aḍ-ḍaffatān*' means the two edges. His words '*wa fīladhu'z-zabarjadi* ': '*al-fīladh*' is the plural of '*al fildhah* ' it means piece. His words '*ka bā'isi'llu'lu'i'r-raṭibi*'. '*al-kibāsah*' means bunch of dates. '*al-asālīj*'. means twigs. Its singular is '*uslīj*'.

* * * * *

SERMON 165

**Advice for observing courtesy and kindness
and keeping in and out of the same**

The young among you should follow the elders while the elders

should be kind to the young. Do not be like those rude people of the pre-Islamic (*al-jāhiliyyah*) period who did not exert themselves in religion nor use their intellects in the matter of Allāh. They ¹ are like the breaking of eggs in the nest of a dangerous bird, because their breaking looks bad, but keeping them intact would mean the production of dangerous young ones.

A part of the same sermon

About the autocracy and oppression of the Umayyads and their fate

They will divide after their unity and scatter away from their centre. Some of them will stick to the branches, and bending down as the branches bend, until Allāh, the Sublime, will collect them together for the day that will be worst for the Umayyads just as the scattered bits of clouds collect together in the autumn. Allāh will create affection among them. Then He will make them into a strong mass like the mass of clouds. Then he will open doors for them to flow out from their starting place like the flood of the two gardens (of Saba') from which neither high rocks remained safe nor small hillocks, and its flow could be repulsed neither by strong mountains nor by high lands. Allāh will scatter them in the low lands of valleys and then He will make them flow like streams throughout the earth, and through them He will arrange the taking of rights of one people by another people and make one people to stay in the houses of another people. By Allāh, all their position and esteem will dissolve as fat dissolves on the fire.

The cause of tyranny

O' people! If you had not evaded support of the truth and had not felt weakness from crushing wrong then he who was not your match

¹ The implication is that the outer Islam of these people required that they should not be molested, but the consequence of sparing them in this way was that they would create mischief and rebellion.

would not have aimed at you and he who overpowered you would not have overpowered you. But you roamed about the deserts (of disobedience) like Banū Isrā'īl (Children of Israel). I swear by my life that after me your tribulations will increase several times, because you will have abandoned the truth behind your backs, severed your connection with your near ones and established relations with remote ones. Know that if you had followed him who was calling you (to guidance) he would have made you tread the ways of the Prophet, then you would have been spared the difficulties of misguidance, and you would have thrown away the crushing burden from your necks.

* * * * *

SERMON 166

At the beginning of his Caliphate.

**Fulfilment of rights and obligations, and
advice to fear Allāh in all matters.**

Allāh, the Glorified, has sent down a guiding Book wherein He has explained virtue and vice. You should adopt the course of virtue whereby you will have guidance, and keep aloof from the direction of vice so that you remain on the right way. (Mind) the obligations, (mind) the obligations. Fulfil them for Allāh and they will take you to Paradise. Surely, Allāh has made unlawful the things which are not unknown and made lawful the things which are without defect. He has declared paying regard to Muslims as the highest of all regards. He has placed the rights of Muslims in the same grade (of importance) as devotion (to himself and His oneness). Therefore, a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand every (other) Muslim is safe save in the matter of truth. It is not, therefore, lawful to molest a Muslim except when it is obligatory.

Hasten towards the most common matter which is peculiar to every one; and that is death. Certainly, people (who have already gone) are ahead of you while the hour (Day of Judgement) is driving you from

behind. Remain light, in order that you may overtake them. Your backs are being awaited for the sake of the fronts. Fear Allāh in the matter of His creatures and His cities because you will be questioned even about lands and beasts. Obey Allāh and do not disobey Him. When you see virtue adopt it, and when you see vice avoid it.

* * * * *

SERMON 167

After swearing of allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn, some people from among the companions of the Prophet said to him. "You should punish the people who assaulted 'Uthmān," whereupon he said:

O' my brothers! I am not ignorant of what you know, but how do I have the power for it while those who assaulted him are in the height of their power. They have superiority over us, not we over them. They are now in the position that even your slaves have risen with them and Bedouin Arabs too have joined them. They are now among you and are harming you as they like. Do you see any way to be able to do what you aim at.

This demand is certainly that of the pre-Islamic (*al jāhiliyyah*) period and these people have support behind them. When the matter is taken up, people will have different views about it. One group will think as you do, but another will not think as you think, and there will be still another group who will be neither this way nor that way. Be patient till people quieten down and hearts settle in their places so that rights can be achieved for people easily. Rest assured from me, and see what is given to you by me. Do not do anything which shatters your power, weakens your strength and engenders feebleness and disgrace. I shall control this affair as far as possible, but if I find it necessary the last treatment will, of course, be branding with a hot iron (through fighting).

* * * * *

SERMON 168

**When the people of Jamal set off for
Baṣrah Amīr al-mu'minīn said:**

There is no doubt that Allāh sent down the Prophet as a guide with an eloquent Book and a standing command. No one will be ruined by it except one who ruins himself. Certainly, only doubtful innovations cause ruin except those from which Allāh may protect. In Allāh's authority lies the safety of your affairs. Therefore, render Him such obedience as is neither blameworthy nor insincere. By Allāh, you must do so, otherwise Allāh will take away from you the power of Islam, and will never thereafter return it to you till it reverts to others.

Certainly, these people are in agreement in disliking my authority. I will carry on till I perceive disunity among you; because if, in spite of the unsoundness of their view, they succeed, the whole organization of the Muslims will be shattered. They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Allāh has bestowed it. So they intend reverting the matters on their backs (pre-Islamic period), while on us it is obligatory, for your sake, to abide by the Book of Allāh (Qur'ān), the Sublime, and the conduct of the Prophet of Allāh, to stand by His rights and the revival of his *sunnah*.

* * * * *

SERMON 169

When Amīr al-mu'minīn approached Baṣrah an Arab met him and spoke to him, as he had been sent to him by a group of people of Baṣrah to enquire from him on their behalf his position vis-a-vis the people of Jamal. Amīr al-mu'minīn explained to him his position with respect to them, from which he was convinced that Amīr al-

mu'minīn was in the right. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn asked him to swear allegiance, but he replied "I am just a message carrier of a people and shall not do anything until I get back to them." Upon this Amīr al-mu'minīn said to him:

If those at your back send you as a forerunner to search out a rain-fed area for them, and you return to them and apprise them of greenery and water but they disagree with you and go towards dry and barren land, what would you do then? He said: I would leave them and go towards greenery and water. Amīr al-mu'minīn then said: So then extend your hand.

This man related that: By Allāh, by such a clear argument I could not refrain from swearing allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn.

This man was known as Kulayb al-Jarmī.

* * * * *

SERMON 170

When Amīr al-mu'minīn decided to fight the enemy face to face at Şiffin he said:

O' my Allāh ! Sustainer of the high sky and the suspended firmament which Thou hast made a shelter for the night and the day, an orbit for the sun and the moon and a path for the rotating stars, and for populating it Thou hast created a group of Thy angels who do not get weary of worshipping Thee. O' Sustainer of this earth which Thou hast made an abode for people and a place for the movement of insects and beasts and countless other creatures seen and unseen. O' Sustainer of strong mountains which Thou hast made as pegs for the earth and (a means of) support for people. If Thou givest us victory over our enemy, save us from excesses and keep us on the straight path of truth. But if Thou givest them victory over us, then grant us martyrdom and

save us from mischief.

Where are those who protect honour, and those self-respecting persons who defend respectable persons in the time of hard-ship? Shame is behind you while Paradise is in front of you.

* * * * *

SERMON 171

About the Consultative Committee and the Battle of Jamal

Praise be to Allāh from whose view one sky does not conceal another sky nor one earth another earth.

A part of the same sermon About the Consultative Committee after the death of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

Someone¹ said to me, ‘ ‘O’ son of Abī Ṭālib, you are eager for the

¹ On the occasion of the Consultative Committee Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās repeated to Amīr al-mu’mīnīn what Caliph ‘Umar had said in his last hours namely that ‘ ‘O’ ‘Alī, you are very greedy for the position of caliphate,’ and ‘Alī replied that, ‘He who demands his own right cannot be called greedy; rather greedy is he who prevents the securing of the right and tries to grab it despite being unfit for it.’

There is no doubt that Amīr al-mu’mīnīn considered the Caliphate to be his right, and demanded his right. The demand for a right does not dispel a right so that it may be put forth as an excuse for not assigning him the caliphate, and the demand may be held as a mark of greed. Even if it was greed, who was not involved in this greed? Was not the pull between the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*, the mutual struggle between the members of the Consultative Committee and the mischief mongering of Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr the product of this very greed. If Amīr al-mu’mīnīn had been

caliphate.” Then I told him:

“Rather, you are, by Allāh, more greedy, although more remote, while I am more suited as well as nearer. I have demanded it as my right, while you are intervening between me and it, and you are turning my face from it.” When I knocked at his ears with arguments among the crowd of those present he was startled as if he was stunned not knowing what reply to give me about it.

O’ my Allāh ! I seek Thy succour against the Quraysh and those who are assisting them, because they are denying me (the rights of) kinship, have lowered my high position, and are united in opposing me in the matter (of the caliphate) which is my right, and then they said, “Know that the rightful thing is that you have it and also that you may leave it.”¹

greedy for this position, he would have stood for it, closing his eyes to the consequences and results, when ‘Abbās (uncle of the Prophet) and Abū Sufyān pressed him for (accepting) allegiance, and when, after the third Caliph people thronged to him for (swearing) allegiance, he should have accepted their offer without paying any attention to the deteriorated conditions. But at no time did Amīr al-mu’minīn take any step which could prove that he wanted the Caliphate for the sake of caliphate, but rather his demand for the caliphate was only with the object that its features should not be altered and the religion should not become the victim of others’ desires, not that he should enjoy the pleasures of life which could be attributed to greed.

¹ Explaining the meaning, Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd writes that Amīr al-mu’minīn’s intention was to say:

They (the Quraysh and those who are assisting them) were not only content to keep me away from my right over the caliphate which they have usurped (from me), but rather claimed that it was their right whether to give it to me or prevent me from the same; and that I have no right to argue with them.

Furthermore, the intention (of Amīr al-mu’minīn) is that:

If they had not said that it is right to keep away from the caliphate, it

A part of the same sermon
Describing the people of Jamal

They (Ṭalḥah, az-Zubayr and their supporters) came out dragging the wife of the Messenger of Allāh — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — just as a maidslave is dragged for sale. They took her to Baṣrah where those two (Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr) put their own women in their houses but exposed the wife of the Messenger of Allāh to themselves and to others in the army in which there was not a single individual who had not offered me his obedience and sworn to me allegiance quite obediently, without any compulsion.

Here in Baṣrah they approached my governor and treasurers of the public treasury and its other inhabitants. They killed some of them in captivity and others by treachery. By Allāh, even if they had wilfully killed only one individual from among the Muslims without any fault, it would have been lawful for me to kill the whole of this army because they were present in it but did not disagree with it nor prevented it by tongue or hand, not to say that they killed from among the Muslims a number equal to that with which they had marched on them.

* * * * *

SERMON 172

On eligibility for the Caliphate

The Prophet is the trustee of Allāh's revelation, the Last of His Prophets, the giver of tidings of His mercy and the warner for His chastisement.

O ' people, the most rightful of all persons for this matter (namely the

would have been easy to endure it because this would have, at least, showed their admitting my right although they were not prepared to concede it. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.9, p.306)

caliphate) is he who is most competent among them to maintain it, and he who knows best Allāh's commands about it. If any mischief is created by a mischief-monger, he will be called upon to repent. If he refuses, he will be fought. By my life,¹ if the question of Imāmah was not to be decided unless all the people were present, then there would be no such case. But those who agreed about it imposed the decision on those who were absent, so much so that he who was present could not dissent and the one who was absent could not choose (any one else). Know that I shall fight two persons — one who claims what is not his and the other who ignores what is obligatory upon him.

¹ When the people collected in the Saqīfah of Banū Sā'idah in connection with the election, even those who were not present there were made to follow the decision taken there, and the principle was adopted that those present at the election had no right to reconsider the matter or to break the allegiance and those not present could do nothing but acquiesce in the agreed decision. But when the people of Medina swore allegiance at the hands of Amīr al-mu'minīn, the Governor of Syria (Mu'āwiyah) refused to follow suit on the ground that since he was not present on the occasion he was not bound to abide by it, whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn gave a reply in this sermon on the basis of these accepted and agreed principles and conditions which had been established among these people and had become uncontrovertible namely that: "When the people of Medina and the *anṣār* and the *muhājirūn* have sworn allegiance on my hand, Mu'āwiyah had no right to keep aloof from it on the ground that he was not present on the occasion, nor were Ṭalhah and az-Zubayr entitled to break the pledge after swearing allegiance."

On this occasion, Amīr al-mu'minīn did not argue on the strength of any saying of the Prophet which would serve as his final say about the caliphate, because the grounds for refusal in his case was in respect of the *modus operandi* of the principle of election. Therefore, in keeping with the requirements of the situation a reply based on the agreed principles of the adversary could alone quieten him. Even if he had argued on the strength of the Prophet's command it would have been subjected to various interpretations and the matter would have been prolonged instead of being settled. Again Amīr al-mu'minīn had seen that soon after the death of the Prophet all his sayings and commands had been set aside. Therefore, how after the lapse of a long time, could one be expected to accept it when habit had been established to follow one's free will against the Prophet's sayings.

The need for sagacity in fighting against Muslims

O ' creatures of Allāh! I advise you to have fear of Allāh because it is the best advice to be mutually given by persons, and the best of all things before Allāh. The door of war has been opened between you and the other Muslims. And this banner will be borne only by him who is a man of sight, of endurance and of knowledge of the position of rightfulness. Therefore, you should go ahead with what you are ordered and desist from what you are refrained. Do not make haste in any matter till you have clarified it. For in the case of every matter which you dislike we have a right to change it.

The behaviour of this world with its adherents

Know that this world which you have started to covet and in which you are interested, and which sometimes enrages you and sometimes pleases you is not your (permanent) abode, nor the place of your stay for which you might have been created, nor one to which you have been invited. Know that it will not last for you nor will you live along with it. If anything out of this world deceives you (into attraction), its evils warn you too. You should give up (the objects of) its deceits in favour of (the objects of) its warning and (the objects of) its attractions in favour of (the objects of) its terrors. And while here in it, advance towards that house to which you have been called, and turn away your hearts from the world. None of you should cry like a maid slave over anything which she has been deprived of. Seek the perfection of Allāh's bounty over you by endurance in obedience to Allāh and in guarding what He has asked you to guard, namely His Book.

Know that the loss of anything of this world will not harm you, if you have guarded the principles of your religion. Know also that after the loss of your religion nothing of this world for which you have cared will benefit you. May Allāh carry our hearts and your hearts towards the right and may He grant us and you endurance.

* * * * *

SERMON 173

About Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubaydillāh.

**Delivered when he received the news that Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr
had already left for Baṣrah to fight against him.**

As for me, I would never be frightened of fighting or be made to fear striking because I am satisfied with Allāh’s promise of support to me. By Allāh, Ṭalḥah has hastened with drawn sword to avenge ‘Uthmān’s blood for fear lest the demand for ‘Uthmān’s blood be made against himself, because the people’s idea in this matter is about him, and, in fact, he was the most anxious among them for his killing. Therefore, he has tried to create misunderstanding by collecting forces in order to confuse the matter and to create doubt.

By Allāh, he did not act in either of three ways about ‘Uthmān. If the son of ‘Affān (‘Uthmān) was in the wrong, as Ṭalḥah believed, it is necessary for him to support those who killed¹ him or to keep away from his supporters. If ‘Uthmān was the victim of oppression, then Ṭalḥah should have been among those who were keeping (the assaulters) away from him or were advancing pleas on his behalf. If he was in doubt about these two alternatives, then it was incumbent upon him to leave him (‘Uthmān) and retire aside and leave the men with him (to deal with him as they wished). But he adopted none of these three ways, and came out with a thing in which there is no good, and his excuses are not acceptable.

* * * * *

¹ It means that if Ṭalḥah considered ‘Uthmān an oppressor, then after his assassination, instead of getting ready to avenge his blood, he should have supported his killers and justified their action. It is not the intention that in the case of ‘Uthmān being in the wrong Ṭalḥah should have supported the attackers because he was already supporting and encouraging them.

SERMON 174

Warning to neglectful people, and about the vastness of his own knowledge

O' people who are (negligent of Allāh but) not neglected (by Allāh), and those who miss (doing good acts) but are to be caught. How is it that I see you becoming removed from Allāh and becoming interested in others? You are like the camel whom the grazier drives to a disease-stricken pasture and a disastrous watering place. They are like beasts who are fed in order to be slaughtered, but they do not know what is intended for them. When they are treated well they think that day to be their whole life, and eating their full to be their aim.

By Allāh, if I wish, I can tell every one of you from where he has come, where he has to go and all his affairs, but I fear lest you abandon the Messenger of Allāh - peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny - in my favour. I shall certainly convey these things to the selected ones who will remain safe from that fear. By Allāh, Who deputed the Prophet with Right and distinguished him over creation. I do not speak save the truth. He (the Prophet) informed me of all this and also about the death of every one who dies, the salvation of every one who is granted salvation, and the consequences of this matter (the caliphate). He left nothing (that could) pass into my head with-out putting it in my ear and telling me about it.¹

¹ Those who drink from the springs of revelation and divine inspiration see things hidden behind the curtains of the unknown and the events which will occur in the future in the same way as objects can be seen with the eyes, and this does not conflict with the saying of Allāh that :

Say: "None (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Allāh . . ." (Qur'ān, 27:65)

because this verse contains the negation of personal knowledge of the unknown, but not the negation of knowledge which is required by the prophets and holy persons through divine inspiration, by virtue of which they make prophesies about the future and unveil many events and

happenings. Several verses of the Qur'ān support this view such as :

When the Prophet confided unto one of his wives a matter, but when she divulged it (unto others) and Allāh apprised him thereof, he made known a part of it and avoided a part; so when he informed her of it, said she: "Who informed thee of this?" He said: "Informed me, the All-knowing, the All-aware." (Qur'ān, 66:3)

These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal unto thee (O' Our Prophet Muḥammad) . . . (Qur'ān, 11:49)

Therefore, it is incorrect to argue in support of the view that if it is said that the prophets and holy persons possess knowledge of the unknown it would imply duality in the divine attributes. It would have implied duality if it were said that someone other than Allāh has personal knowledge of the unknown. When it is not so and the knowledge possessed by the Prophets and Imāms is that given by Allāh it has no connection with duality. If duality should mean what is alleged, what would be the position of 'Īsā's (Jesus's) assertion related in the Qur'ān namely:

... Out of clay will I make for you like the figure of a bird, and I will breathe into it, and it shall become a flying bird by Allāh's permission; and I shall heal the blind and the leper and will rise the dead to life by Allāh's permission; and I will declare to you what ye eat and what ye store up in your houses . . . (Qur'ān, 3:49)

If it is believed that 'Īsā (Jesus) could create and bestow life with Allāh's permission does it mean that he was Allāh's partner in the attributes of creation and revival? If this is not so then how can it be held that if Allāh gives someone the knowledge of the unknown it implies that he has been taken to be His partner in His attributes, and how can one extol one's belief in the oneness of Allāh by holding that the knowledge of the unknown implies duality.

No one can deny the fact that some people either see in dreams certain things which have yet to occur in the future, or that things can be read through interpretation of the dream, while during a dream neither do the senses function nor do the powers of understanding and comprehension cooperate. Therefore, if some events become known to some people in wakefulness why should there be amazement over it and what are the

grounds for rejecting it, when it stands to reason that things possible in dreams are also possible in wakefulness. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī has written that it is possible to achieve all this, because in a dream the spirit becomes free from looking after the body and is removed from bodily connections; as a result of this it perceives such hidden realities which could not be seen because of the obstruction of the body. In the same way those perfect beings who pay no heed to bodily matters, and turn with all the attention of spirit and heart towards the centre of knowledge can see those realities and secrets which the ordinary eyes are unable to discern. Therefore, keeping in view the spiritual greatness of *Ahlu'l-bayt* (members of the Prophet's family) it should not appear strange that they were aware of events which were going to occur in future. Ibn Khaldūn has written :

When thaumaturgic feats are performed by others what do you think about those who were distinguished in knowledge and honesty and were a mirror of the Prophet's traits, while the consideration Allāh had for their noble root (namely the Prophet) is a proof of the high performances of his chaste off shoots (*Ahlu'l-bayt*). Consequently many events about knowledge of the unknown are related about *Ahlu'l-bayt* which are not related about others.. (*al-Mugaddamah*, p.23).

In this way there is no cause for wonder over Amīr al-mu'minīn's claim since he was brought up by the Prophet and was a pupil of Allāh's school. Of course, those whose knowledge does not extend beyond the limits of physical objectivity and whose means of learning are confined to the bodily senses refuse to believe in the knowledge about the paths of divine cognizance and reality. If this kind of claim were unique and were heard only from Amīr al-mu'minīn then minds could have wavered and temperaments could have hesitated in accepting it, but if the Qur'ān records even such a claim of 'Īsā (Jesus) that — "I can tell you what you eat or drink or store in your houses," then why should there be hesitation over Amīr al-mu'minīn's claim, when it is agreed that Amīr al-mu'minīn had succeeded to all the attainments and distinctions of the Prophet and it cannot be contended that the Prophet did not know what 'Īsā (Jesus) knew. Thus, if the successor of the Prophet advances such a claim, why should it be rejected, particularly as this vastness of knowledge of Amīr al-mu'minīn is the best evidence and proof for the Prophet's knowledge and perfection and a living miracle of his truthfulness.

In this connection, it is amazing that even having knowledge of events

Amīr al-mu'minīn did not, through any of his words or deeds, indicate that he knew them. Thus, commenting on the extraordinary importance of this claim, as-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs writes:

An amazing aspect of this claim is that despite the fact that Amīr al-mu'minīn was aware of conditions and events, yet he observed such conduct by way of his words and deeds that one who saw him could not believe that he knew the secrets and unknown acts of others, because the wise agree that if a person knows what event is likely to take place or what step his comrade is going to take, or if the hidden secrets of people are known to him, then the effects of such knowledge would appear through his movements and the expressions of his face. But the man who, in spite of knowing everything, behaves in a way as though he is unaware and knows nothing, then his personality is a miracle and a combination of contradictions.

At this stage, the question arises as to why Amīr al-mu'minīn did not act upon the dictates of his secret knowledge. The reply to this is that the commands of the *sharī'ah* are based on apparent conditions. Otherwise secret knowledge is a kind of miracle and power which Allāh grants to His prophets and Imāms. Although the prophets and Imāms possess this power always, they cannot make use of it at any time unless and until by the permission of Allāh and on the proper occasion. For example, the verse quoted above about 'Īsā (Jesus) which tells that he had the power to give life, to heal the blind and declare what one ate and stored in his house, etc., he (Jesus) did not used to practise this power on every thing or every corpse or everyone who met him. He used to practise this power only by the permission of Allāh and on the proper occasion.

If prophets and other divines acted on the basis of their secret knowledge it would have meant serious dislocation and disturbance in the affairs of the people. For example, if a prophet or divine, on the basis of his secret knowledge, punishes a condemnable man by killing him, there would be great commotion and agitation among those who see it on the ground that he killed an innocent man. That is why Allāh has not permitted the basing of conclusions on secret knowledge save in a few special cases, and has enjoined the following of observable factors. Thus, despite his being aware of the hypocrisy of some of the hypocrites, the Prophet extended to them the treatment that should be extended to a Muslim.

O' people! By Allāh, I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not restrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before you.

* * * * *

SERMON 175

Preaching

(O' creatures!) Seek benefit from the sayings of Allāh, be admonished of Allāh and accept the advice of Allāh because Allāh has left no excuse for you by providing clear guidance, has put before you

Now, there can be no scope for the objection that if Amīr al-mu'minīn knew secret matters then why did he not act according to them because it has been shown that he was not obliged to act according to the requirements of his secret knowledge. Of course, where conditions so required he did disclose some matters for the purposes of preaching, admonishing, giving good tidings (of reward) or warning (against punishment), so that future events could be fore-closed. For example, Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (p.b.u.h.) informed Yaḥyā ibn Zayd that if he went out he would be killed. Ibn Khaldūn writes in this connection :

It has been authentically related from Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq that he used to apprise some of his relations of the events to befall them. For example, he warned his cousin Yaḥyā ibn Zayd of being killed but he disobeyed him and went out and was killed in Jūzajān. (*al-Muqaddamah*, p.233).

Nevertheless, where there was apprehension that minds would get worried it was not at all disclosed. That is why in this sermon Amīr al-mu'minīn avoided more details, in view of the fear that people would begin to regard him higher than the Prophet. Despite all this people did go astray about 'Īsā (Jesus), and in the same way about Amīr al-mu'minīn also they began to say all sorts of things and were misled into resorting to exaggeration.

the plea and clarified for you what acts He likes and what acts He hates, so that you may follow the one and avoid the other. The Prophet of Allāh used to say, “Paradise is surrounded by unpleasant things while Hell is surrounded by desires.”

You should know that every obedience to Allāh is unpleasant in appearance while every disobedience to Allāh has the appearance of enjoyment. Allāh may have mercy on the person who kept aloof from his desire and uprooted the appetite of his heart, because this heart has far-reaching aims and it goes on pursuing disobedience through desires.

You should know, O’ creatures of Allāh, that a believer should be distrustful of his heart every morning and evening. He should always blame it (for shortcomings) and ask it to add to (its good acts). You should behave like those who have gone before you and the precedents in front of you. They left this world like a traveller and covered it as distance is covered.

The greatness of the Holy Qur’ān

And know that this Qur’ān is an adviser who never deceives, a leader who never misleads and a narrator who never speaks a lie. No one will sit beside this Qur’ān but that when he rises he will achieve one addition or one diminution—addition in his guidance or elimination in his (spiritual) blindness. You should also know that no one will need any thing after (guidance from) the Qur’ān and no one will be free from want before (guidance from) the Qur’ān. Therefore, seek cure from it for your ailments and seek its assistance in your distresses. It contains a cure for the biggest diseases, namely unbelief, hypocrisy, revolt and misguidance. Pray to Allāh through it and turn to Allāh with its love. Do not ask the people through it. There is nothing like it through which the people should turn to Allāh, the Sublime.

Know that it is an interceder and its intercession will be accepted. It is a speaker who is testified. For whoever the Qur’ān intercedes on the Day of Judgement, its intercession for him would be accepted. He about whom the Qur’ān speaks ill on the Day of Judgement shall testify to it.

On the Day of Judgement an announcer will announce, “Beware, every sower of a crop is in distress except the sowers of the Qur’ān.” Therefore, you should be among the sowers of the Qur’ān and its followers. Make it your guide towards Allāh. Seek its advice for yourselves, do not trust your views against it, and regard your desires in the matter of the Qur’ān as deceitful.

**About the believers and their good deeds; and
the hypocrites and their bad deeds**

Action! action! Then (look at) the end; the end, and (remain) steadfast; steadfast. Thereafter (exercise) endurance, endurance, and piety, piety. You have an objective. Proceed towards your objective. You have a sign. Take guidance from your sign. Islam has an objective. Proceed towards its objective. Proceed towards Allāh’s by fulfilling His rights which He has enjoined upon you. He has clearly stated His demands for you. I am a witness for you and shall plead excuses on your behalf on the Day of Judgement.

Beware! what had been ordained has occurred and that which had been destined has come into play. I am speaking to you with the promise and pleas of Allāh.

Allāh the Sublime, has said :

Verily, those who say: Our Lord is Allāh! and persevere aright, the angels descend upon them (saying): ‘Fear ye not, nor be grieved, and receive the glad tidings of the Garden which ye were promised.’ (Qur’ān, 41:30)

You have said, “Our Lord is Allāh.” Then keep steadfast to His Book, to the way of His command and to the virtuous course of His worship. Thereafter do not go out of it, do not introduce innovations in it, and do not turn away from it, because those who go away from this course will be cut off from (the mercy of) Allāh on the Day of Judgement.

Beware from destroying your manners and changing them, maintain one tongue. A man should control his tongue because the tongue is obstinate with its master. By Allāh, I do not find that fear of Allāh benefits a man who practises it unless he controls his tongue. Certainly the tongue of a believer is at the back of his heart while the heart of a hypocrite is at the back of his tongue; because, when a believer intends to say anything, he thinks it over in his mind. If it is good he discloses it, but if it is bad he lets it remain concealed. While a hypocrite speaks whatever comes to his tongue, without knowing what is in his favour and what goes against him.

The Prophet of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — said: “The belief of a person cannot be firm unless his heart is firm, and his heart cannot be firm unless his tongue is firm.” So whoever of you can manage to meet Allāh, the Sublime, in such a position that his hands are unsmeared with the blood of Muslims and their property and his tongue is safe from exposing them, he should do so.

Following the sunnah and refraining from innovation

Know, O’ creatures of Allāh, that a believer should regard lawful this year what he regarded lawful in the previous year, and should consider unlawful this year what he considered unlawful in the previous year. Certainly people’s innovation cannot make lawful for you what has been declared unlawful; rather, lawful is that which Allāh has made lawful and unlawful is that which Allāh has made unlawful. You have already tested the matters and tried them; you have been preached by those before you. Illustrations have been drawn for you and you have been called to clear fact. Only a deaf man can remain deaf to all this, and only a blind man can remain blind to all this.

He whom Allāh does not allow benefit from trials and experience cannot benefit from preaching. He will be faced with losses from in front, so that he will approve what is bad and disapprove what is good. People are of two categories - the follower of the *sharī’ah* (religious laws), and the follower of the innovations to whom Allāh has not given

any testimony by way of *sunnah* or the light of any plea.

Guidance from the Holy Qur'ān

Allāh the Glorified, has not counselled anyone on the lines of this Qur'ān, for it is the strong rope of Allāh and His trustworthy means. It contains the blossoming of the heart and springs of knowledge. For the heart there is no other gloss than the Qur'ān although those who remembered it have passed away while those who forgot or pretended to have forgotten it have remained. If you see any good give your support to it, but if you see evil evade it, because the Messenger of Allāh used to say: ‘ ‘ O ’ son of Adam, do good and evade evil; by doing so you will be treading correctly.’ ’

Categories of oppression

Know that injustice is of three kinds — one, the injustice that will not be forgiven, another, that will not be left unquestioned, and another that will be forgiven without being questioned. The injustice that will not be forgiven is duality of Allāh. Allāh has said: *Verily Allāh forgiveth not that (anything) be associated with Him . . .* (Qur'ān, 4:48, 116). The injustice that will be forgiven is the injustice a man does to himself by committing small sins; and the injustice that will not be left unquestioned is the injustice of men against other men. The retribution in such a case is severe. It is not wounding with knives, nor striking with whips, but it is so severe that all these things are small against it. You should therefore avoid change in the matter of Allāh's religion for your unity in respect of a right which you dislike is better than your scattering away in respect of a wrong that you like. Certainly, Allāh the Glorified has not given any person, whether among the dead or among those who survive, any good from separation.

O ' people, blessed is the man whose own shortcomings keep him away from (looking into) the shortcomings of others, and also blessed is the man who is confined to his house, eats his meal, buries himself in obeying his Allāh, and weeps over his sins, so that he is engaged in himself and people are in safety from him.

SERMON 176

About the two arbiters (after the battle of Şifīn)

Your party had decided to select two persons, and so we took their pledge that they would act according to the Qur'ān and would not commit excess, that their tongues should be with it and that their hearts should follow it. But they deviated from it, abandoned what was right although they had it before their eyes. Wrong-doing was their desire, and going astray was their behaviour. Although we had settled with them to decide with justice, to act according to the light and without the interference of their evil views and wrong judgement. Now that they have abandoned the course of right and have come out with just the opposite of what was settled, we have strong ground (to reject their verdict).

* * * * *

SERMON 177

Praise of Allāh, transience of this world, and causes of the decline of Allāh's blessings. (Delivered at the beginning of his caliphate after the killing of 'Uthmān)

One condition does not prevent Him from (getting into) another condition, time does not change Him, place does not locate him and the tongue does not describe Him. The number of drops of water, of stars in the sky, or of currents of winds in the air are not unknown to Him, nor the movements of ants on rocks, or the resting place of grubs in the dark night. He knows the places where leaves fall, and the secret movements of the pupils of the eyes.

I stand witness that there is no god but Allāh, Who has no parallel, Who is not doubted, Whose religion is not denied and Whose creativeness is not questioned. My witnessing is like that of a man whose intention is free, whose conscience is clear, whose belief is pure and

whose loads (of good actions) are heavy. I also stand witness that Muḥammad — the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him and his progeny — is His slave and His Messenger, chosen from His creations, selected for detailing His realities, picked for His selected honours and chosen for His esteemed messages. Through him the signs of guidance have been lighted and the gloom of blindness (misguidance) has been dispelled.

O ' people, surely this world deceives him who longs for it and who is attracted towards it. It does not behave niggardly with him who aspires for it and overpowers him who overpowers it. By Allāh, no people are deprived of the lively pleasures of life after enjoying them, excepts as a result of sins committed by them, because certainly Allāh is not unjust to His creatures. Even then, when calamities descend upon people and pleasures depart from them, they turn towards Allāh with true intention and the feeling in their hearts that He will return them everything that has fled from them and cure all their ills.

I fear about you lest you fall into ignorance (that prevailed before the appearance of the Prophet). In the past there were certain matters in which you were deflected, and in my view you were not worthy of admiration; but if your previous position could be returned to you then you would become virtuous. I can only strive; but if I were to speak I would (only) say may Allāh forgive your past actions.

* * * * *

SERMON 178

Dhi'lib al-Yamānī asked Amīr al-mu'minīn whether he had seen Allāh, when he replied, "Do I worship one whom I have not seen?" Then he enquired, "How have you seen Him?"

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn replied:

Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous.

He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him.

* * * * *

SERMON 179

Condemning his disobedient men

I praise Allāh for whatever matter He ordained and whatever action He destines, and for my trial with you, O' group of people who do not obey when I order and do not respond when I call you. If you are at ease you engage in (conceited) conversation, but if you are faced with battle you show weakness. If people agree on one Imām you taunt each other. If you are faced with an arduous matter you turn away from it. May others have no father (woe to your enemy!) what are you waiting for, in the matter of your assistance and for fighting for your rights? For you there is either death or disgrace. By Allāh, if my day (of death) comes, and it is sure to come, it will cause separation between me and you, although I am sick of your company and feel lonely with you.

May Allāh deal with you! Is there no religion which may unite you nor sense of shamefulness that may sharpen you? Is it not strange that Mu'āwiyah calls out to some rude low people and they follow him without any support or grant, but when I call you, although you are the successors of Islam and the (worthy) survivors of the people, with support and distributed grants you scatter away from me and oppose me? Truly, there is nothing between me to you which I like and you also like it, or with which I am angry and you may also unite against it. What I love most is death. I have taught you the Qur'ān, clarified to you arguments, apprised you of what you were ignorant and made you

swallow what you were spitting out. Even a blind man would have been able to see, and he who was sleeping would have been awakened. How ignorant of Allāh is their leader Mu'āwiyah and their instructor Ibn an-Nābighah.¹

* * * * *

SERMON 180

Amīr al-mu'minīn sent one of his men to bring him news about a group of the army of Kūfah who had decided to join the Khārijites but were afraid of him.² When the man came back

¹ “an-Nābighah” is the surname of Layla hint Ḥarmalah al-‘Anaziyyah, mother of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. The reason for attributing him to his mother is her common reputation in the matter. When Arwā hint al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭālib went to Mu'āwiyah, during the conversation, when ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ intervened, she said to him: “O son of an-Nābighah, you too dare speak, although your mother was known publicly and was a singer of Mecca. That is why five persons claimed you (as a son), and when she was asked she admitted that five people had visited her and that you should be regarded as the son of him you resembled most. You must have resembled al-‘Āṣ ibn Wā'il and therefore you came to be known as his son.”

These five persons were (1) al-‘Āṣi ibn Wā'il, (2) Abū Lahab, (3) Umayyah ibn Khalaf, (4) Hishām ibn al-Mughirah, and (5) Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb. (Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al farīd*, vol.2, p.120; Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Balāghāt an-nisā'*, p.27; Ibn Ḥijjah, *Thamarāt al-awraq*, vol.1, p.132; Ṣafwat, *Jamharat khutab al-'Arab*, vol.2, p.363; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.6, pp.283—285, 291; al-Ḥalabī, *as-Sīrah*, vol.1, p.46).

² A man of the tribe Banū Nājiyah named al-Khirrit ibn Rāshid an-Nāji was on Amīr al-mu'minīn's side in the battle of Ṣiffīn, but after Arbitration he became rebellious, and, coming to Amīr al-mu'minīn with thirty persons, said: “By Allāh, I will no more obey your command, nor offer prayers behind you, and shall leave you tomorrow.” Whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn said: “You should first take into account the grounds underlying this Arbitration and discuss it with me. If you are satisfied, you do as you will.” He said he

Amīr al-mu'minīn said to him: "Are they satisfied and staying or feeling weak and going astray?" The man replied, "They have gone away, O' Amīr al-mu'minīn." Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said:

May Allāh's mercy remain away from them as in the case of Thamūd. Know that when the spears are hurled towards them and the swords are struck at their heads they will repent of their doings. Surely today Satan has scattered them and tomorrow he will disclaim any connection with them, and will leave them. Their departing from guidance, returning to misguidance and blindness, turning away from truth and falling into wrong is enough (for their chastisement).

* * * * *

would come the next day to discuss the matter. Amīr al-mu'minīn then cautioned him, "Look, on going from here do not get mislead by others and do not adopt any other course. If you have the will to understand, I will get you out of this wrong path and put you on the course of guidance." After this conversation he went away, but his countenance indicated he was bent on revolt, and would not see reason by any means. And so it happened. He stuck to his point and on reaching his place he said to his tribesmen, "When we are determined to abandon Amīr al-mu'minīn there is no use going to him. We should do what we have decided to do." On this occasion 'Abdullāh ibn Qu'ayn al-Azdī also went to them to enquire, but when he came to know the position he asked Mudrik ibn ar-Rayyān an-Nājī to speak to him and to apprise him of the ruinous consequence of this rebellion, whereupon Mudrik assured him that this man would not be allowed to take any step. Consequently, 'Abdullāh came back satisfied and related the whole matter before Amīr al-mu'minīn on returning the next day. Amīr al-mu'minīn said, "Let us see what happens when he comes." But when the appointed hour passed and he did not turn up Amīr al-mu'minīn asked 'Abdullāh to go and see what the matter was and what was the cause for the delay. On reaching there 'Abdullāh found that all of them had left. When he returned to Amīr al-mu'minīn he spoke as in this sermon.

The fate that befell al-Khirrīt ibn Rāshid an-Nājī has been stated under Sermon 44.

SERMON 181

It has been related by Nawf al-Bikālī that Amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī (p.b.u.h.) delivered this sermon at Kūfah standing on a stone which Ja'dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzūmī had placed for him. Amīr al-mu'minīn had a woollen apparel on his body, the belt of his sword was made of leaves, and the sandals on his feet too were of palm leaves. His forehead had a hardened spot like that of a camel (on its knee, due to too many and long prostrations). About Allāh's attributes, His creatures and His being above physical limitations.

Praise be to Allāh to Whom is the return of all creation and the end of all matters. We render Him praise for the greatness of His generosity, the charity of His proofs, the increase of His bounty and His favours, — praise which may fulfil His right, repay His thanks, take (us) near His reward and be productive of increase in His kindness. We seek His help like one who is hopeful of His bounty, desirous of His benefit, and confident of His warding off (calamities), who acknowledges His gifts and is obedient to Him in word and deed. We believe in Him like him who reposes hope in Him with conviction, inclines to Him as a believer, humbles himself before Him obediently, believes in His oneness exclusively, regards Him great, acknowledging His dignity, and seeks refuge with Him with inclination and exertion.

Allāh the Glorified has not been born so that someone could be (His) partner in glory. Nor has He begotten anyone so as to be inherited from after dying. Time and period have not preceded Him. Increase and decrease do not occur to Him. But He has manifested Himself to our understanding through our having observed His strong control and firm decree. Among the proofs of His creation is the creation of the skies which are fastened without pillars and stand without support. He called them and they responded obediently and humbly without being lazy or loathsome. If they had not acknowledged His Godhead and obeyed Him He would not have made them the place for His throne, the abode of His angels and the destination for the rising up of the pure utterances and the

righteous deeds of the creatures.

He has made the stars in the skies by way of signs by which travellers wandering the various routes of the earth may be guided. The gloom of the dark curtains of the night does not prevent the flame of their light, nor do the veils of blackish nights have the power to turn back the light of the moon when it spreads in the skies. Glory be to Allāh from Whom neither the blackness of dark dusk or of gloomy night (falling) in the low parts of the earth or on high dim mountains is hidden, nor the thundering of clouds on the horizons of the skies, nor the sparking of lightning in the clouds, nor the falling of leaves blown away from their falling places by the winds of hurricanes or by downpour from the sky. He knows where the drops fall and where they stay, where the grubs leave their trails or where they drag themselves, what livelihood would suffice the mosquitoes and what a female bears in its womb.

Praise be to Allāh Who exists from before the coming into existence of the seat, the throne, the sky, the earth, the jinn or human being. He cannot be perceived by imagination nor measured by understanding. He who begs from Him does not divert Him (from others), nor does giving away cause Him diminution. He does not see by means of an eye, nor can He be confined to a place. He cannot be said to have companions. He does not create with (the help of) limbs. He cannot be perceived by senses. He cannot be thought of after the people.

It is He who spoke to Mūsā clearly and showed him His great signs without the use of bodily parts, the organ of speech or the uvula. O' you who exert yourself in describing Allāh if you are serious then (first try to) describe Gabriel, Michael or the host of angels who are close (to Allāh) in the receptacles of sublimity; but their heads are bent downwards and their wits are perplexed as to how to assign limits (of definition) to the Highest Creator. This is because those things can only be perceived through qualities which have shape and parts and which succumb to death after reaching the end of their times. There is no god but He. He has lighted every darkness with His effulgence and has darkened every light with the darkness (of death).

An account of past peoples and about learning from them

I advise you, creatures of Allāh, to practise fear of Allāh Who gave you good clothing and bestowed an abundance of sustenance on you. If there was anyone who could secure a ladder to everlasting life or a way to avoid death it was Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd (p.b.u.h.) who was given control over the domain of the jinn and men along with prophethood and great position (before Allāh), but when he finished what was his due in food (of this world) and exhausted his (fixed) time the bow of destruction shot him with arrow of death. His houses became vacant and his habitations became empty. Another group of people inherited them. Certainly, the by-gone centuries have a lesson for you.

Where are the Amalekites¹ and the sons of Amalekites? Where are the Pharaohs?² Where are the people of the cities of ar-Rass¹ who

¹ History shows that very often the ruin and destruction of peoples has been due to their oppression and open wickedness and profligacy. Consequently, communities which had extended their sway over all the corners of the populated world and had flown their flags in the East and West of the globe disappeared from the surface of the earth like a wrong word, on disclosure of their vicious actions and evil doings.

Amalekites: ancient nomadic tribe, or collection of tribes, described in the Old Testament as relentless enemies of Israel, even though they were closely related to Ephraim, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their name derives from Amalek, who is celebrated in Arabian tradition but cannot be identified. The district over which they ranged was south of Judah and probably extended into northern Arabia. The Amalekites harrassed the Hebrews during their exodus out of Egypt and attacked them at Rephidim (near Mt. Sinai), where they were defeated by Joshua. They also filled out the ranks of the nomadic raiders defeated by Gideon and were condemned to annihilation by Samuel. The Amelekites, whose final defeat occurred in the time of Hezekiah, were the object of a perpetual curse. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Micropaedia] , vol.I, p.288, ed.1973-1974; also see [for further reference] *The Encyclopaedia Americana*, [International Edition] vol.I, p.651, ed.1975).

² **Pharaoh:** Hebrew form of the Egyptian *per-‘o* (“the great house”), signifying the royal palace, an epithet applied in the New Kingdom and after, as a title of respect, to the Egyptian king himself. In the 22nd dynasty the title was added to the king’s personal name. In official documents the full titulary of the Egyptian king contained five names. The first and oldest identified him as the incarnation of the falcon god, Horus; it was often written inside a square called *serekh*, depicting the facade of the archaic palace. The second name, “two ladies,” placed him under the protection of Nekhbet and Buto, the vulture and uraeus (snake) goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt; the third, “golden Horns,” signified perhaps originally “Horns victorious over his enemies.” The last two names, written within a ring, or cartouche, are generally referred to as the praenomen and nomen, and were the ones most commonly used; the praenomen, preceded by the hieroglyph meaning “King of Upper and Lower Egypt,” usually contained a reference to the king’s unique relationship with the sun god, Re, while the fifth, or nomen, was preceded by the hieroglyph for “Son of Re,” or by that for “Lord of the two lands.” The last name was given him at birth, the rest at his coronation. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Micropaedia], vol.VII, p.927, ed.1973-1974; also see [for further reference] *The Ancylopaedia Americana*, [International Edition], vol. 21, p. 707, ed.1975).

Among the Pharaohs was the Pharaoh of the days of Prophet Mūsā. His pride, egotism, insolence and haughtiness were such that by making the claim “I am your sublime God” he deemed himself to be holding sway over all other powers of the world, and was under the misunderstanding that no power could wrest the realm and government from his hands. The Qur’ān has narrated his claim of “I and no one else” in the following words :

And proclaimed Pharaoh unto his people, “O’ my people! is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow below me; What! behold ye not? (43:51)

But when his empire came near the end it was destroyed in a few moments. Neither his position and servants could come in the way of its destruction nor could the vastness of his realm prevent it. Rather, the waves of the very streams which he was extremely proud to possess, wrapped him in and dispatched his spirit to Hell throwing the body on the bank to serve as a lesson for the whole of creation.

¹ **The people of the cities of ar-Rass:** In the same way the people of

killed the prophets, destroyed the traditions of the divine messengers and revived the traditions of the despots? Where are those who advanced with armies, defeated thousands, mobilised forces and populated cities?

A part of the same sermon about the Imām al-Mahdī

He will be wearing the armour of wisdom, which he will have secured with all its conditions, such as full attention towards it, its (complete) knowledge and exclusive devotion to it. For him it is like a thing which he had lost and which he was then seeking, or a need which he was trying to fulfil. If Islam is in trouble he will feel forlon like a traveller and like a (tired) camel beating the end of its tail and with its neck flattened on the ground. He is the last of Allāh's proofs and one of the vicegerents of His prophets.

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn continued:

On the method of his ruling, and grief over the martyrdom of his companions

O' people! I have divulged to you advice which the prophets used to preach before their peoples, and I have conveyed to you what the vicegerents (of the prophets) conveyed to those coming after them. I tried to train you with my whip but you could not be straightened. I

ar-Rass were killed and destroyed for' disregarding the preaching and call of a prophet, and for revolt and disobedience. About them the Qur'ān says:

And the (tribes of) 'Ād and Thamūd and the inhabitants of ar-Rass, and generations between them, in great number. And unto each of them We did give examples and every one (of them) We did destroy with utter extermination. (25:38,39)

Belied (also) those before them the people of Noah and the dwellers of ar-Rass and Thamūd; And 'Ād and Pharaoh, and the brethren of Lot; And the dwellers of the Wood and the people of Tubba'; all belied the apostles, so was proved true My promise (of the doom) (50:12—14)

drove you with admonition but you did not acquire proper behaviour. May Allāh deal with you! Do you want an Imām other than me to take you on the (right) path, and show you the correct way?

Beware, the things in this world which were forward have become things of the past, and those of which were behind are going ahead. The virtuous people of Allāh have made up their minds to leave and they have purchased, with a little perishable (pleasure) of this world, a lot of such (reward) in the next world that will remain. What loss did our brothers whose blood was shed in Şiffīn suffer by not being alive today? Only that they are not suffering choking on swallowings and not drinking turbid water. By Allāh, surely they have met Allāh and He has bestowed upon them their rewards and He has lodged them in safe houses after their (having suffered) fear.

Where are my brethren who took the (right) path and trod in rightness. Where is ‘Ammār?¹ Where is Ibn at-Tayyihān?¹ Where is

¹ ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir ibn ‘Āmir al-‘Ansī al-Madhḥijī al-Makhzūmī (a confederate of Banū Makhzūm) was one of the earliest converts to Islam, and the first Muslim to build a mosque in his own house in which he used to worship Allāh (*aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, Part 1, p.178; *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p.46; Ibn Kathīr, *aṭ-Ṭārīkh*, vol.7, p.311).

‘Ammār accepted Islam along with his father Yāsir and his mother Sumayyah. They suffered great tortures by the Quraysh, due to their conversion to Islam, to such an extent that ‘Ammār lost his parents; and they were the first martyrs — man and woman in Islam.

‘Ammār was among those who immigrated to Abyssinia, and the earliest immigrants (*muhājirūn*) to Medina. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet; and he showed his might and favour in all Islamic struggles in the best way.

Many traditions are narrated from the Holy Prophet about ‘Ammār regarding his virtues, outstanding traits and his glorious deeds, such as the tradition which ‘Ā’ishah and other have narrated that the Holy Prophet himself had said that ‘Ammār was filled with faith from the crown of his head to the

soles of his feet. (Ibn Mājah, *as-Sunan*, vol.1, p.65; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā’*, vol.1, p.139; al-Haytamī, *Majma‘ az-zawā’id*, vol.9, p.295; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1137; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.512)

In another tradition the Holy Prophet said about ‘Ammār :

‘Ammār is with the truth and the truth is with ‘Ammār. He turns wherever the truth turns. ‘Ammār is as near to me as an eye is near to the nose. Alas! a rebellious group will kill him. (*aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, part 1, p.187; *al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.392; Ibn Hishām, *as-Sīrah*, vol.2, p.143; Ibn Kathīr, *at-Tārikh*, vol.7, pp.268, 270)

Also in the decisive and widely known tradition which al-Bukhārī (in *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.8, pp.185—186), at-Tirmidhī (in *al-Jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.5, p.669); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (in *al-Musnad*, vol.2, pp.161,164, 206; vol.3, pp.5,22,28,91; vol.4, pp.197,199; vol.5, pp.215,306,307; vol.6, pp.289, 300,311,315), and all the narrators of Islamic traditions and historians transmitted through twenty-five Companions that the Holy Prophet said about ‘Ammār :

Alas! a rebellious group which swerves from the truth will murder ‘Ammār. ‘Ammār will be calling them towards Paradise and they will be calling him towards Hell. His killer and those who strip him of arms and clothing will be in Hell.

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (in *Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb*, vol.7, p.409; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.512) and as-Suyūṭī (in *al-Khaṣā’is al-kubrā*, vol.2, p.140) say: “The narration of this (above-mentioned) tradition is *mutawātir* (i.e. narrated successively by so many people that no doubt can be entertained about its authenticity).”

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (in *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1140) says:

The narration followed uninterrupted succession from the Holy Prophet, that he said: “A rebellious group will murder ‘Ammār,” and this is a prophecy of the Prophet’s secret knowledge and the sign of his prophethood. This tradition is among the most authentic and the most rightly ascribed traditions.

After the death of the Holy Prophet, ‘Ammār was one of the closest adherents and best supporters of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn during the reign of the

first three Caliphs. During the caliphate of ‘Uthmān when the Muslim protested (to ‘Uthmān) against his policy on the distribution of the Public Treasury (*Baytu’l-māl*) ‘Uthmān said in a public assembly that, ‘the money which was in the treasury was sacred and belonged to Allāh, and that he (as being the successor of the Prophet) had the right to dispose of them as he thought fit.’ He (‘Uthmān) threatened and cursed all who presumed to censure or murmur at what he said. Upon this, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir boldly declared his disapprobation and began to charge him with his inveterate propensity to ignore the interests of the general public; accused him with reviving the heathenish customs abolished by the Prophet. Whereupon ‘Uthmān commanded him to be beaten and immediately some of the Umayyads, the kindred of the Caliph fell upon the venerable ‘Ammār, and the Caliph himself kicking him with his shoes (on his feet) on ‘Ammār’s testicles, and afflicted him with hernia. ‘Ammār became unconscious for three days, and he was taken care of by Umm al-mu’minīn Umm Salamah in her own house. (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol.5, pp.48,54,88; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.3, pp.47-52; *al-Imāmah wa’s-siyāsah*, vol.1, pp.35-36; *al-‘Iqd al farīd*, vol.4, p.307; *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, Part 1, p.185; *Tārikh al-khamīs*, vol.2, p.271)

When Amīr al-mu’minīn became Caliph, ‘Ammār was one of his most sincere supporters. He participated fully in all social, political and military activities during this period, especially in the first battle (the battle of Jamal) and the second one (the battle of Ṣiffīn).

However, ‘Ammār was martyred on 9th *Ṣafar* 37 A.H. in the battle of Ṣiffīn when he was over ninety years of age. On the day ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir achieved martyrdom, he turned his face to the sky and said :

O’ my Allāh ! surely Thou art aware that if I know that Thy wish is that I should plunge myself into this River (the Euphrates) and be drowned, I will do it. O’ my Allāh! surely Thou knowest that if I knew that Thou would be pleased if I put my scimitar on my chest (to hit my heart) and pressed it so hard that it came out of my back, I would do it. O’ my Allāh! I do not think there is anything more pleasant to Thee than fighting with this sinful group, and if knew that any action were more pleasant to Thee I would do it.

Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī narrates :

“We were present with Amīr al-mu’minīn at Ṣiffīn where I saw ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir was not turning his face towards any side, nor valleys (*wādis* [of the land]) of Ṣiffīn but the companions of the Holy Prophet were following him as if he was a sign for them. Then I heard ‘Ammār say to Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah (al-Mirqāl): ‘O’ Hāshim! rush into enemy’s ranks, paradise is under sword !

Today I meet my beloved one, Muḥammad and his party.’

“Then he said: ‘By Allāh, if they put us to flight (and pursue us) to the date-palms of Ḥajar (a town in Bahrain, Persian Gulf [i.e., if they pursue us along all the Arabian desert] nevertheless) we know surely that we are right and they are wrong.’

“Then he (‘Ammār) continued (addressing the enemies):

We struck you to (believe in) its (Holy Qur’ān) revelation; And today we strike you to (believe in) its interpretation; Such strike as to remove heads from their resting places; And to make the friend forget his sincere friend; Until the truth returns to its (right) path.’ ”

The narrator says : “I did not see the Holy Prophet’s companions killed at any time as many as they were killed on this day.”

Then ‘Ammār spurred his horse, entered the battlefield and began fighting. He persistently chased the enemy, made attack after attack, and raised challenging slogans till at last a group of mean-spirited Syrians surruounded him on all sides, and a man named Abū al-Ghādiyāh al-Juhārī (al-Fazārī) inflicted such a wound upon him that he could not bear it, and returned to his camp. He asked for water. A tumbler of milk was brought to him. When ‘Ammār looked at the tumbler he said : “The Messenger of Allāh had said the right thing.” People asked him what he meant by these words. He said, “The Messenger of Allāh informed me that the last sustenance for me in this world would be milk.” Then he took that tumbler of milk in his hands, drank the milk and surrendered his life to Allāh, the Almighty. When Amīr al-mu’minīn came to know of his death, he came to ‘Ammār’s side, put his (‘Ammār’s) head on his own lap, and recited the following elegy to mourn his death :

Surely any Muslim who is not distressed at the murder of the son of Yāsir, and is not be afflicted by this grievous misfortune does not have true faith.

May Allāh show His mercy to ‘Ammār the day he embraced Islam, may Allāh show His mercy to ‘Ammār the day he was killed, and may Allāh show His mercy to ‘Ammār the day he is raised to life.

Certainly, I found ‘Ammār (on such level) that three companions of the Holy Prophet could not be named unless he was the fourth, and four of them could not be mentioned unless he was the fifth.

There was none among the Holy Prophet’s companions who doubted that not only was Paradise once or twice compulsorily bestowed upon ‘Ammār, but that he gained his claim to it (a number of times). May Paradise give enjoyment to ‘Ammār.

Certainly, it was said (by the Holy Prophet) “Surely, ‘Ammār is with the truth and the truth is with ‘Ammār. He turns wherever the truth turns. His killer will be in hell.”

Then Amīr al-mu’minīn stepped forward and offered funeral prayers for him, and then with his own hands, he buried him with his clothes.

‘Ammār’s death caused a good deal of commotion in the ranks of Mu‘āwiyah too, because there were a large number of prominent people fighting from his side under the impression created in their minds that he was fighting Amīr al-mu’minīn for a right cause. These people were aware of the saying of the Holy Prophet that ‘Ammār would be killed by a group who would be on the wrong side. When they observed that ‘Ammār had been killed by Mu‘āwiyah’s army, they became convinced that they were on the wrong side and that Amīr al-mu’minīn was definitely on the right. This agitation thus caused among the leaders as well as the rank and file of Mu‘āwiyah’s army, was quelled by him with the argument that it was Amīr al-mu’minīn who brought ‘Ammār to the battlefield and therefore it was he who was responsible for his death. When Mu‘āwiyah’s argument was mentioned before Amīr al-mu’minīn he said it was as though the Prophet was responsible for killing Ḥamzah as he brought him to the battle of Uḥud. (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.1, pp.3316-3322; vol.3, pp.2314-2319; Ibn Sa‘d, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, Part 1, pp.176-189; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.3, pp.308-312;

Dhu'sh-Shahādatayn? ² And where are others like them¹ from among

Ibn Kathīr, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.7, pp.267-272; al-Minqarī, *Şifḥīn*, pp.320-345; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, pp.1135-1140; vol.4, p.1725; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al ghābah*, vol.4, pp.43-47; vol. 5, p.267; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.5, pp.252—258; vol.8, pp.10—28; vol.10, pp.102—107; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.384—394; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al farīd*, vol.4, pp.340—343; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj adh-dhahab*, vol.2, pp.381—382; al-Haytamī, *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.7, pp.238—244; vol.9, pp.291—298; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Biography of Amīr al-mu'minīn), pp.310—319.

¹ Abu'l-Haytham (Mālik) ibn at-Tayyihān al-Anṣārī was one of the twelve chiefs (naqīb [of *anṣār*]) who attended the fair and met at al-'Aqabah — in the first 'Aqabah and among those who attended in the second 'Aqabah — where he gave the Holy Prophet the 'pledge of Islam'. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. He was also among the sincere supporters of Amīr al-mu'minīn and he attended the battle of Jamal as well as Şifḥīn where he was martyred. (*al-Istī'āb*, vol.4, p.1773; *Şifḥīn*, p.365; *Usd al ghābah*, vol.4, p.274; vol.5, p.318; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.3, p.341; vol.4, pp.312—313; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, vol.10, pp.107—108; *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, p.319).

² Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī. He is known as Dhu'sh-Shahādatayn because the Holy Prophet considered his evidence equivalent to the evidence of two witnesses. He was present in the battle of Badr, and other battles as well as in the places of assembly of the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. He is counted among the earliest of those who showed their adherence to Amīr al-mu'minīn and he was also present in the battle of Jamal and Şifḥīn. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā narrated that he saw a man in the battle of Şifḥīn fighting the enemy valiantly and when he protested against his action, the man said :

I am Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī, I have heard the Holy Prophet saying "Fight, fight, by the side of 'Alī.'" (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī, *Muwaddih awḥām al-jam' wa't-tafrīq*, vol.1, p.277).

Khuzaymah was martyred in the battle of Şifḥīn soon after the martyrdom of 'Ammār ibn Yāsir.

Sayf ibn 'Umar al-Usayyidī (the well know liar) has fabricated another

Khuzaymah, and claimed that the one who was martyred in the battle of Şifḥīn was this one and not the one with the surname of ‘Dhu’sh-Shahādātayn’. aṭ-Ṭabarī has quoted this fabricated story from Sayf either intentionally or otherwise, and through him this story has affected some other historians who quoted from aṭ-Ṭabarī or relied on him. (For further reference, see al-‘Askarī, *Khamsūn wa miah ṣahābī mukhtalaq* [one hundred and fifty fabricated companions], vol.2, pp.175—189).

After having denied this story Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd adds (in *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.10, pp.109—110) that:

Furthermore, what is the need for those. who want to defend Amīr al-mu’mīnīn to make a boast of abundance with Khuzaymah, Abu’l-Haytham, ‘Ammār and others. If people treat this man (Amīr al-mu’mīnīn) with justice and look at him with healthy eyes they will certainly realize that should he be alone (on one side) and the people all together (on the other side) fighting him, he will be in the truth and all the rest will be in the wrong, (*aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, part 1, pp.185, 188; *al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.385,397; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.2, p.114; vol.4, p.47; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.2, p.448; aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.3, pp.2316,2319, 2401; *al-Kāmil*, vol.3, p.325; *Şifḥīn*, pp.363,398; *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, pp.313—314).

¹ Among the people who were present in the battle of Jamal on the side of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn there were one hundred and thirty Badries (those who participated in the battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet) and seven hundred of those who were present in the ‘pledge of ar-Riḍwān’ (*Bay‘atu’r-Riḍwān*) which took place under a tree. (adh-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol.2, p.171; Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.1, p.164). Those who were killed in the battle of Jamal from the side of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn numbered some five hundred (some said that the number of martyrs were more that). But on the side of the people of Jamal twenty thousand were killed. (*al-‘Iqd al farīd*, vol.4, p.326).

Among those who were present in the battle of Şifḥīn on the side of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn, there were eighty Badries and eight hundred of those who gave the Holy Prophet the ‘pledge of ar-Riḍwān.’ (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.104; *al-Istī‘āb*, vol.3, p.1138; *al-Iṣābah*, vol.2, p.389; *at-Tārīkh*, al-Ya‘qūbī, vol.2, p.188).

On the side of Mu‘āwiyah forty-five thousand were killed, and on the side of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn twenty-five thousand. Among these martyrs (of Amīr al-mu’mīnīn) there were twenty-five or twenty-six Badries and sixty-three or three

their comrades who had pledged themselves to death and whose (severed) heads were taken to the wicked enemy.

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn wiped his hand over his auspicious, honoured beard and wept for a long time, then he continued:

Oh! my brothers, who recited the Qur'ān and strengthened it, thought over their obligation and fulfilled it, revived the *sunnah* and destroyed innovation. When they were called to *jihād* they responded and trusted in their leader then followed him.

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn shouted at the top of his voice:

al jihād, al jihād (fighting, fighting), O' creatures of Allāh ! By Allāh, I am mobilizing the army today. He who desires to proceed towards Allāh should come forward.

Nawf says: Then Amīr al-mu'minīn put Ḥusayn (p.b.u.h.) over (a force of) ten thousand, Qays ibn Sa'd (mercy of Allāh be upon him) over ten thousand, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī over ten thousand, and others over different numbers, intending to return to Ṣiffīn, but Friday did not appear again and the accursed Ibn Muljam (May Allāh curse him) killed

hundred and three of the people of the 'pledge of ar-Riḍwān'. (*Ṣiffīn*, p.558; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.2, p.389; *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, p.322; Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, vol.10, p.104; Abu'l-Fida', vol.1, p.175; Ibn al-Wardī, *at-Tārīkh*, vol.1, p.240; Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.275; *Tārīkh al-khamīs*, vol.2, p.277).

Besides the distinguished and eminent companions of Amīr al-mu'minīn like 'Ammār, Dhu'sh-Shahādatayn and Ibn al-Tayyihān, who lay martyred in Ṣiffīn were:

- i. Hāshim ibn 'Utbah ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Mirqāl was killed on the same day when 'Ammār was martyred. He was the bearer of the standard of Amīr al-mu'minīn's army on that day.
- ii. 'Abdullāh ibn Budayl ibn al-Warqā' al-Khuzā'ī was sometimes the right wing Commander of Amīr al-mu'minīn's army and sometimes the infantry Commander.

him. Consequently, the armies came back and were left like sheep who had lost their shepherd while wolves were snatching them away from all sides.

* * * * *

SERMON 182

Praise of Allāh for His bounties

Praise be to Allāh Who is recognized without being seen and Who creates without trouble. He created the creation with His Might, and receives the devotion of rulers by virtue of His dignity. He exercises superiority over great men through His generosity. It is He who made His creation to populate the world and sent towards the jinn and human beings His messengers to unveil it for them, to warn them of its harm, to present to them its examples, to show them its defects and to place before them a whole collection of matters containing lessons about the changings of health and sickness in this world, its lawful things and unlawful things and all that Allāh has ordained for the obedient and the disobedient, namely, Paradise and Hell and honour and disgrace. I extend my praise to His Being as He desires His creation to praise Him. He has fixed for everything a measure, for every measure a time limit, and for every time limit a document.

A part of the same sermon

About the greatness and importance of the Holy Qur'ān

The Qur'ān orders as well as refrains, remains silent and also speaks. It is the proof of Allāh before His creation. He has taken from them a pledge (to act) upon it. He has perfected its effulgence, and completed through it His religion. He let the Prophet leave this world when he had conveyed to the people all His commands of guidance through the Qur'ān. You should therefore regard Allāh great as He has held Himself great, because He has not concealed anything of His religion from you, nor has He left out anything which He likes or which He dislikes, but He

made for it a clear emblem (of guidance) and a definite sign which either refrains from it or calls towards it. His pleasure is the same for all time to come.

You should know that He will not be pleased with you for anything for which He was displeased with those before you, and He will not be displeased with you for anything for which He was pleased with those before you. You are treading on a clear path, and are speaking the same as the people before you had spoken. Allāh is enough for your needs in this world. He has persuaded you to remain thankful, and has made it obligatory on you to mention Him with your tongues.

Warning against punishment on the Day of Judgement

He has advised you to exercise fear and has made it the highest point of His pleasure and all that He requires from His creatures. You should therefore fear Allāh, who is such that you are as though just in front of Him, and your forelocks are in His grip, and your change of position is in His control. If you conceal a matter, He will know of it. If you disclose a matter, He will record it. For this He has appointed honoured guards (angels) who do not omit any rightful matter nor include anything incorrect. You should know that whoever fears Allāh, He would make for him a way to get out of troubles and (grant him) a light (to help him) out of darkness. He will ever keep him in what ever (condition) he wishes, and will make him stay in a position of honour near Himself, in the house which He has made for Himself. The shade of this house is His throne, its light is His effulgence, its visitors are His angels and its companions are His prophets.

Therefore, hasten towards the place of return and go ahead of (your) deaths (by collecting provision for the next world). Shortly, the expectations of the people will be cut short and death will overtake them while the door of repentance will be closed for them. You are still in a place to which those who were before you have been wishing to return. In this world, which is not your house, you are just a traveller in motion. You have been given the call to leave from here, and you have

been ordered to collect provision while you are here. You should know that this thin skin cannot tolerate the Fire (of Hell). So, have pity on yourselves because you have already tried it in the tribulations of the world.

Have you ever seen the crying of a person who has been pricked with a thorn or who bleeds due to stumbling or whom hot sand has burnt? How would he feel when he is between two frying pans of Hell with stones all round with Satan as his companion? Do you know that when Mālik (the guard-in-charge of Hell) is angry with the fire, its parts begin to clash with each other (in rage), and, when he scolds it, it leaps between the doors of Hell crying on account of his scolding.

O' you old and big whom old age has made hoary, how will you feel when rings of fire will touch the bones of your neck, and handcuffs hold so hard that they eat away the flesh of the forearms? (Fear) Allāh ! Allāh ! O' crowd of men, while you are in good health before sickness (grips you) and you are in ease before straitness (overtakes you). You should try for the release of your necks before their mortgage is foreclosed. your eyes, thin down your bellies, use your feet, spend your money, take your bodies and spend them over yourselves, and do not be niggardly about them, because Allāh the Glorified, has said:

... if you help (in the way) of Allāh, He will (also) help you, and will set firm your feet. (Qur'ān, 47:7)

and He, the Sublime, has said :

Who is he who would loan unto Allāh a goodly loan? so that He may double it for him, and for him shall be a noble recompense. (Qur'ān, 57:11)

He does not seek your support because of any weakness, nor does He demand a loan from you because of shortage. He seeks your help, although He possesses all the armies of the skies and the earth and He is strong and wise. He seeks a loan from you, although He owns the treasures of the skies and the earth and He is rich and praiseworthy.

(Rather) He intends to try you as to which of you performs good acts. You should therefore be quick in performance of (good) acts so that your way be with His neighbours in His abode; He made His Prophet's companions of these neighbours and made the angels to visit them. He has honoured their ears so that the sound of Hell fire may never reach them, and He has afforded protection to their bodies from weariness and fatigue.

. . . that is the grace of Allāh, He bestoweth it upon whomsoever He willeth; and Allāh is the Lord of Mighty Grace. (Qur'ān, 57:21)

I say what you are hearing. I seek Allāh's help for myself and yourselves. He is enough for me and He is the best dispenser.

* * * * *

SERMON 183

One of the Khārijites al-Burj ibn Mus'hir at-Ṭā'i raised the slogan, "Command behoves only Allāh" in such a way that Amīr al-mu'minīn heard it. On hearing it he said:

Keep quite, may Allāh make you ugly, O' you with broken tooth. Certainly, by Allāh, when truth became manifest even then your personality was weak and your voice was lose. But when wrong began to shout loudly you again sprouted up like the horns of a kid.

* * * * *

SERMON 184

Praise of Allāh and His wonderful creatures

Praise be to Allāh. He is such that senses cannot perceive Him, place

cannot contain Him, eyes cannot see Him and veils cannot cover Him. He proves His eternity by the coming into existence of His creation, and (also) by originating His creation (He proves) His existence, and by their (mutual) similarity He proves that there is nothing similar to Him. He is true in His promise. He is too high to be unjust to His creatures. He stands by equity among His creation and practices justice over them in His commands. He provides evidence through the creation of things of His being from ever, through their marks of incapability of His power, and through their powerlessness against death of His eternity.

He is One, but not by counting. He is everlasting without any limit. He is existent without any support. Minds admit of Him without (any activity of the) senses. Things which can be seen stand witness to Him without confronting Him. Imagination cannot encompass Him. He manifests Himself to the imagination with his help for the imagination, and refuses to be imagined by the imagination. He has made imagination the arbiter (in this matter). He is not big in the sense that volume is vast and so His body is also big. Nor is He great in the sense that His limits should extend to the utmost and so His frame be extensive. But He is big in position and great in authority.

About the Holy Prophet

I stand witness that Muhammad is His slave, His chosen Prophet and His responsible trustee — may Allāh bless him and his descendants. All`ah sent him with undeniable proofs, a clear success and open paths. So he conveyed the message declaring the truth with it. He led the people on the (correct) highway, established signs of guidance and minarets of light, and made Islam's ropes strong and its knots firm.

A part of the same sermon

About the creation of animal species

Had they pondered over the greatness of His power and the vastness of His bounty they would have returned to the right path and feared the

punishment of the Fire; but hearts are sick and eyes are impure. Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination — how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness. Its livelihood is guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Allāh, the Kind, does not forget it and (Allāh the Giver) does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone or fixed rocks.

If you have thought about its digestive tracts in its high and low parts, the carapace of its belly, and its eyes and its ears in its head you would be amazed at its creation and you would feel difficulty in describing it. Exalted is He who made it stand on its legs and erected it on its pillars (of limbs). No other originator took part with Him in its origination and no one having power assisted Him in its creation. If you tread on the paths of your imagination and reach its extremity it will not lead you anywhere except that the Originator of the ant is the same as He who is the Originator of the date-palm, because everything has (the same) delicacy and detail, and every living being has little difference.

The Creation of the Universe

In His creation, the big, the delicate, the heavy, the light, the strong, the weak are all equal.¹ So is the sky, the air, the winds and the water.

¹ The meaning is that if the smallest thing in creation is examined it will be found to contain all that which is found in the biggest creatures, and each will exhibit the same reflection of natures, workmanship and performance, and the ratio of each to Allāh's might and power will be the same, whether it be as small as an ant or as big as a date-palm. Is it not that making a small thing is easy for Him while the making of a big thing is difficult for Him, because the diversity of colour, volume and quantity is just based on the dictates of His sagacity and expediency, but as regards creation itself there is no difference among them. Therefore, this uniformity of creation is a proof of the oneness and unity of the Creator.

Therefore, you look at the sun, moon, vegetation, plants, water, stone, the difference of this night and day, the springing of the streams, the large number of the mountains, the height of their peaks, the diversity of languages and the variety of tongues. Then woe be to him who disbelieves in the Ordainer and denies the Ruler. They believe that they are like grass for which there is no cultivator nor any maker for their diverse shapes. They have not relied on any argument for what they assert, nor on any research for what they have heard. Can there be any construction without a constructor, or any offense without an offender.

The wonderful creation of the locust

If you wish you can tell about the locust (as well). Allāh gave it two red eyes, lighted for them two moon—like pupils, made for it small ears, opened for it a suitable mouth and gave it keen sense, gave it two teeth to cut with and two sickle-like feet to grip with. The farmers are afraid of it in the matter of crops since they cannot drive it away even though they may join together. The locust attacks the fields and satisfies its desires (of hunger) from them although its body is not equal to a thin finger.

About the Glory of Allāh

Glorified is Allāh before Whom every one in the skies or the earth bows in prostration willingly or unwillingly, submits to Him by placing his cheeks and face (in the dust), drops before Him (in obedience) peacefully and humbly, and hands over to Him full control in fear and apprehension.

The birds are bound by His commands. He knows the number of their feathers and their breaths. He has made their feet to stand on water and on land. He has ordained their livelihoods. He knows their species: this is the crow, this is the eagle, this is the pigeon and this is the ostrich. He called out every bird with its name (while creating it) and provided it with its livelihood. He created heavy clouds and produced from them heavy rain and spread it on various lands. He drenched the earth after its dryness and grew vegetation from it after its barrenness.

* * * * *

SERMON 185

**About the Oneness of Allāh. This sermon contains principles
of knowledge which no other sermon contains**

He who assigns to Him (different) conditions does not believe in His oneness, nor does he who likens Him grasp His reality. He who illustrates Him does not signify Him. He who points at Him and imagines Him does not mean Him. Everything that is known through itself has been created, and everything that exists by virtue of other things is the effect (of a cause). He works but not with the help of instruments. He fixes measures but not with the activity of thinking. He is rich but not by acquisition.

Times do not keep company with Him, and implements do not help Him. His Being precedes times. His Existence precedes non-existence and His eternity precedes beginning. By His creating the senses it is known that He has no senses. By the contraries in various matters it is known that He has no contrary, and by the similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him. He has made light the contrary of darkness, brightness that of gloom, dryness that of moisture and heat that of cold. He produces affection among inimical things.

He fuses together diverse things, brings near remote things and separates things which are joined together. He is not confined by limits, nor counted by numbers. Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves. The word¹

¹ The meaning is that the sense for which the words “*mundhu*”, “*qad*” and “*lawlā*” have been formed is opposed to the attributes of “Ever”, “Eternal” and “Perfect”. Therefore, their application to anything would prove that they have come into existence from non-existence and are imperfect. For example, “*mundhu*” is used to denote time as is “*qad wujida mundhu kadhā*” (this thing is found since so-and-so). Here a time limit has been stated, and anything for which a limit of time can be described cannot exist from ever or for ever. The word “*qad*” shows (indicating the present perfect tense) the immediate past. This sense

‘*mundhu*’ (i.e. since) disproves their eternity, the word ‘*qad*’ (that denotes nearness of time of occurrence), disproves their being from ever and the word ‘*lawlā*’ (if it were hot) keep them remote from perfection.

Through them the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence, and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes. Stillness and motion do not occur in Him, and how can that thing occur in Him which He has Himself made to occur, and how can a thing revert to Him which He first created, and how can a thing appear in Him which He first brought to appearance. If it had not been so, His Self would have become subject to diversity, His Being would have become divisible (into parts), and His reality would have been prevented from being deemed Eternal. If there was a front to Him there would have been a rear also for Him. He would need completing only if shortage befell Him. In that case signs of the created would appear in Him, and He would become a sign (leading to other objects) instead of signs leading to Him. Through the might of His abstention (from affectedness), He is far above being affected by things which effect others.

He is that which does not change or vanish. The process of setting does not behove Him. He has not begotten any one lest He be regarded as having been born. He has not been begotten otherwise He would be contained within limits. He is too High to have sons. He is too purified to contact women. Imagination cannot reach Him so as to assign Him quantity. Understanding cannot think of Him so as to give him shape. Senses do not perceive Him so as to feel Him. Hands cannot touch Him so as to rub against Him. He does not change into any condition. He does not pass from one state to another. Nights and days do not turn Him old. Light and darkness do not alter Him.

It cannot be said that He has a limit or extremity, or end or termination;

also can apply to a thing which is limited in time. The word ‘*lawlā*’ is used to denote the negation of something in another thing, as ‘*mā aḥsanahu wa akmalahu lawlā annahu kadhā*’ (how handsome and perfect it would be if it were so-and-so). Therefore, the thing for which this word is used would be in need of others in handsomeness and perfection, and would remain deficient by itself.

nor do things control Him so as to raise Him or lower Him, nor does anything carry Him so as to bend Him or keep Him erect. He is not inside things nor outside them. He conveys news, but not with the tongue or voice. He listens, but not with the holes of the ears or the organs of hearing. He says, but does not utter words. He remembers, but does not memorise. He determines, but not by exercising His mind. He loves and approves without any sentimentality (of heart). He hates and feels angry without any painstaking. When He intends to create someone He says ‘‘Be’’ and there he is, but not through a voice that strikes (the ears) is that call heard. His speech is an act of His creation. His like never existed before this. If it had been eternal, it would have been the second god.

It cannot be said that He came into being after He had not been in existence because in that case the attributes of the created things would be assigned to Him and there would remain no difference between them and Him, and He would have no distinction over them. Thus, the Creator and the created would become equal and the initiator and the initiated would be on the same level. He created (the whole of) creation without any example made by someone else, and He did not secure the assistance of any one out of His creation for creating it.

He created the earth and suspended it without being busy, retained it without support, made it stand without legs, raised it without pillars, protected it against bendings and curvings and defended it against crumbling and splitting (into parts). He fixed mountains on it like stumps, solidified its rocks, caused its streams to flow and opened wide its valleys. Whatever He made did not suffer from any flaw, and whatever He strengthened did not show any weakness.

He manifests Himself over the earth with His authority and greatness. He is aware of its inside through his knowledge and understanding. He has power over every thing in the earth by virtue of His sublimity and dignity. Nothing from the earth that He may ask for defies Him, nor does it oppose Him so as to overpower Him. No swift-footed creature can run away from Him so as to surpass Him. He is not needy towards any possessing person so that he should feed Him. All things bow to Him and are humble before His greatness. They cannot flee away from His

authority to someone else in order to escape His benefit or His harm. There is no parallel for Him who may match Him and no one like Him so as to equal Him.

He will destroy the earth after its existence, till all that exists on it will become non-existent. But the extinction of the world after its creation is no stranger than its first formation and invention. How could it be? Even if all the animals of the earth, whether birds or beasts, stabled cattle or pasturing ones, of different origins and species, dull people and sagacious men — all jointly try to create (even) a mosquito they are not able to bring it into being and do not understand what is the way to its creation. Their wits are bewildered and wandering. Their powers fall short and fail, and return disappointed and tired, knowing that they are defeated and admitting their inability to produce it, also realizing that they are too weak (even) to destroy it.

Surely, after the extinction of the world, Allāh the Glorified will remain alone with nothing else beside Him. He will be, after its extinction, as He was before its production: without time or place or moment or period. At this moment, period and time will not exist, and years and hours will disappear. There will be nothing except Allāh, the One, the All-powerful. To Him is the return of all matters. Its initial creation was not in its power; and the prevention of its extinction was (also) not in its power. If it had the power to prevent it, it would have existed for ever. When He made anything of the world, the making of it did not cause Him any difficulty, and the creation of anything which He created and formed did not fatigue Him. He did not create it to heighten His authority nor for fear of loss or harm, nor to seek its help against an overwhelming foe, nor to guard against any avenging opponent with its help, nor for the extension of His domain by its help, nor for boasting (over largeness of His possession) against a partner, nor because He felt lonely and desired to seek its company.

Then after its creation He will destroy it, but not because any worry has overcome Him in its upkeep and administration, nor for any pleasure that will accrue to Him, nor for the cumbrousness of anything over Him. The length of its life does not weary Him so as to induce Him to its quick

destruction. But Allāh, the Glorified, has maintained it with His kindness, kept it intact with His command and perfected it with His power. Then after its destruction, He will resuscitate it, but not for any need of His own towards it, nor to seek the assistance of any of its things against it, nor to change over from the condition of loneliness to that of company, nor from the condition of ignorance and blindness to that of knowledge and search, nor from paucity and need towards needlessness and plenty, nor from disgrace and lowliness towards honour and prestige.

* * * * *

SERMON 186

Regarding the vicissitudes of time

(The mischiefs that are to occur and the absence of lawful ways of livelihood)

May my father and my mother be sacrificed for those few whose names are well-known in the sky and not known on the earth. Beware, you should expect what is to befall you such as adversity in your affairs, severance of relations and the rising up of inferior people. This will happen when the blow of a sword will be easier for a believer than to secure one Dirham lawfully. This will happen ¹ when the reward of the

¹ In that period the reward of the beggar who takes will be higher than that of the giver because the ways of earning livelihood of the rich will be unlawful, and whatever he will donate of it, its purpose will be showing himself, hypocrisy and seeking fame, for which he will not be entitled to any reward, while the poor who take it by force of their poverty and helplessness, and to spend it in the right manner, will deserve more reward and recompense.

The commentator, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written another meaning of it also, namely if the beggar does not take the wealth from the rich and it remains with him he will spend it on unlawful matters and enjoyments, and since his taking it from him prevents him from using it in unlawful manner;

beggar is more than that of the giver. This will be when you are intoxicated, not by drinking, but with wealth and plenty, you are swearing without compulsion and are speaking lies without compulsion. This will be when troubles hurt you as the saddle hurts the hump of the camel. How long will these tribulations be and how distant the hope (for deliverance from them)?

O' people, throw away the reins of the horses who carry on their backs the weight of your hands (i.e. sins), do not cut away from your chief (Imām) otherwise you will blame yourself for your own doings. Do not jump in the fire which is in flames in front of you; keep away from its courses and leave the middle way for it. Because, by my life, the believer will die in its flames, and others will remain safe in it.

I am among you like a lamp in the darkness. Whoever enters by it will be lit from it. So listen O' men, preserve it and remain attentive with the ears of your hearts so that you may understand.

* * * * *

SERMON 187

Allāh's favours

I advise you, O' people, to fear Allāh and to praise Him profusely for His favours to you and His reward for you and His obligations on you. See how He chose you for favours and dealt with you with mercy. You sinned openly; He kept you covered. You behaved in a way to incur His punishment, but He gave you more time.

Condition of persons facing death

I also advise you to remember death and to lessen your heedlessness

therefore, for this prevention of evil, the beggar will deserve more reward and recompense. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.13, p.97)

towards it. Why should you be heedless of Him Who is not heedless of you? Why expect from him (i.e., the angel of death) who will not give you time? The dead whom you have been watching suffice as preachers. They were carried to their graves, not riding themselves, and were placed in them but not of their own accord. It seems as if they never lived in this world and as if the next world had always been their abode. They have made lonely the place where they were living, and are now living where they used to feel lonely. They remained busy about what they had to leave, and did not care for where they were to go. Now, they cannot remove themselves from evil, nor add to their virtues. They were attached to the world and it deceived them. They trusted it and it overturned them.

Transience of this world

May Allāh have pity on you. You should therefore hasten towards (the preparation of) houses which you have been commanded to populate, and towards which you have been called and invited. Seek the completion of Allāh's favours on you by exercising endurance in His obedience and abstention from His disobedience, because tomorrow is close to today. How fast are the hours of the day, how fast are the days in the month, how fast are the months in the year, and how fast the years in a life.

* * * * *

SERMON 188

Steadfast and transient belief

One belief is that which is firm and steadfast in hearts, and one is that which remains temporarily in the heart and the breast up to a certain time. If you were to acquit (yourself) before any person, you should wait till death approaches him, for that is the time limit for being acquitted.

And immigration stands as its original position. Allāh has no need towards him who secretly accepts belief or him who openly does so. Immigration will not apply to any one unless he recognizes the proof (of Allāh) on the earth. Whoever recognizes him and acknowledges him would be *a muhājir* (immigrant). *istid'āf* (i.e. freedom from the obligation of immigration) does not apply to him whom the proof (of Allāh) reaches and he hears it and his heart preserves it.¹

**The challenge “Ask me before you miss me”
and prophecy about the Umayyads**

Certainly, our case is difficult and complicated. No one can bear it except a believer whose heart Allāh has tried with belief. Our traditions will not be preserved except by trustworthy hearts and (men of) solid

¹ This is the interpretation of the word ‘*muhājir*’ and ‘*mustaḍ’af*’ as mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān :

Verily those whom the angels take away (at death) while they are unjust to their (own) selves (in sin), they (the angels) shall ask (the sinning souls): ‘In what state were ye?’ They shall reply, ‘Weakened (mustaḍ’af — and oppressed) were we in the land;’ They (angels) will say ‘Was not the kind of Allāh vast (enough) for you to immigrate therein?’ So these (are those) whose refuge shall be Hell; and what a bad resort it is. Except the (really) weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children, who have not in their power the means (to escape from the unbelievers) and nor do they find the (right) way. So these, may be, Allāh will pardon them; and Allāh is the Clement, the Oft forgiving. (4:97—99)

The meaning of Amīr al-mu’minīn here is that *hijrah* (immigration) was not only obligatory during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, but it is a permanent obligation. This immigration is even now obligatory for attaining the proof of Allāh and the true religion. Therefore, if one has attained the proof of Allāh and believed in it, even if he is in midst of the unbelievers of his locality, he is not duty bound to immigrate.

The ‘*mustaḍ’af*’ (weakened) is one who is living among the unbelievers and is far from being informed of the proofs of Allāh, and at the same time he is unable to immigrate in order to attain the proofs of Allāh.

understanding. O' people! ask me before you miss me, because certainly I am acquainted with the passages of the sky more than the passages of the earth,¹ and before that mischief springs upon its feet

¹ Some people have explained this saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn to mean that by the passages of the earth he means matters of the world and by passages of the sky matters of religious law and that Amīr al-mu'minīn intends to say that he knows the matters of religious law and commandments more than the worldly matters. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī writes (in *Sharḥ: Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.4, pp.200-201):

It is related from al-'Allāmah al-Wabarī, that he said that Amīr al-mu'minīn's intention is to say that the scope of his religious knowledge is larger than his knowledge about matters of the world.

But taking the context into account, this explanation cannot be held to be correct because this sentence (which is the subject of explanation) has been used as the cause of the sentence "Ask me before you miss me", and after it, is the prophesy about revolt. In between these two the occurrence of the sentence that "I know religious matters more than worldly matters", makes the whole utterance quite uncounted, because Amīr al-mu'minīn's challenge to ask whatever one likes is not confined to matters of religious law only so this sentence could be held as its cause. Then, after that, the prophesy of the rising up of the revolt has nothing to do with matters of religious law, so that it could be put forth as a proof of more knowledge of religious matters. To ignore the clear import of the words and to interpret them in a way which does not suit the occasion, does not exhibit a correct spirit, when from the context also the same meaning accrues which the words openly convey. Thus, it is to give a warning about the Umayyad's mischief that Amīr al-mu'minīn uttered the words: "Ask me whatever you like"; because I know the paths and courses of divine destiny more than the passages of the earth. So, even if you ask me about matters which are recorded in the 'preserved tablet' and concern divine destiny I can tell you, and a serious mischief is to rise against me in those matters in which you should have doubt, because my eyes are more acquainted with those ethereal lines which concern the occurrence of events and mischiefs than with what I know about lives appearing on the earth. The occurrence of this mischief is as certain as an object seen with eyes. You should therefore ask me its details and the way to keep safe from it, so that you may be able to manage your defence when the

which would trample even the nosestring and destroy the wits of the people.

* * * * *

SERMON 189

**Importance of fear of Allāh, desolateless of the grave,
and about the death of the lover of Ahlu'l-bayt being
like that of a martyr**

I praise Him out of gratefulness for His reward, and I seek His assistance in fulfilling His rights. He has a strong army. His dignity is grand. I stand witness that Muḥammad - peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny - is His slave and His Prophet. He called (people) to His obedience and overpowered His enemies by fighting for the sake of His religion. People's joining together to falsify him and their attempt to extinguish His light did not prevent him from it.

You should therefore exercise fear of Allāh because it has a rope

times comes.” This meaning is supported by the successive sayings of Amīr al-mu'minīn which he uttered in connection with the unknow, and to which the future testified. Thus, Ibn Abi'l Ḥadīd comments on this claim of Amīr al-mu'minīn as follows :

Amīr al-mu'minīn's claim is also supported by his sayings about future events which he uttered not once or a hundred times but continuously and successively, from which there remains no doubt that whatever he spoke was on the basis of knowledge and certainty and not in the way of chance. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.13, p.106)

In connection with this saying of Amīr al-mu'minīn it has already been shown and explained (in Sermon 92, Foot-note No.2) that no one else dared advance such a claim, and those who made such a claim had to face only disgrace and humility. About the prophesies made by Amīr al-mu'minīn see Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.7, pp.47-51; al-Qādī Nūru'l-Lāh al-Mar'ashī, *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq* (New ed.), vol.8, pp.87—182.

whose twist. is strong and its pinnacle is lofty and invulnerable. Hasten toward death in its pangs (by doing good acts) and be prepared for it before its approach, because the ultimate end is the Day of Judgement. This is enough preaching for one who understands and enough of a lesson for one who does not know. What idea do you have, before reaching that end, of the narrowness of grave, the hardship of loneliness, fear of the passage towards the next world, the pangs of fear, the shifting of ribs here and there (due to narrowing of the grave) , the deafness of ears, the darkness of the grave, fear of the promised punishment, the closing of the receptacle of the grave and the laying of stones?

Therefore, (fear) Allāh, (fear) Allāh, O' creatures of Allāh, because the world is behaving with you in the usual way and you and the Day of Judgement are in the same rope (close to each other). As though it has come with its signs, has approached with its pleas and has made you stand in its way; and as though it has come forward with all its quakings and has settled down with its chest on the ground while the world has parted from its people and has turned them out of its lap. It was like a day that has passed or a month that has gone by. Its new things have become old and the fat ones have become thin.

They are in a narrow place, in very complicated affairs and in a fire whose pain is sharp, cries are loud, flames are rising, sound is trembling, burning is severe, abatement is remote; its fuel is burning, its threats are fearful, its hollows are hidden, its sides are dark, its vessels are aflame, and everything about it is abominable.

And shall be conveyed those who feared (the wrath of) their Lord, in companies unto the garden. . . (Qur'ān, 39:73)

They are safe from chastisement, away from punishment, and kept aloof from fire. Their abode will be peaceful and they will be pleased with their longing and their place of stay. These are the people whose acts in this world were chaste, their eyes were tearful, their night in this world were like days because of fearing and seeking forgiveness, and their days were like nights because of feeling of loneliness and separation. Therefore, Allāh made Paradise the place of their (eventual)

return and a reward in recompense, . . . *They were most eligible and suitable for it*; . . . (Qur'ān, 48:26) in the eternal domain and everlasting favours.

Therefore, O' creatures of Allāh, pay regard to all that by being regardful of which one will succeed and by ignoring which one will incur loss, and hasten towards your death by means of your (good) acts, because you are bound by what you have done in the past and you have to your credit only what (good acts) you have sent forward. (Behave in such a way) as though the feared event (death) has come upon you, so that you cannot return (to do good acts) nor can you be cleared of evil acts. Allāh may prompt us and you for His obedience and obedience of His Prophet, and forgive us and you by His great mercy.

Stick to the earth, keep patient in trials, do not move your hands and swords after the liking of your tongues, and do not make haste in matters in which Allāh has not asked for haste, because any one of you who dies in his bed while he had knowledge of the rights of Allāh and the rights of His Prophet and members of the Prophet's house, will die as a martyr. His reward is incumbent on Allāh. He is also eligible to the recompense of what good acts he has intended to do, since his intention takes the place of drawing his sword. Certainly, for every thing there is a time and a limit.

* * * * *

SERMON 190

Praise of Allāh

Praise be to Allāh Whose praise is wide-spread, Whose army is overpowering and Whose dignity is grand. I praise Him for His successive favours and His great gifts. His forbearance is high so that He forgives and is just in whatever He decides. He knows what is going on and what has already passed. He crafted all creation by His knowledge and produced it by His intelligence without limitation, without learning,

without following the example of any intelligent producer, without committing any mistake and without the availability of any group (for help) ; I stand witness that Muḥammad — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — is His slave and His Messenger whom He deputed (at a time) when people were collecting in the abyss and moving in bewilderment. The reins of destruction were dragging them, and the locks of malice lay fixed on their hearts.

**Advice about fear of Allāh and an account
of this world and its people**

I advise you, O' creature of Allāh, that you should have fear of Allāh because it is a right of Allāh over you and it creates your right over Allāh, and that you should seek Allāh's help in it, and its help in (meeting) Allāh. Certainly, for today fear of Allāh is a protection and a shield, and for tomorrow (the Day of Judgement) it is the road to Paradise. Its way is clear and he who treads it is the gainer. Whoever holds it, guards it. It has presented itself to the people who have already passed and to those coming from behind, because they will need it tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement) when Allāh will revive His creation again, take back what He has given and take account of what He has bestowed. How few will be those who accept it and practise it as it ought to be practised. They will be very few in number, and they are the people who correspond to the description given by Allāh, the Glorified, when He says :

... And very few of My creatures are grateful! (Qur'ān, 34:13)

Therefore, hasten with your ears towards it and intensify your efforts for it. Make it a substitute for all your past (shortcomings) to take their place as a successor, and make it your supporter against every opponent. Turn your sleep into wakefulness by its help, and pass your days with it. Make it the equipment of your hearts, wash your sins with it, treat your ailments with it and hasten towards your death with it. Take a lesson from him who neglects it, so that others who follow it should not take a lesson from you (i.e., from your neglecting it). Beware, therefore; you should take care of it and should take care of yourselves through it.

Keep away from this world and proceed towards the next world infatuatedly. Do not regard humble he whom fear of Allāh has given a high position, and do not accord a high position to him whom this world has given a high position. Do not keep your eyes on the shining clouds of the world, do not listen to him who speaks of it, do not respond to him who calls towards it, do not seek light from its glare, and do not die in its precious things, because its brightness is deceitful, its words are false, its wealth is liable to be looted, and its precious thing are to be taken away.

Beware, this world attracts and then turns away. It is stubborn, refusing to go ahead. It speaks lies and misappropriates. It disowns and is ungrateful. It is malicious and abandons (its lovers). It attracts but causes trouble. Its condition is changing, its step shaking, its honour disgrace, its seriousness jest, and its height lowliness. It is a place of plunder and pillage, and ruin and destruction. Its people are ready with their feet to drive, to overtake and to depart. Its routes are bewildering, its exits are baffling, and its schemes end in disappointment. Consequently, strongholds betray them, houses throw them out and cunning fails them.

Some of them are like hocked camel, some like butchered meat, some like severed limbs, some like spilt blood, some are biting their hands (in pain) some are rubbing their palms (in remorse), some are holding their cheeks on their hands (in anxiety), some are cursing their own views and some are retreating from their determination. But the time for action has gone away and the hour of calamity has approached, *while* (there was no longer) *the time to escape* (Qur'ān, 38:3). Alas! Alas! what has been lost is lost ! what has gone is gone ! The world has passed in its usual manner.

So wept not on them the heavens and the earth nor were they respited. (Qur'ān, 44:29)

* * * * *

SERMON 191

Known as “al-Khuṭbah al-Qāṣi‘ah”

(Sermon of Disparagement)

(It comprises disparagement of Satan [Iblīs] for his vanity and his refusing to prostrate before Adam [p.b.u.h.], and his being the first to display bigotry and to act through vanity; it comprises a warning to people treading in Satan’s path)

Praise be to Allāh who wears the apparel of Honour and Dignity and has chosen them for Himself instead of for His creation. He has made them inaccessible and unlawful for others. He has selected them for His own great self, and has hurled a curse on him who contests with Him concerning them.

Allāh’s trial and the vanity of Iblīs

Then He put His angels on trial concerning these attributes in order to distinguish those who are modest from those who are vain. Therefore, Allāh, who is aware of whatever is hidden in the hearts and whatever lies behind the unseen said :

*... “Verily I am about to create man from clay,”
And when I have completed and have breathed into him of My
spirit, then fall ye prostrating in obeisance unto him.
And did fall prostrating in obeisance the angels all together,
Save Iblīs ; . . (Qur’ān, 38:71—74)*

His vanity stood in his way. Consequently, he felt proud over Adam by virtue of his creation and boasted over him on account of his origin. Thus, this enemy of Allāh is the leader of those who boast, and the fore-runner of the vain. It is he who laid the foundation of factionalism, quarrelled with Allāh about the robe of greatness, put on the dress of haughtiness and took off the covering of humility. Do you not see how Allāh made him low on account of his vanity and humiliated him for his feigning to be high? He discarded him in this world and provided for him burning fire in the next world.

If Allāh had wanted to create Adam from a light whose glare would

have dazzled the eyes, whose handsomeness would have amazed the wits and whose smell would have caught the breath, He could have done so; and if He had done so, people would have bowed to him in humility and the trial of the angels through him would have become easier. But Allāh, the Glorified, tries His creatures by means of those things whose real nature they do not know in order to distinguish (good and bad) for them through the trial, and to remove vanity from them and keep them aloof from pride and self-admiration.

You should take a lesson from what Allāh did with Satan; namely He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan had worshipped Allāh for six thousand years — whether by the reckoning of this world or of the next world is not known. Who now can remain safe from Allāh after Satan by committing a similar disobedience? None at all. Allāh, the Glorified, cannot let a human being enter Paradise if he does the same thing for which Allāh turned out from it an angel. His command for the inhabitants in the sky and of the earth is the same. There is no friendship between Allāh and any individual out of His creation so as to give him license for an undesirable thing which He has held unlawful for all the worlds.

Warning against Satan

Therefore, you should fear lest Satan infects you with his disease, or leads you astray through his call, or marches on you with his horsemen and footmen, because, by my life, he has put the arrow in the bow for you, has stretched the bow strongly, and has aimed at you from a nearby position, and:

He (Satan) said: ‘My Lord! because Thou hast left me to stray, certainly will I adorn unto them the path of error, and certainly will I cause them all to go astray.’ (Qur’ān, 15:39)

Although he (Satan) had said so only by guessing about the unknown future and by wrong conjecturing, yet the sons of vanity, the brothers of haughtiness and the horsemen of pride and intolerance proved him to be true, so much so that when disobedient persons from among you bowed

before him, and his greed about you gained strength, and what was a hidden secret turned into a clear fact, he spread his full control over you and marched with his forces towards you.

Then they pushed you into the hollows of disgrace, threw you into the whirlpools of slaughter, and trampled you, wounding you by striking your eyes with spears, cutting your throats, tearing your nostrils, breaking your limbs and taking you in ropes of control towards the fire already prepared. In this way he became more harmful to your religion and a greater kindler of flames (of mischief) about your worldly matters than the enemies against whom you showed open opposition and against whom you marched your forces.

You should therefore spend all your force against him, and all your efforts against him, because, by Allāh, he boasted over your (i.e., Adam's) origin, questioned your position and spoke lightly of your lineage. He advanced on you with his army, and brought his footmen towards your path. They are chasing you from every place, and they are hitting you at every finger joint. You are not able to defend by any means, nor can you repulse them by any determination. You are in the thick of disgrace, the ring of straitness, the field of death and the way of distress.

You should therefore put out the fires of haughtiness and the flames of intolerance that are hidden in your hearts. This vanity can exist in a Muslim only by the machinations of Satan, his haughtiness, mischief and whisperings. Make up your mind to have humility over your heads, to trample self-pride under your feet and to cast off vanity from your necks. Adopt humility as the weapon between you and your enemy, Satan and his forces. He certainly has, from every people, fighters, helpers, footmen and horsemen. Do not be like him who feigned superiority over the son of his own mother without any distinction given to him by Allāh except the feeling of envy which his feeling of greatness created in him and the fire of anger that vanity kindled in his heart. Satan blew into his nose his own vanity, after which Allāh gave him remorse and made him responsible for the sins of all killers up to the Day of Judgement.

Caution against vanity and boasting about ignorance

Beware! you strove hard in revolting and created mischief on the earth in open opposition to Allāh and in challenging the believers over fighting. (You should fear) Allāh ! Allāh ! in feeling proud of your vanity and boasting over ignorance, because this is the root of enmity and the design of Satan wherewith he has been deceiving past peoples and bygone ages, with the result that they fell into the gloom of his ignorance and the hollows of his misguidance, submitting to his driving and accepting his leadership. In this matter the hearts of all the people were similar, and centuries passed by, one after the other, in just the same way, and there was vanity with which chests were tightened.

Caution against obeying haughty leaders and elders

Beware ! beware of obeying your leaders and elders who felt proud of their achievements and boasted about their lineage. They hurled the (liability for) things on Allāh and quarrelled with Allāh in what He did with them, contesting His decree and disputing His favours. Certainly, they are the main foundation of obstinacy, the chief pillars of mischief and the swords of pre-Islamic boasting over fore-fathers. Therefore, fear Allāh, do not become antagonistic to His favours on you, nor jealous of His bounty over you¹ and do not obey the claimants (of Islam) whose dirty water you drink along with your clean one, whose ailments you mix with your healthiness and whose wrongs you allow to enter into your rightful matters.

They are the foundation of vice and the linings of disobedience. Satan has made them carriers of misguidance and the soldiers with whom he attacks men. They are interpreters through whom he speaks in order to steal away your wits, enter into your eyes and blow into your ears. In this way he makes you the victim of his arrows, the treading ground of his footsteps and source of strength. for his hands. Take instruction from how he brought Allāh's wrath, violence, chastisement and punishment on those who were vain among the past people. Take admonition from their

¹ The intention is that “you should not create conditions by which you may be deprived of Allāh's favours, like the jealous who aims at harming him of whom he is jealous.”

lying on their cheeks and falling on their sides, and seek Allāh's protection from the dangers of vanity, as you seek His protection from calamities.

The humbleness of the Holy Prophet

Certainly, if Allāh were to allow anyone to indulge in pride He would have allowed it to his selected prophets and vicegerents. But Allāh, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and liked humbleness for them. Therefore, they laid their cheeks on the ground, smeared their faces with dust, bent themselves down for the believers and remained humiliate people. Allāh tried them with hunger, afflicted them with difficulty, tested them with fear, and upset them with troubles. Therefore, do not regard wealth and progeny the criterion for Allāh's pleasure and displeasure, as you are not aware of the chances of mischief and trials during richness and power as Allāh, the Glorified, the Sublime, has said :

What! Think they that what We aid them with of wealth and children, We are hastening unto them the good things? Nay! they (only) perceive not. (Qur'ān, 23:55—56)

Certainly, Allāh the Glorified, tries His creatures who are vain about themselves through His beloved persons who are humble in their eyes.

When Mūsā son of 'Imrān went to Pharaoh along with his brother Hārūn (Aaron) wearing (coarse) shirts of wool and holding sticks in their hands, they guaranteed him retention of his country and continuity of his honour if he submitted; but he said: "Do you not wonder at these two men guaranting me the continuity of my honour and the retention of my country although you see their poverty and lowliness. Otherwise, why do they not have gold bangles on their wrists?" He said so feeling proud of his gold and collected possessions, and considering wool and its cloth as nothing.

When Allāh, the Glorified, deputed His prophets, if He had wished to open for them treasures and mines of gold and (surround them with) planted gardens and to collect around them birds of the skies and beasts of the earth, He could have done so. If He had done so then there would have been no trial, nor recompense and no tidings (about the affairs of the next world). Those who accepted (His message) could not be given

the recompense falling due after trial and the believers could not deserve the reward for good acts, and all these words¹ would not have retained their meanings. But Allāh, the Glorified, makes His Prophets firm in their determination and gives them weakness of appearance as seen from the eyes, along with contentment that fills the hearts and eyes resulting from care-freeness, and with want that pains the eyes and ears.

If the prophets possessed authority that could not be assaulted, or honour that could not be damaged or domain towards which the necks of people would turn and the saddles of mounts could be set, it would have been very easy for people to seek lessons and quite difficult to feel vanity. They would have then accepted belief out of fear felt by them or inclination attracting them, and the intention of them all would have been the same, although their actions would have been different. Therefore, Allāh, the Glorified decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble before His face, obey His command and accept His obedience with sincerity in which there should not be an iota of anything else; and as the trial and tribulation would be stiffer the reward and recompense too should be larger.

The Holy Ka‘bah

Do you not see that Allāh, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam, upto the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm, which neither see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged

¹ The intention is to say that if belief is accepted under force of awe and fear and worship is offered under the influence of power and authority then neither will it be belief in the true sense nor worship in real spirit. This is because belief is the name of inner testimony and heart-felt conviction. The conviction produced by force and compulsion can be only verbal but not heart-felt. Similarly, worship is the name of open acknowledgement of one's position of servitude. Worship which is devoid of the feeling of servitude or the sense of devotion and which is performed only in view of authority or fear cannot be real worship. Therefore, such belief and such worship would not present their correct connotation.

stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the most narrow valleys between rough mountains, soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water and scattered habitants, where neither camels nor horses nor cows and sheep can prosper.

Then He commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it. In this way it became the centre of their journey in seeking pastures and the rendezvous for meeting of their carrier-beasts, so that human spirits hasten towards it from distant waterless deserts, deep and low lying valleys and scattered islands in the seas. They shake their shoulders in humbleness, recite the slogan of having reached His audience, march with swift feet, and have dishavelled hair and dusted faces. They throw their pieces of cloth on their backs, they have marred the beauty of their faces by leaving the hair uncut as a matter of great test, severe tribulation, open trial, and extreme refining. Allāh has made it a means to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If Allāh, the Glorified, had placed His sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level plains, plenty of trees, an abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings in people. But Allāh tries His creatures by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distresses, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits and to make all this an open door for His favours and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins).

Caution against rebellion and oppressiveness

(Fear) Allāh! Allāh! from the immediate consequence of rebellion (to accrue in this world), and the eventual consequence of weighty oppressiveness (to accrue in the next world), and from the evil result of vanity, because it is the great trap of Satan and his big deceit which enters the hearts of the people like a fatal poison. It never goes waste, nor misses anyone — neither the learned because of his knowledge, nor the destitute¹ in his rags. This is the thing against which Allāh has protected His creatures who are believers by means of prayers, and alms-giving, and suffering the hardships of fasting in the days in which it has been made obligatory, in order to give their limbs peacefulness, to cast fear in their eyes, to make their spirits humble, to give their hearts humility and to remove haughtiness from them. All this is achieved through the covering of their delicate cheeks with dust in humility, prostrating their main limbs on the ground in humbleness, and retracting of their bellies so as to reach to their backs due to fasting by way of lowliness (before Allāh), besides giving all sorts of products of the earth to the needy and the destitute by way of alms.

Look what there is in these acts by way of curbing the appearance of pride and suppressing the traces of vanity. I cast my glance and noticed that no one in the world, except you, feels vanity for anything without a cause which may appeal to the ignorant, or a reason which may cling to the minds of the foolish, because you feel vanity for something for which no reason is discernable, nor any ground.

As for Satan, he felt proud over Adam because of his origin and taunted at him about his creation, since he said: ‘ ‘ I am of fire while you

¹ The reason for specifying the learned and the poor is that the learned has the light of learning to lead him, which the destitution of the poor may deny to him. In spite of this, both the learned and the poor fall into his deceit.

Then how can the ignorant save himself from his clutches, and how can the rich, who has all the means to get into wrong ways, defend himself against him.

Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel!

As he deemeth himself needless!

are of clay.” In the same way the rich among the prosperous communities have been feeling vanity because of their riches, as (Allāh) said :

And said they: ‘‘We are more (than you) in wealth and in children, and we shall not be chastised.’’ (Qur’ān, 34:35)

Enthusiasm for attractive manners, respectable position, and taking lessons from the past

In case you cannot avoid vanity, your vanity should be for good qualities, praiseworthy acts, and admirable matters with which the dignified and noble chiefs of the Arab families distinguished themselves, such as attractive manners, high thinking, respectable position and good performances. You too should show vanity in praiseworthy habits like the protection of the neighbour, the fulfilment of agreements, obedience to the virtuous, opposition to the haughty, extending generosity to others, abstention from rebellion, keeping aloof from blood-shed, doing justice to people, suppressing anger and avoiding trouble on the earth. You should also fear what calamities befell peoples before you on account of their evil deeds and detestable actions. Remember, during good or bad circumstances, what happened to them, and be cautious that you do not become like them.

After you have thought over both the conditions of these people, attach yourself to everything with which their position became honourable, on account of which enemies remained away from them, through which safety spread over them, by reason of which riches bowed before them and as a result of which distinction connected itself with their rope. These things were abstention from division, sticking to unity, calling each other to it and advising each other about it. You should avoid everything which broke their backbone and weakened their power, such as malice in the heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other’s help) and withholding the hand from one another’s assistance.

Think about the condition of people from among the believers who passed before you. What distresses and trials they were in! Were they not

the most over-burdened among all the people and in the most straitened circumstances in the whole world? The Pharaohs took them as slaves. They inflicted on them the worst punishments and bitter sufferings. They continuously remained in this state of ruinous disgrace and severe subjugation. They found no method for escape and no way for protection. Till when Allāh, the Glorified, noticed that they were enduring troubles in His love and bearing distresses out of fear for Him, He provided escape from the distress of trials. So, He changed their disgrace into honour and fear into safety. Consequently, they became ruling kings and conspicuous leaders, and Allāh's favours over them reached limits to which their own wishes had not reached.

Look, how they were when their groups were united, their views were unanimous, their hearts were moderate, their hands used to help one another, their swords were intended for assisting one another, their eyes were sharp and their aims were the same. Did they not become masters of the corners of the earth and rulers over the neck of all the worlds? Thereafter, also see what happened to them towards the end when division overtook them, unity became fractured, and differences arose between their words and their hearts. They divided into various groups and were scattered fighting among themselves. Then Allāh took away from them the apparel of His honour and deprived them of the prosperity produced by His favours. Only their stories have remained among you for the guidance of those who may learn the lesson from them.

You should take a lesson from the fate of the progeny of Ismael, the children of Issac and the children of Israel. How similar are their affairs and how akin are their examples. In connection with the details of their division and disunity, think of the days when the Kisrās of Persia and the Ceasars of Rome had become their masters.¹ They turned them out from

¹ If a glance is cast at the rise and fall and events and happenings of the past people this fact will shine like daylight that the rise and fall of communities is not the result of luck or chance, but that, to a great extent, it is affected by their acts and deeds. And of whatever type those deeds are, their results and consequences are in accord with them. Consequently, the stories and events of past people openly reflect that the result of oppression and evil deeds has always been ruin and destruction, while the consequence of virtuous

action and peaceful living was always good luck and success. Since time and people make no difference, if the same conditions appear again and the same actions are repeated the same results must accrue which had appeared in the earlier set of circumstances, because the accrual of the results of good or bad actions is sure and certain like the properties and effects of everything. If this were not so it would not be possible to kindle hope in the minds of the oppressed and the afflicted by presenting to them past events and their effects, nor could the oppressors and tyrants be warned of the ill-effects of their deeds, on the ground that it was not necessary that the same would accrue now as had accrued earlier. But it is the universality of causality which makes past events the object of a lesson for posterity. Consequently, it was for this purpose that Amīr al-mu'minīn provoked thinking and consideration and mentioned the various events of Banū Ismā'īl, Banū Is'hāq and Banū Isrā'īl and their affliction at the hands of the kings of Persia and Rome.

The progeny of Ismael, the elder son of Ibrāhīm (Abraham), is called Banū Ismā'īl while the progeny of his younger son Issac is called Banū Is'hāq which later continued to divide into various off-shoots and acquired different names. Their original abode was at Canaan in Palestine, where Ibrāhīm had settled after the immigration from the plains of the Euphrates and the Tigris. His son Ismā'īl had settled in the Ḥijāz, where Ibrahim had left him and his mother Hājar (Hagar). Ismā'īl married as-Sayyidah hint Muḍāḍ a woman of the tribe of Jurhum which also inhabited this very area. His progeny sprang from her and spread throughout the world. The other son of Ibrāhīm namely Is'hāq remained in Canaan. His son was Ya'qūb (Jacob/Israel) who married Liyā the daughter of his mother's brother and after her death married his other daughter. Both of them bore him progeny which is known as Banū Isrā'īl. One of his sons was Yūsuf (Joseph), who reached the neighbouring country, Egypt, through an accident, and, after suffering slavery and imprisonment, eventually became the ruler and occupier of the throne.

After this change, he sent for all his relations and kith and kin and in this way Egypt became the abode of Banū Isrā'īl. For some time they lived there in peace and safety, and led a life of respect and esteem, but by and by the locals began to view them with disdain and hatred and made them the target of all sorts of tyrannies, so much so that they used to kill their children and retained their women as slave-maids, as a result of which their determination and courage was trampled and their spirit of freedom was completely subdued. At last, conditions changed and the period of their troubles came to an end, after four hundred years of the shackles of slavery; when Allāh sent

Mūsā to deliver them from the oppression of Pharaoh. Mūsā set off with them to leave Egypt but in order to destroy the Pharaoh, Allāh turned them towards the Nile where there was all flood in front, and on the rear the huge forces of the Pharaoh. This bewildered them much, but Allāh commanded Mūsā to enter the river without fear. Thus, when he went forward, there appeared in the river not only one but several courses to pass through and Mūsā crossed to the other side of the river along with Banū Isrā'īl. Pharaoh was closely following. When he saw them passing he too advanced with his army but when they reached the middle of the stream the still water began moving and, engulfing Pharaoh and his army in its waves, finished them. About them the Qur'ān says:

And (remember ye) when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your sons and by letting your women alive, and in that was a great trial from your Lord. (2:49)

However, when, after leaving the boundaries of Egypt, they entered their mother-land Palestine, they established their own state and began to live in freedom, and Allāh changed their lowliness and disgrace into the greatness and sublimity of rule and power. In this connection, Allāh says:

And made We inheritors the people who were deemed weak (to inherit) the eastern parts of the earth and the western parts of it, which we had blessed therein (with fertility) and the good word of thy Lord was fulfilled in the children of Israel for what they did endure; and destroyed We, what Pharaoh and his people had wrought, and what shade they did make. (Qur'ān, 7:137)

On occupying the throne of rule and regaining prosperity and peacefulness, Banū Isrā'īl forgot all the ignominies and disgraces of the period of slavery, and instead of being thankful to Allāh for the favours granted by Him they took to rebellion and revolt. Consequently, they shamelessly indulged in vices and misconduct and partook in mischiefs and evil deeds to the maximum, made lawful things unlawful and unlawful things lawful by false excuses and disobeyed the prophets who tried to preach and correct them under the command of Allāh, and even killed them. The natural consequence of their vicious activities was that they were caught in punishment for their deeds. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar, who was ruling in Babylon (Iraq) in 600 B.C., rose to march against Syria and Palestine and killed seventy thousand Banū Isrā'īl with his blood-thirsty

swords, devastated their towns, drove away the survivors with him like sheep and goats and threw them in the abyss of ignominy by turning them into slaves. Although after this ruination there seemed no way for them to regain position and power, yet nature gave them still another chance to recover. When Nebuchadnezzar died and power came in the hands of Belshazzar he started all sorts of oppression on the people. Being disgusted with this, they sent word to the ruler of Persia that they were tired of enduring the oppression of their ruler and that he should rescue them from him, and free them from the oppression of Belshazzar. Cyrus the Great, who was a just and upright ruler, rose up in response to this request and, with the cooperation of the local population, overturned the government, as a consequence of which the yoke of slavery on Banū Isrā'īl's necks was also removed, and they were allowed to return to Palestine. Thus, after seventy years of subjugation they again set foot in their homeland and took over the reins of government. If they had taken their lesson from the past events they would not have committed the same evils as a consequence of which they had to suffer slavery; but the mental constitution of this community was such that whenever they achieved prosperity and freedom from care they lost themselves in the intoxication of riches and in the enjoyment of pleasure, mocked the laws of religion, derided the prophets and even killing them did not mean anything serious to them. Thus, when their ruler Herod at the request of his sweetheart, beheaded the Prophet Yaḥyā (John) and presented his head to her, none of them raised any voice against this brutality or was affected by it in any manner. This was the state of their unruliness and fierceness when 'Īsā made his appearance. He stopped them from evil deeds and exhorted them to adopt good habits, but they opposed him too and gave him troubles of various sorts, so much so that they tried to end his life. However, Allāh foiled all their devices and made 'Īsā safe against their approach. When their disobedience reached this stage and their capacity to accept guidance was completely wiped out, fate decided to ruin them and made full arrangements for their annihilation and destruction. The ruler of Roma (Byzantia) Vespasianus sent his son Titus to attack Syria, he laid siege round Jerusalem, demolished the houses and broke down the walls of the Synagogue as a result of which thousands of Banū Isrā'īl left their houses and became scattered abroad, while thousands died of hunger; and those who remained were put to sword. Most of them settled in Ḥijāz, but because of their rejecting Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) their unity was so disturbed that they could never again converge on any one centre of honour and could never regain a life of prestige and dignity in place of disgrace and ignominy.

the pastures of their lands, the rivers of Iraq and the fertility of the world, towards thorny forests, the passages of (hot) winds and hardships in livelihood. In this way they turned them into just herders of camels. Their houses were the worst in the world and their places of stay were the most drought-stricken. There was not one voice towards which they could turn for protection, nor any shade of affection on whose strength they could repose trust.

Their condition was full of distress. Their hands were scattered. Their majority was divided. They were in great anguish and under layers of ignorance. They buried their daughters alive, worshipped idols, disregarded kinship and practised robbery.

Now, look at the various favours of Allāh upon them, that He deputed towards them a prophet who got them to pledge their obedience to him and made them unite at his call. (Look) how (Allāh's) bounty spread the wings of its favours over them and flowed for them streams of its blessing, and the whole community became wrapped in blissful prosperity. Consequently, they were submerged under its bounty and enjoyed its lush life. Their affairs were settled under the protection of a powerful ruler, and circumstances offered them over-powering honour,

In the same way the ruler of Persia made serious attacks on Arabia and subjugated the inhabitants of those places. Thus, Shāpūr ibn Hurmuz, at the age of sixteen, took with him four thousand combatants and attacked Arabs who resided within the boundaries of Persia and then advanced towards Bahrain, Qaṭīf and Hajar and ruined Banū Tamīm, Banū Bakr ibn Wā'il and Banū 'Abd al-Qays and cut through the shoulders of seventy thousand Arabs, after which his nickname became "Dhu'l-Aktāf" (the shoulderer). He forced the Arabs that they should live in tents built of hair, should grow long hair on their heads, should not wear white clothes and should ride unsaddled horses. Then he settled twelve thousand people of Iṣfahān and other cities of Persia in the area between Iraq and Syria. In this way he drove the inhabitants of those places from fertile lands to waterless forests which had neither any of the conveniences of life nor means of livelihood, and for long these people remained the victims of other's oppression due to their own disunity and division. At last, Allāh deputed the Prophet and raised them out of disgrace to the highest pinnacle of progress and sublimity.

and all things became easy for them under the auspices of a strong country. They became rulers over the world and kings in the (various) parts of the earth. They became masters of those who were formerly their masters, and began issuing commands over those who used to command them. They were so strong that neither did their spears need testing nor did their weapons have any flaw.

Condemning his people

Beware! You have shaken your hands loose from the rope of obedience, and broken the divine fort around you by (resorting to) pre-Islamic rules. Certainly, it is a great blessing of Allāh, the Glorified, that He has engendered among them unity through the cord of affection in whose shade they walk and take shelter. This is a blessing whose value no one in the whole world realizes, because it is more valuable than any price and higher than any wealth.

You should know that you have again reverted to the position of the Bedouin Arabs after immigration (to Islam), and have become different parties after having been once united. You do not possess anything of Islam except its name, and know nothing of belief save its show. You say, “The Fire, yes, but no shameful position,” as if you would throw down Islam on its face in order to defame its honour and break its pledge (for brotherhood) which Allāh gave you as a sacred trust on His earth and (a source of) peace among the people. Be sure that if you incline towards anything other than Islam, the unbelievers will fight you. Then there will be neither Gabriel nor Michael, neither *muhājirūn* nor *anṣār* to help you, but only the clashing of swords, till Allāh settles the matter for you.

Certainly, there are examples before you of Allāh’s wrath, punishment, days of tribulations and happenings. Therefore, do not disregard His promises, ignoring His punishment, making light His wrath and not expecting His violence, because Allāh, the Glorified, did not curse the past ages except because they had left off asking others to do good acts and refraining them from bad acts. In fact, Allāh cursed the foolish for committing sins and the wise because they gave up refraining others from evils. Beware ! You have broken the shackles of Islam, have

transgressed its limits, and have destroyed its commands.

Amīr al-mu'minīn's high position and wonderful deeds in Islam

Beware ! surely Allāh has commanded me to fight those who revolt, or who break the pledge, or create trouble on the earth. As regards pledge-breakers, I have fought them; as regards deviators from truth, I have waged holy war against them, and as regards those who have gone out of the faith, I have put them in (serious) disgrace.¹ As for Satan of the

¹ Amīr al-mu'minīn, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās narrated that the Holy Prophet commanded 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to fight those who are pledge-breakers (*nākihīn*), deviators from truth (*qāsiṭīn*) and those who have left the faith (*māriqīn*). (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, p.139; *al-Isti'āb*, vol.3, p.1117; *Usd al ghābah*, vol.3, pp.32-33; *ad-Durr al-manthūr*, vol.6, p.18; *al-Khaṣā'is. al-kubrā*, vol.2, p.138; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.5, p.186; vol.6, p.235; vol.7, p.238; *Kanzal-'ummāl*, vol.6, pp. 72, 82, 88,155, 215,319,391,392; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.8, p.340; vol.13, pp.186-187; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn 'Asākir, vol.5, p.41; *at-Tārīkh*, Ibn Kāthīr, vol.7, pp.304-306; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍarah*, vol.2, p.240; *Sharḥ al-mawāhib al-ladunniyyah*, vol.3, pp.316-317; *Muwaḍḍaḥ al-awhām*, vol.1, p.386).

Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd says: ‘‘It has been proved (by right ascription) from the Holy Prophet that he said to ‘Alī (p.b.u.h.):

You will fight after me those who are pledge-breakers, deviators from truth and those who have gone out of the faith.

‘‘The pledge-breakers were the people of Jamal, because they broke their allegiance with him. The deviators from truth were the people of Syria (ash-Shām) at Ṣiffīn. Those who have gone out of the faith were the Khārījites at an-Nahrawān. Regarding these three groups, Allāh says (about the first one):

Verily, those who swear their fealty unto thee do but swear fealty unto Allāh; the hand of Allāh is above their hands; so whosoever violateth his oath, doth violate it only to the hurt of his (own) self; ... (Qur'ān, 48:10)

(About the second group) Allāh says:

pit,¹ he too has been dealt with by me through the loud cry with which

And as for the deviators, they shall be for the hell, a fuel. (Qur'ān, 72:15)''

Concerning the third group, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has referred to the following tradition (*ḥadīth*) that al-Bukhārī (in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.4, pp.166—167, 243), Muslim (in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.3, pp.109—117), at-Tirmidhi (in *al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.4, p.481), Ibn Mājah (in *as-Sunan*, vol.1, pp.59—62), an-Nasā'ī (in *as-Sunan*, vol.3, pp.65—66), Mālik ibn Anas (in *al-Muwatta'*, pp.204—205), ad-Dār'quṭnī (in *as-Sunan*, vol.3, pp.131—132), ad-Dārimī (in *as-Sunan*, vol.2, p.133), Abū Dāwūd (in *as-Sunan*, vol.4, pp.241—246), al-Ḥākim (in *al-Mustadrak*, vol.2, pp.145—154; vol.4, p.531), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (in *al-Musnad*, vol.1, pp.88,140,147; vol.3, pp.56,65) and al-Bayḥaqī (in *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol.8, pp.170—171) have narrated through a group of the companions of the Holy Prophet that he said about Dhu'l-Khuwayṣirah (the surname for Dhu'th-Thudayyah Ḥurqūṣ ibn Zuhayr at-Tamīmī, the chief of the Khārijites):

From this very person's posterity there will arise people who will recite the Qu'ān, but it will not go beyond their throat; they will kill their followers of Islam and will spare the idol-worshippers. They will glance through the teaching of Islam as hurriedly as the arrow passes through its prey. If I were to ever find them I would kill them like 'Ād.

Then Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd continues :

This is the sign for his (Holy Prophet's) prophethood and his prophecy of the secret knowledge. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.13, p.183)

¹ By "Satan of the pit" the reference is to Dhu'th-Thudayyah (whose full name already mentioned in Foot-note No.5) who was killed in Nahrawān by the stroke of lightning from the sky, and there was no need to kill him by sword. The Holy Prophet had foretold his death. Therefore, after the annihilation of the Khārijites at Nahrawān, Amīr al-mu'minīn came out in search, but could not find his body anywhere. In the meantime, ar-Rayyān ibn Ṣabirah saw forty to fifty bodies in a pit on the bank of the canal. When they were taken out the body of Dhu'th-Thudayyah was also found among them. He was called Dhu'th-Thudayyah because of a mass of flesh on his shoulder. When Amīr al-mu'minīn saw his body he said, "Allāh is Great, neither I

the scream of his heart and shaking of his chest was also heard. Only a small portion of the rebels has remained. If Allāh allows me one more chance over them I will annihilate them except a few remnants that may remain scattered in the suburb of the cities.

Even in my boyhood I had lowered the chest of (the famous men) of Arabia, and broken the horn points (i.e., defeated the chiefs) of the tribes of Rabī‘ah and Muḍar. Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants. When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to press me to his chest and lay me beside him in his bed, bring his body close to mine and make me smell his smell. He used to chew something and then feed me with it. He found no lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act.

From the time of his weaning, Allāh had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it. Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Ḥirā’, where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants —and Khadījah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — I heard the moan of Satan. I said, ‘ ‘ O ’ Prophet of Allāh, what is this moan?’ and he replied, “This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O’ ‘Alī, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on

spoke lie nor was I told wrong.’’ (Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.13, pp. 183—184; at-Ṭabarī, vol.1, pp.3383—3384; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, p.348)

(the path of) virtue.”

I was with him when a party of The Quraysh came to him and said to him, “‘O’ Muḥammad, you have made a big claim which none of your fore-fathers or those of your family have made. We ask you one thing; if you give us an answer to it and show it to us, we will believe that you are a prophet and a messenger, but if you cannot do it, we will know that you are a sorcerer and a liar.”

The Messenger of Allāh said; “‘What do you ask for?’” They said: “‘Ask this tree to move for us, even with its roots, and stop before you.’” The Prophet said, “‘Verily, Allāh has power over everything. If Allāh does it for you, will you then believe and stand witness to the truth?’” They said “‘Yes’”. Then he said, “‘I shall show you whatever you want, but I know that you won’t bend towards virtue, and there are among you those who will be thrown into the pit, and those who will form parties (against me).’” Then the Holy Prophet said: “‘O’ tree, if you do believe in Allāh and the Day of Judgement, and know that I am the Prophet of Allāh, come up with your roots and stand before me with the permission of Allāh.” By Him who deputed the Prophet with truth, the tree did remove itself with its roots and came with a great humming sound and a flapping like the flapping of the wings of birds, till it stopped before the Messenger of Allāh while some of its twigs came down onto my shoulders, and I was on the right side of the Holy Prophet.

When the people saw this they said by way of pride and vanity, “‘Now you order half of it to come to you and the other half of it remain (in its place).’” The Holy Prophet ordered the tree to do the same. Then half of the tree advanced towards him in an amazing manner and with greater humming. It was about to touch the Prophet of Allāh. Then they said, disbelieving and revolting, “‘Ask this half to get back to its other half and be as it was.’” The Prophet ordered it and it returned. Then I said, “‘O’ Prophet of Allāh, I am the first to believe in you and to acknowledge that the tree did what it did just now with the command of Allāh, the Sublime, in testimony to your Prophethood and to lighten your word. Upon this all the people shouted, “‘Rather a sorcerer, a liar;

it is wonderful sorcery, he is very adept in it. Only a man like this (pointing to me) can stand testimony to you in your affairs.’’

Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of anybody in matters concerning Allāh. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during the nights (in devotion to Allāh), and over beacons (of guidance) in the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Qur’ān, revive the traditions of Allāh and of His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in Paradise while their bodies are busy in (good) acts.

* * * * *

SERMON 192

It is related that a companion of Amīr al-mu’minīn called Hammām¹ who was a man devoted to worship said to him, “O’ Amīr al-mu’minīn, describe to me the pious man in such a way as though I see them.” Amīr al-mu’minīn avoided the reply and said, “O’ Hammām, fear Allāh and perform good acts because ‘Verily, Allāh is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others)’ ” (Qur’ān, 16:128). Hammām was not satisfied with this and pushed him to speak. Thereupon, Amīr al-mu’minīn praised Allāh and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Holy Prophet and then spoke:

Now then, Allāh the Glorified, the Sublime, created (the things of) creation. He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him. He has distributed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world.

¹ According to Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd this is Hammām ibn Shurayḥ but al-Allāmah al-Majlisī says that apparently this is Hammām ibn ‘Ubādah.

Thus, the God-fearing in it are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is moderate and their gait is humble. They keep their eyes closed to what Allāh has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them. They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort. If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of (their) eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement. The greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus to them, Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favours. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it.

Their hearts are grieved, they are protected against evils, their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty, and their souls are chaste. They endured (hardship) for a short while, and in consequence they secured comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial transaction that Allāh made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It captured them, but they freed themselves from it by a ransom.

During a night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'ān and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend themselves from their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their palms, their knees and their toes, and beseech Allāh, the Sublime, for their deliverance. During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous and God-fearing. Fear (of Allāh) has made them thin like arrows. If any one looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, and he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern (i.e., fear) has made them mad.

They are not satisfied with their meagre good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: "I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O' Allāh do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know."

The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred from greed. He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks (to Allāh). In the morning his anxiety is to remember (Allāh). He passes the night in fear and rises in the morning in joy — fear lest night is passed in forgetfulness, and joy over the favour and mercy received by him. If his self refuses to endure a thing which it does not like he does not grant its request towards what it likes. The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last for ever, while from the things (of this world) that will not last he keeps aloof. He transfuses knowledge with forbearance; and speech with action.

You will see his hopes simple, his shortcomings few, his heart fearing, his spirit contented, his meal small and simple, his religion safe, his desires dead and his anger suppressed. Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him is not to be feared. Even if he is found among those who forget (Allāh) he is counted among those who remember (Him), but if he is among the rememberers he is not counted among the forgetful. He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him.

Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent, his virtues are ever present, his good is ahead and mischief has turned its face (from him). He is dignified during calamities, patient in distresses, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom

he loves. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody, and does not forget what he is required to remember. He does not call others bad names, he does not cause harm to his neighbour, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes, he does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.

If he is silent his silence does not grieve him, if he laughs he does not raise his voice, and if he is wronged he endures till Allāh takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him. He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his next life, and makes people feel safe from himself. His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating.

It is related that Hammām passed into a deep swoon and then expired. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said: Verily, by Allāh I had this fear about him. Then he added: Effective advices produce such effects on receptive minds. Someone ¹ said to him: O' Amīr al-mu'minīn, how is it you do not receive such an effect? Amīr al-mu'minīn replied: Woe to you. For death there is a fixed hour which cannot be exceeded, and a cause which does not change. Now look, never repeat such talk which Satan had put on your tongue.

* * * * *

SERMON 193

In description of hypocrites

We praise Allāh for the succour He has given us in carrying out His obedience and in preventing us from disobedience, and we ask Him to

¹ This man was 'Abdullāh ibn al-Kawwā' who was in the fore-front of the Khārijite movement and was a great opponent of Amīr al-mu'minīn.

complete His favours (to us) and to make us hold on to His rope. We stand witness that Muḥammad is His slave and His Messenger. He entered every hardship in search of Allāh's pleasure and endured for its sake every grief. His near relations changed themselves for him and those who were remote from him (in relationship) united against him. The Arabs let loose the reins (of their horses to quicken their march) against him, and struck the bellies of their carriers to (rouse them) in fighting against him, so much so that enemies came to his threshold from the remotest places and most distant areas.

I advise you, O' creatures of Allāh, to fear Allāh and I warn you of the hypocrites, because they are themselves misguided and misguide others, and they have slipped and make others slip too. They change into many colours, and adopt various ways. They support you with all sorts of supports, and lay in waiting for you at every lookout. Their hearts are diseased while their faces are clean. They walk stealthily and tread like the approach of sickness (over the body). Their words speak of cure, but their acts are like incurable diseases. They are jealous of ease, intensify distress, and destroy hopes. Their victims are found lying down on every path, while they have means to approach every heart and they have (false) tears for every grief.

They eulogise each other and expect reward from each other. When they ask something they insist on it, if they reprove (any one) they disgrace (him), and if they pass verdict they commit excess. They have adopted for every truth a wrong way, for every erect thing a bender, for every living being a killer, for every (closed) door a key and for every night a lamp. They covet, but with despair, in order to maintain with it their markets, and to popularise their handsome merchandise. When they speak they create doubts. When they describe they exaggerate. First they offer easy paths but (afterwords) they make them narrow. In short, they are the party of Satan and the stings of fire.

Satan hath gained hold on them, so he maketh them forget the remembrance of Allāh; they are Satan's Party; Beware! verily, the party of Satan are the losers. (Qur'ān, 58:19)

* * * * *

SERMON 194**Allāh's praise, advice about fear of Allāh and
details about the Day of Judgement**

Praise be to Allāh who has displayed such effects of His authority and the glory of His sublimity through the wonders of His might that they dazzle the pupils of the eyes and prevent the minds from appreciating the reality of His attributes. I stand witness that there is no god but Allāh by virtue of belief, certainty, sincerity and conviction. I also stand witness that Muḥammad is His slave and His Prophet whom He deputed when the signs of guidance were obliterated and the ways of religion were desolate. So, he threw open the truth, gave advice to the people, guided them towards righteousness and ordered them to be moderate. May Allāh bless him and his descendants.

Know, O' creatures of Allāh, that He has not created you for nought and has not left you free. He knows the extent of His favours over you and the quantity of His bounty towards you. Therefore, ask Him for success and for the attainment of aims. Beg before Him and seek His generosity. No curtain hides you from Him, nor is any door closed before you against Him. He is at every place, in every moment and every instance. He is with every man and jinn. Giving does not create any breach in Him. Gifting does not cause Him diminution. A beggar cannot exhaust Him and paying (to others) cannot take Him to the end.

One person cannot turn His attention from another, one voice does not detract Him from another voice, and one grant of favour does not prevent Him from refusing another favour. Anger does not prevent Him from mercy, mercy does not prevent Him from punishing; His concealment does not hide His manifestness and His manifestness does not prevent Him from concealment. He is near and at the same time distant. He is high and at the same time low. He is manifest and also concealed. He is concealed yet well-known. He lends but is not lent

anything. He has not created (the things of) creation after devising, nor did He take their assistance on account of fatigue.

I advise you, O' creatures of Allāh, to have fear of Allāh, for it is the rein and the mainstay (of religion). Hold fast to its salient points, keep hold of its realities. It will take you to abodes of easiness, places of comfort, fortresses of safety and houses of honour on *the Day* (of Judgement) *when eyes will be wide open*, (Qur'ān, 14 :42) , when there will be darkness all round, when small groups of camels pregnant for ten months will be allowed free grazing, and when the Horn will be blown, then every living being will die, every voice will become dumb, the high mountains and hard rocks will crumble (to pieces) so that their hard stones will turn into moving sand and their bases will become level. (On that day) there will be no interceder to intercede and no relation to ward off (trouble), and no excuse will be of avail.

* * * * *

SERMON 195

**The condition of the world at the time of the proclamation
of prophethood, the transience of this world and The state
of its inhabitants.**

Allāh deputed the Prophet when no sign of guidance existed, no beacon was giving light and no passage was clear.

I advise you, O' creatures of Allāh, to have fear of Allāh, and I warn you of this world which is a house from which departure is inevitable and a place of discomfort. He who lives in it has to depart, and he who stays here has to leave it. It is drifting with its people like a boat whom severe winds dash (here and there) in the deep sea. Some of them get drowned and die, while some of them escape on the surface of the waves, where winds push them with their currents and carry them towards their dangers. So, whatever is drowned cannot be restored, and whatever escapes is on the way to destruction.

O' creatures of Allāh, you should know now that you have to perform (good) acts, because (at present) your tongues are free, your bodies are healthy, your limbs have movement, the area of your coming and going is vast and the course for your running is wide; before the loss of opportunity or the approach of death. Take death's approach as an accomplished fact and do not think it will come (hereafter).

* * * * *

SERMON 196

Amīr al-mu'minīn's attachment to the Holy Prophet.

The performance of his funeral rites

Those companions of Muḥammad — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — who were the custodians (of divine messages) know that I never disobeyed Allāh or His Messenger ¹ — the

¹ Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written (in *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.10, pp.180-183) that Amīr al-mu'minīn's saying that he never disobeyed the commands of the Prophet is a sort of taunt to those who felt no hesitation in rejecting the Prophet's commands, and sometimes even checked him. For example, when, at the time of the peace of al-Ḥudaybiyah, the Prophet was agreeable to negotiate peace with the unbelievers among the Quraysh, one of the companions became so enraged that he expressed doubts about the prophethood of the Prophet whereupon Abū Bakr had to say:

Woe be to you! Keep clinging to him. He is certainly Allāh's Messenger and He will not ruin him.

The introduction to the oath, '*inna*', and the word of emphasis '*lam*' which are used here to create conviction about the prophethood shows that the addressee had gone farther than mere doubt, because these words of emphasis are employed only when the stage of denial has been reached. However, if belief requires absence of doubt, the presence of doubt must imply defect in the belief, as Allāh says :

peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — at all, and by virtue of the courage ¹ with which Allāh honoured me I supported

The believers are only those who believe in Allāh and His Messenger, they doubt not thereafter, . . . (Qur'ān, 49:15)

Similarly, when the Prophet intended to say the funeral prayers of Ubayy ibn Salūl the same companion said to him, “How do you intend to seek forgiveness for this Chief of hypocrites?” And he even drew away the Prophet by catching the skirt (of his shirt). Then the Prophet had to say, “No act of mine is beside the command of Allāh.” In the same way the Prophet’s command to accompany the force of Usāmah ibn Zayd was ignored. The greatest of all these insolences was displayed in connection with the Prophet’s intention to write down his advice as to when such a blame was laid against the Prophet which proves an absence of belief in the commands of the *sharī‘ah*, and creates a doubt about each command as to whether it is based on divine revelation or (Allāh may forbid) just the result of mental disorder.

¹ Who can deny that the ever-successful lion of Allāh, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (p.b.u.h.) shielded the Prophet on every critical occasion and performed the duty of protecting him by dint of the courage and valour gifted to him by Allāh. The first occasion of risking his life was when the unbelievers from the Quraysh decided finally to kill the Prophet and ‘Alī slept on his bed surrounded by enemies and under the direct peril of swords, whereby the enemies were not able to succeed in their aims. Then, in those battles where the enemies used to attack the Prophet together and where the feet of even the reputed heroes could not stand firm. Amīr al-mu’minīn remained steadfast with the banner (of Islam) in his hand. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and al-Ḥākim writes about it:

Ibn ‘Abbās says that ‘Alī had four qualities which no one else possessed. Firstly, he was the first among Arabs and non-Arabs to have said prayers with the Messenger of Allāh. Secondly, he always had the banner of Islam in his hand in every battle. Thirdly, when people ran away from the Prophet, ‘Alī remained with him; and fourthly it was he who gave the Prophet his funeral ablution and laid him in his grave. (*al-Istī‘ab*, vol.3, p.1090; *al-Mustadrak ‘alā aṣ-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol.3, p.111)

him with my life on occasions when even the brave turned away and feet remained behind (instead of proceeding forward).

When the Prophet — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — died his head was on my chest, and his (last) breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face. I performed his (funeral) ablution, may Allāh bless him and his descendants, and the angels helped me. The house and the courtyard were full of them. One party of them was descending and the other was ascending. My ears continually caught their humming voices, as they invoked Allāh's blessing on him, till we buried him in his grave. Thus, who can have greater rights with him than I during his life or after his death? Therefore

A study of the holy wars of Islam fought in the Prophet's days leaves no doubt that, except for the battle of Tabūk in which Amīr al-mu'minīn did not partake, all other battles bear testimony to his fine performance and all the successes are due to his valour. Thus, in the battle of Badr seventy unbelievers were killed, half of whom were killed by 'Alī's sword. In the battle of Uḥud, when victory changed into defeat as a result of the Muslims engaging themselves in the collection of booty, and they fled away under the sudden attack of the enemy, Amīr al-mu'minīn remained steadfast, taking *jihād* to be a religious obligation, and displayed such conspicuous performance in support and defence of the Prophet that the Prophet too acknowledged it and also the Angel. Again, in the battle of the Trench (al-Khandaq), the Prophet was accompanied by three thousand combatants, but none dared face 'Amr ibn 'Abdawadd. At last, Amīr al-mu'minīn killed him and saved the Muslims from ignominy. In the battle of Ḥunayn, the Muslims were proud of their number because they were ten thousand while the unbelievers were only four thousand, but here too they leapt onto the booty, as a consequence of which the unbelievers gained the opportunity, and pounced upon them. Bewildered with this sudden attack the Muslims fled away as the Holy Qur'ān says:

Most certainly did Allāh help you in many (battle) fields, and on the day of Ḥunayn, when made you vain your great number, but they availed you nothing, and was straitened the earth against you with all its extensiveness, then ye turned back in retreat. (9:25)

On this occasion also, Amīr al-mu'minīn was steady like a rock, and eventually with Allāh's, support, victory was achieved.

depend on your intelligence and make your intentions pure in fighting your enemy, because I swear by Him who is such that there is no god but He, that I am on the path of truth and that they (the enemy) are on the misleading path of wrong. You hear what I say; and I seek Allāh's forgiveness for myself and for you.

* * * * *

SERMON 197

Allāh's attribute of Omniscience

Allāh knows the cries of the beasts in the forest, the sins of the people in seclusion, the movements of the fishes in the deep seas and the rising of the water by tempestuous winds. I stand witness that Muḥammad is the choice of Allāh, the conveyor of His revelation and the messenger of His mercy.

Advantages of fear of Allāh

Now then, I advise you to fear Allāh, Who created you for the first time; towards Him is your return, with Him lies the success of your aims, at Him terminate (all) your desires, towards Him runs your path of right and He is the aim of your fears (for seeking protection). Certainly, fear of Allāh is the medicine for your hearts,, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolation for the fear of your heart and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.

Therefore, make obedience to Allāh the way of your life and not only your outside covering, make it your inner habit instead of only outer routine, subtle enough to enter through your ribs (upto the heart), the guide for all your affairs, the watering place for your getting down (on the Day of Judgement), the interceder for the achievement of your aims, asylum for the day of your fear, the lamp of the interior of your graves,

company for your long loneliness, and deliverance from the troubles of your abodes. Certainly, obedience to Allāh is a protection against encircling calamities, expected dangers and the flames of burning fires.

Therefore, whoever entertains fear of Allāh, troubles remain away from him after having been near, affairs become sweet after their bitterness, waves (of troubles) recede from him after having crowded over him, difficulties become easy for him after occurring, generosity rains fast over him after there had been famine, mercy bends over him after it had been loath, the favours (of Allāh) spring forth on him after they had been dried, and blessing descends over him in showers after being scanty. So, fear Allāh Who benefits you with His good advice, preaches to you through His Messenger, and obliges you with His favours. Devote yourselves to His worship, and acquit yourselves of the obligation of obeying Him.

About Islam

This Islam is the religion which Allāh has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, preferred it as the best among His creations, established its pillars on His love. He has disgraced other religions by giving honour to it. He has humiliated all communities before its sublimity; He has humbled its enemies with His kindness and made its opponents lonely by according it His support. He has smashed the pillars of misguidance with its columns. He has quenched the thirst of the thirsty from its cisterns, and filled the cisterns through those who draw its water.

He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break, its links cannot separate, its construction cannot fall, its columns cannot decay, its plant cannot be uprooted, its time does not end, its laws do not expire, its twigs cannot be cut, its parts do not become narrow, its ease does not change into difficulty, its clarity is not affected by gloom, its straightness does not acquire curvature, its wood has no crookedness, its vast paths have no narrowness, its lamp knows no putting off and its sweetness has no bitterness.

It consists of columns whose bases Allāh has fixed in truthfulness, and whose foundation He has strengthened, and of sources whose streams are ever full of water and of lamps, whose flames are full of light, and of beacons with whose help travellers get guidance, and of signs through which a way is found to its highways and of watering places which provide water to those who come to them. Allāh has placed in Islam the height of His pleasure, the pinnacle of His pillars and the prominence of His obedience. Before Allāh, therefore, its columns are strong, its construction is lofty, its proofs are bright, its fires are aflame, its authority is strong, its beacons are high and its destruction is difficult. You should therefore honour it, follow it, fulfil its obligations and accord the position due to it.

About the Holy Prophet

Then, Allāh, the Glorified, deputed Muḥammad — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — with Truth at a time when the destruction of the world was near and the next life was at hand, when its brightness was turning into gloom after shining, it had become troublesome for its inhabitants, its surface had become rough, and its decay had approached near. This was during the exhaustion of its life at the approach of signs (of its decay), the ruin of its inhabitants, the breaking of its links, the dispersal of its affairs, the decay of its signs, the divulging of its secret matters and the shortening of its length. Allāh made him responsible for conveying His message and (a means of) honour for his people, a period of bloom for the men of his days, a source of dignity for the supporters and an honour for his helpers.

About the Holy Qur'ān

Then, Allāh sent to him the Book as a light whose flames cannot be extinguished, a lamp whose gleam does not die, a sea whose depth cannot be sounded, a way whose direction does not mislead, a ray whose light does not darken, a separator (of good from evil) whose arguments do not weaken, a clarifier whose foundations cannot be dismantled, a cure which leaves no apprehension for disease, an honour whose supporters are not defeated, and a truth whose helpers are not abandoned. Therefore, it is the mine of belief and its centre, the source of knowledge

and its oceans, the plantation of justice and its pools, the foundation stone of Islam and its construction, the valleys of truth and its plains, and ocean which those who draw water cannot empty, springs which those who draw water cannot dry up, a watering place which those who come to take water cannot exhaust, a staging place in moving towards which travellers do not get lost, signs which no treacher fails to see and a highland which those who approach it cannot surpass it.

Allāh has made it a quencher of the thirst of the learned, a bloom for the hearts of religious jurists, a highway for the ways of the righteous, a cure after which there is no ailment, an effulgence with which there is no darkness, a rope whose grip is strong, a stronghold whose top is invulnerable, an honour for him who loves it, a peace for him who enters it, a guidance for him who follows it, an excuse for him who adopts it, an argument for him who argues with it, a witness for him who quarrels with it, a success for him who argues with it, a carrier of burden for him who bears it, a carriage for him who acts upon it, a sign for him who seeks the way, a shield for him who arms himself (against misguidance), a knowledge for him who listens carefully, a worthy story for him who relates it and a final verdict for him who passes judgements.

* * * * *

SERMON 198

**Containing advice given by Amīr al-mu'inīn
to his companions
About Prayer**

Pledge yourself with prayer and remain steady on it; offer prayer as much as possible and seek nearness (of Allāh) through it, because it is, (imposed) *upon the believers as (a) tinted ordinance* (Qur'ān, 4:103). Have you not heard the reply of the people of Hell when they were asked: *What hath brought you into the hell? They shall say: We were not of those who offered the regular prayers* (to Allāh)! (Qur'ān, 74:42—43) Certainly, prayer drops out sins like the dropping of leaves (of trees) , and removes them as ropes are removed from the necks

of cattle. The Messenger of Allāh — the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — likened it to a hot bath situated at the door of a person who bathes in it five times a day. Will then any dirt remain on him?

Its obligation is recognized by those believers whom neither the adornment of property nor the coolness of the eyes produced by children can turn away from it. Allāh, the Glorified, says :

Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Allāh and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; . . . (Qur'ān, 24:37)

Even after receiving assurance of Paradise, the Messenger of Allāh — peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants — used to exert himself for prayers because of Allāh, the Glorified's command.

And enjoin prayer on thy followers, and adhere thou steadily unto it, . . . (Qur'ān, 20:132).

Then the Holy Prophet used to enjoin his followers to prayer and exert himself for it.

About the Islamic Tax (zakāt)

Then, Islamic tax has been laid down along with prayer as a sacrifice (to be offered) by the people of Islam. Whoever pays it by way of purifying his spirit, it serves as a purifier for him and a protection and shield against fire (of Hell). No one therefore (who pays it) should feel attached to it afterwards, nor should feel grieved over it. Whoever pays it without the intention of purifying his heart expects through it more than its due. He is certainly ignorant of the *sunnah*, he is allowed no reward for it, his action goes to waste and his repentance is excessive.

Fulfilment of Trust

Then, as regards fulfilment of trust, whoever does not pay attention to it will be disappointed. It was placed before the strong skies, vast earths and high mountains but none of them was found to be stronger, vaster, or higher than it. If anything could be unapproachable because of height, vastness, power or strength they would have been unapproachable, but they felt afraid of the evil consequences (of failure in fulfilling a trust) and noticed what a weaker being did not realize it, and this was man.

... *Verily he was (proved) unjust, ignorant.* (Qur'ān, 33:72)

Surely, Allāh, the Glorified, the Sublime, nothing is hidden from Him of whatever people do in their nights or days. He knows all the details, and His knowledge covers them. Your limbs are a witness, the organs of your body constitute an army (against yourself) , your inner self serves Him as eyes (to watch your sins), and your loneliness is open to Him.

* * * * *

SERMON 199

Treason and treachery of Mu'āwiyah and the fate of those guilty of treason

By Allāh ¹ Mu'āwiyah is not more cunning than I am, but he deceives

¹ People who are ignorant of religion and ethics free from the shackles of religious law and unaware of the conception of punishment and reward find no paucity of excuses and means for the achievement of their objects. They can find ways of success at every stage; but when the dictates of humanity, or Islam, or the limitations imposed by ethics and religious law act as impediments, the chances of devising and finding means become narrow, and the possibility of action becomes restricted. Mu'āwiyah's influence and control was the result of these devices and ways in following which he knew no impediment nor any obstacle of what is lawful or unlawful, nor did fear of the Day of Judgement prevent him from acting fearlessly. As al-'Allāmah ar-

Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī while taking account of his characters writes:

“His aim always was to achieve his object whether lawful or unlawful. He did not care for religion nor did he ever think of divine chastisement. Thus, in order to maintain his power he resorted to mis-statements and concoctions, practised all sorts of deceits and contrivances. When he saw that success was not possible without entangling Amīr al-mu'minīn in war he roused Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr against him. When success could not be achieved by this means he instigated the Syrians and brought about the civil war of Ṣiffīn. And when his rebellions' position had become known by the killing of 'Ammār, he at once duped the people by saying that 'Alī was responsible for killing him as he had brought him into the battlefield; and on another occasion he interpreted the words 'rebellions party' occurring in the saying of the Prophet to mean 'avenging party' intending to prove that 'Ammār would be killed by the group that would seek revenge of 'Uthmān's blood, although the next portion of this saying namely 'he will call them towards Paradise while they will call him to Hell,' does not leave any scope for interpretation. When there was no hope of victory even by these cunning means, he contrived to raise the Qur'ān on spears, although in his view neither the Qur'ān nor its commandments carried any weight. If he had really aimed at a decision by the Qur'ān, he should have put this demand before the commencement of the battle, and when it became known to him that the decision had been secured by 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ by deceiving Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, and that it did not have even a remote connection with the Qur'ān, he should not have accepted it and should have punished 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ for this cunning, or at least should have warned and rebuked him. But on the contrary, his performance was much appreciated and in reward he was made the Governor of Egypt.”

In contrast to this Amīr al-mu'minīn's conduct was a high specimen of religious law and ethics. He kept in view the requirements of truth and righteousness even in adverse circumstances and did not allow his chaste life to be tarnished by the views of deceit and contrivance. If he wished he could face cunning by cunning, and Mu'āwiyah's shameful activities could have been answered by similar activities. For example, when he put a guard on the Euphrates and stopped the supply of its water (to Amīr al-mu'minīn's men), then the supply of water could have been cut from them also on the grounds that since they had occupied the Euphrates it was lawful to retaliate, and in this way they could be overpowered by weakening their fighting power. But Amīr al-mu'minīn could never tarnish his hands with such an inhuman act which was not permitted by any law or code of ethics, although

and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allāh) , and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognized on the Day of Judgement. By Allāh, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy, nor can I be overpowered by hardships.

SERMON 200

One should not be afraid of the scarcity of those who tread on the right path

O' people, do not wonder at the small number of those who

common people regard such acts against the enemy as lawful and call this duplicity of character for achievement of success, a stroke of policy and administrative ability. But Amīr al-mu'minīn could never think of strengthening his power by fraud or duplicity of behaviour on any occasion. Thus, when people advised him to retain the officers of the days of 'Uthmān in their positions and to befriend Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr by assigning them governorship of Kūfah and Baṣrah, and make use of Mu'āwiyah's ability in administration by giving him the government of Syria, Amīr al-mu'minīn rejected the advice and preferred the commandments of religious law over worldly expediency, and openly declared about Mu'āwiyah as follows:

If I allow Mu'āwiyah to retain what he already has I would be one "*who taketh those who lead (people) astray, as helpers*" (Qur'ān, 18:51). Those who look at apparent successes do not care to find out by what means the success has been achieved. They support anyone whom they see succeeding by means of cunning ways and deceitful means and begin to regard him an administrator, intelligent, a politician, intellectually brilliant and so on, while he who does not deploy cunning and fraudulent methods owing to his adherence to Islamic commandments and divine instructions and prefers failure to success secured through wrong methods is regarded as ignorant of politics and weak in foresight. They do not feel it necessary to think what difficulties and impediments exist in the way of a person who adheres to principles and laws which prevent him from proceeding forward even after approaching near success."

follow the right path, because people throng only round the table (of this world) whose edibles are few but whose hunger is insatiable.

O' people, certainly, what gathers people together (in categories) is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement, for only one individual killed the camel of Thamūd¹ but Allāh held all of them in punishment because all of them

¹ Thamūd, in ancient Arabia, a tribe or group of tribes, seems to have been prominent from about the 4th Century B.C. to the first half of the 7th Century A.D. Their place of stay and homeland was at a place lying on the way between the Ḥijāz and Syria called the Valley of al-Qurā and bore this name because it consisted of several townships. Allāh deputed for their guidance and directions the Prophet Ṣāliḥ who preached to them as Allāh relates in his story :

And unto (the people of) Thamūd (We did send) their brother .Ṣāliḥ, he said: "O' my people! worship ye Allāh (alone). Ye have no god other than Him; indeed came unto you a clear proof from your Lord; this is the She-camel of Allāh (which) unto you is a Sign, so leave it (free) to pasture in Allāh's earth and touch her not with any harm, or ye shall be seized with a painful chastisement. And remember when He made you successors after the (people) 'Ād and settled you in the earth, ye build mansions on its plain and hew the mountains into dwellings. So remember ye the bounties of Allāh, and seek ye not evil in the earth, making mischief. "Said the chiefs of those who were puffed up with pride among his people to those who were reckoned weak, to those who believed from among them; "Know ye that Ṣāliḥ is sent by his Lord?" Said they: "Verily, in what he hath been sent with, we are believers." Said those who were puffed up with pride; "Verily we, in that which ye believe are dis-believers." They hamstrung the She-camel and rebelled against the command of their Lord, and they said: "O' Ṣāliḥ! bring us what thou didst, threaten us with, if thou art of the apostles." Then siezed them (unawares) the earthquake, so became they in their dwellings, motionless (dead). Then he turned away from them and said: "O' my people! Indeed I did deliver unto you the message of my Lord, and did admonish you, but ye love not the admonishers." (Qur'ān, 7:73-79).

joined him by their acquiescing in their consenting to it.⁴⁴¹
Thus, Allāh, the Glorified, has said :

Then they hamstrung her, and turned (themselves) regretful.
(Qur'ān, 26:157.).

Then their land declined by sinking (into the earth) as the spike of a plough pierces unploughed weak land. O' people, he who treads the clear path (of guidance) reaches the spring of water, and whoever abandons it strays into waterless desert.

* * * * *

SERMON 201

**What Amīr al-mu'minīn said on the occasion of the burial of
Sayyidatu'n-nisā' (Supreme lady) Fatimah (p.b.u.h.) while
addressing the Holy Prophet at his grave.**

O' Prophet of Allāh, peace be upon you from me and from your daughter who has come to you and who has hastened to meet you. O' Prophet of Allāh, my patience about your chosen (daughter) has been exhausted, and my power of endurance has

(The people of) Thamūd belied the warners, and said they: 'what! a single man, from among us! and we to follow him? Verily then we shall be astray and in distress. Is it that (the duty of) reminding hath been bestowed on him (alone), of all the (people) among us? Nay! he is a great liar, an insolent one!' "Soon they shall know on the morrow, (as to) who is the liar, the insolent one! (O' Our Apostle Ṣāliḥ !) verily We are going to send the She-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and be patient. And (thou O' Ṣāliḥ !) make them aware(beforehand) that the water is (to be) divided between them; and every drinking share shall be witnessed (on it).'" But they called their companions, then he pursued (her) and hamstrung (her). How (great) was My chastisement and My warning? Verily sent We upon them a single (violent) blast, and they were (all) like the dry stubble used by a fencer in a fence. (Qur'ān, 54:23-31).

weakened, except that I have ground for consolation in having endured the great hardship and heart-rending event of your separation. I laid you down in your grave when your last breath had passed (when your head was) between my neck and chest.

. . . *Verily we are Allāh's and verily unto Him shall we return.*
(Qur'ān, 2:156)

Now, the trust has been returned and what had been given has been taken back. As to my grief, it knows no bounds, and as to my nights, they will remain sleepless till Allāh chooses for me the house in which you are now residing.

Certainly, your daughter would apprise you of the joining together of your ¹ *ummah* (people) for oppressing her. You ask her in detail and get all the news about the position. This has happened when a long time had not elapsed and your remembrance had not

¹ The treatment meted out to the daughter of the Prophet after his death was extremely painful and sad. Although Sayyidatu'n-nisā' Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h.) did not live in this world more than a few months after the death of the Prophet yet even this short period has a long tale of grief and woe (about her). In this connection, the first scene that strikes the eyes is that arrangements for the funeral rites of the Prophet had not yet been made when the contest for power started in the Saqifah of Banū Sā'idah. Naturally, their leaving the body of the Prophet (without burial) must have injured Sayyidatu'n-nisā' Fāṭimah's grief-stricken heart when she saw that those who had claimed love and attachment (with the Prophet) during his life became so engrossed in their machinations for power that instead of consoling his only daughter they did not even know when the Prophet was given a funeral ablution and when he was buried, and the way they consoled her was that they crowded at her house with material to set fire to it and tried to secure allegiance by force with all the display of oppression, compulsion and violence. All these excesses were with a view to so obliterate the prestigious position of this house that it might not regain its lost prestige on any occasion. With this aim in view, in order to crush her economic position, her claim for (the estate of) Fadak was turned down by dubbing it as false, the effect of which was that Sayyidatu'n-nisā' Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h.) made the dying will that none of them should attend her funeral.

disappeared. My *salām* (salutation) be on you both, the *salām* of a grief stricken not a disgusted or hateful person; for if I go away it is not because I am weary (of you), and if I stay it is not due to lack of belief in what Allāh has promised the endurers.

* * * * *

SERMON 202

Transience of this world, and importance of collecting provisions for the next life.

O' people, certainly this world is a passage while the next world is a place of permanent abode. So, take from the passage (all that you can) for the permanent abode. Do not tear away your curtain before Him Who is aware of your secrets. Take away from this world your hearts before your bodies go out of it, because herein you have been put on trial, and you have been created for the other world. When a man dies people ask what (property) he has left while the angels ask what (good actions) he has sent forward. May Allāh bless you; send forward something, it will be a loan for you, and do not leave everything behind, for that would be a burden on you.

* * * * *

SERMON 203

What Amīr al-mu'minīn said generally to his companions warning them about the dangers of the Day of Judgement

May Allāh have mercy on you ! Provide yourselves for the journey because the call for departure has been announced. Regard your stay in the world as very short, and return (to Allāh) with the best provision that is with you, because surely, in front of you lies a valley, difficult to climb, and places of stay full of fear and dangers. You have to reach

there and stay in them. And know that the eyes of death are approaching towards you. It is as though you are (already) in its talons and it has struck itself against you. Difficult affairs and distressing dangers have crushed you into it. You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourselves with the provision of Allāh's fear.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍi says: A part of this saying has been quoted before through another narration.

* * * * *

SERMON 204

After swearing allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn, Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr complained to him that he had not consulted them or sought their assistance in the affairs (of state). Amīr al-mu'minīn replied:

Both of you frown over a small matter and leave aside big ones. Can you tell me of anything wherein you have a right of which I have deprived you or a share which was due to you and which I have held away from you, or any Muslim who has laid any claim before me and I have been unable to decide it or been ignorant of it, or committed a mistake about it?

By Allāh, I had no liking for the caliphate nor any interest in government, but you yourselves invited me to it and prepared me for it. When the caliphate came to me, I kept the Book of Allāh in my view and all that Allāh had put therein for us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet — may Allāh bless him and his descendants — had laid down as his *sunnah*. In this matter I did not need your advice or the advice of anyone else, nor has there been any order of which I was ignorant so that I ought to have consulted you or my Muslim brethren. If it were so I would not have turned away from you or from others.

As regards your reference to the question of equality (in distribution of shares from the Muslim common fund), this is a matter in which I have not taken a decision by my own opinion, nor have I done it by my caprice. But I found, and you too (must have) found, that whatever the Prophet — may Allāh bless him and his descendants — brought had been finalized. Therefore, I felt no need to turn towards you about a share which had been determined by Allāh and in which His verdict has been passed. By Allāh, in this matter, therefore, you two or anyone else can have no favour from me. May Allāh keep our hearts and your hearts in righteousness, and may He grant us and you endurance.

Then Amīr al-mu'minīn added: May Allāh have mercy on the person who, when he sees the truth, supports it, when he sees the wrong, rejects it, and who helps the truth against him who is on the wrong.

* * * * *

SERMON 205

**During the battle of Siffin Amīr al-mu'minīn heard
some of his men abusing the Syrians, then he said:**

I dislike you starting to abuse them, but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations that would be a better mode of speaking and a more convincing way of arguing. Instead of abusing them you should say, ‘‘O’ Allāh ! save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it.’’

* * * * *

SERMON 206

**In the battle of Şiffin Amīr al-mu'minīn saw Imām al-Ḥasan
proceeding rapidly to fight, then he said:**

Hold back this young man on my behalf, lest he causes my ruin, because I am loath to send these two (meaning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) towards death, lest the descending line of the Prophet — may Allāh bless him and his descendants — is cut away by their death.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Amīr al-mu'minīn's words “*amlīkū ‘annī hādha’l ghulām*” (i.e. “Hold back this young man on my behalf”) represents the highest and the most eloquent form of expression.

* * * * *

SERMON 207

**When Amīr al-mu'minīn's companions expressed displeasure
about his attitude concerning Arbitration,¹ he said:**

¹ When the surviving forces of the Syrians lost ground and were ready to run away from the field Mu‘āwiyah changed the whole phase of the battle by using the Qur’ān as his instrument of strategy, and succeeded in creating such a division among the Iraqis that, despite Amīr al-mu'minīn's efforts at counselling, they were not prepared to take any forward step, but insisted on stopping the war, whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn too had to agree to arbitration. Among these people some had actually been duped and believed that they were being asked to abide by the Qur’ān but there were others who had become weary of the long period of war and had lost courage. Then people got a good opportunity to stop the war, and so they cried hoarse for its postponement. There were others who had accompanied Amīr al-mu'minīn because of his temporal authority but did not support him by heart, nor did they aim at victory for him. There were some people who had expectations with Mu‘āwiyah, and had started attaching hopes to him for this, while there were some who were, from the very beginning, in league with him. In these circumstances and with this type of the army it was really due to Amīr al-mu'minīn's political ability and competence of military control and administration that he carried the war up to this stage, and if Mu‘āwiyah had not adopted this trick there could have been no doubt in Amīr al-mu'minīn's victory

O' people, matters between me and you went as I wished till war exhausted you. By Allāh, it has overtaken some of you and left others, and has completely weakened your enemy. Till yesterday I was giving orders but today I am being given orders, and till yesterday I was dissuading people (from wrong acts) but today I am being dissuaded. You have now shown liking to live in this world, and it is not for me to bring you to what you dislike.

* * * * *

SERMON 208

Amīr al-mu'minīn wenI to enquire about the health of his companion al-'Alā' ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī and when he noticed the vastness of his house he said:

What will you do with this vast house in this world, although you need this house more in the next world. If you want to take it to the next world you could entertain in it guests and be regardful of kinship and discharge all (your) obligations according to their accrual. In this way you will be able to take it to the next world.

Then al-'Alā' said to him: O' Amīr al-mu'minīn, I want to complain to you about my brother 'Āṣim ibn Ziyād.

Amīr al-mu'minīn enquired: What is the matter with him?

al-'Alā' said: He has put on a woollen coat and cut himself away

because the military power of the Syrian forces had been exhausted and defeat was hovering over its head. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes :

Mālik al-Ashtar had reached Mu'āwiyah and grabbed him by the neck. The entire might of the Syrians had been smashed. Only so much movement was discernable in them as remains in the tail of a lizard which is killed, but the tail continues hopping right and left. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.11, pp.30-31)

from the world.

Amīr al-mu'minīn said: Present him to me.

When he came Amīr al-mu'minīn said: O' enemy of yourself. Certainly, the evil (Satan) has misguided you. Do you feel no pity for your wife and your children? Do you believe that if you use those things which Allāh has made lawful for you, He will dislike you? You are too unimportant for Allāh to do so.

He said: O' Amīr al-mu'minīn, you also put on coarse dress and eat rough food.

Then he replied: Woe be to you, I am not like you. Certainly, Allāh, the Sublime, has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of low people so that the poor do not cry over their poverty.¹

¹ From ancient days asceticism and the abandonment of worldly attachments has been regarded as a means of purification of the spirit and important for the character. Consequently, those who wished to lead a life of abstemiousness and meditation used to go out of the cities and towns to stay in forests and caves in the mountains and stay there concentrating on Allāh according to their own conception. They would eat only if a casual traveller or the inhabitant of nearby dwellings gave them anything to eat, otherwise they remained contented with the fruits of wild trees and the water of the streams, and thus they passed their life. This way of worship commenced in a way that was forced by the oppression and hardships of rulers. Certain people left their houses and, in order to avoid their grip, hid themselves in some wilderness or cave in a mountain, engaging themselves in worship of and devotion to Allāh. Later on, this forced asceticism acquired a voluntary form and people began to retire to caves and hollows of their own volition. Thus it became an accepted way that whoever aimed at spiritual development retired to some corner after severing himself from all worldly ties. This method remained in vogue for centuries and even now some traces of this way of worship are found among the Buddhists and the Christians.

The moderate views of Islam do not, however, accord with the monastic life, because for attaining spiritual development it does not advocate the abandonment of worldly enjoyments and successes, nor does it view with approbation that a Muslim

should leave his house and fellow men and busy himself in formal worship, hiding in some corner. The conception of worship in Islam is not confined to a few particular rites, but it regards the earning of one's livelihood through lawful means, mutual sympathy and good behaviour, and cooperation and assistance also to be important constituents of worship. If an individual ignores worldly rights and obligations, and does not fulfil his responsibility towards his wife and children, nor occupies himself in efforts to earn a livelihood, but all the time stays in meditation, he ruins his life and does not fulfil the purpose of living. If this were Allāh's aim, what would have the need for creating and populating the world when there was already a category of creatures who were all the time engaged in worshipping and adoration.

Naure has made man to stand on the cross-roads at which the midway is the centre of guidance: If he deviates from this point of moderateness even a bit, this way or that way, there is sheer misguidance for him. That mid-way is that he should neither bend towards this world to such an extent as to ignore the next life, devoting himself entirely to this one, nor should he abstain from this world so as not to have any connection with anything of it, confining himself to some corner leaving everything else. Since Allāh has created man in this world he should follow the code of life for living in this world, and should partake of the comforts and pleasures bestowed by Allāh within moderate limits. The eating and using of things made lawful by Allāh is not against Allāh's worship, but rather Allāh has created these thin: for the very purpose that they should be taken advantage of. That is why those who were the chosen of Allāh lived in this world with others and ate and drank like others. They did not feel the need to turn their faces away from the people of the world, and to adopt the wilderness or the caves of mountains as their abodes, or to live in distant spots. On the other hand they remembered Allāh, remained disentangled from worldly affairs, and did not forget death despite the pleasures and comforts of life.

The life of ascetism sometimes produces such evils as ruin the next life also as well as this one, and such an individual proves to be the true picture of "the looser in this life as well as the next." When natural impulses are not satisfied in the lawful and legal way the mind turns into a centre of evil-ideas and becomes incapable of performing worship with peace and concentration; and sometimes passions so overcome the ascetic that breaking all moral fetters, he devotes himself completely to their satisfaction and consequently falls in an abyss of ruin for which it is impossible to extract himself. That is why religious law accords a greater position to the worship performed by a family man than that by a non-family man, because the former can exercise mental peace and

concentration in the worship and rituals.

Individuals who put on the cloak of Sufism and make a loud show of their spiritual greatness are cut off from the path of Islam and are ignorant of its wide teachings. They have been misled by Satan and, relying on their self-formed conceptions, tread wrongful paths. Eventually their misguidance becomes so serious that they begin to regard their leaders as having attained such a level that their word is as the word of Allāh and their act is as the act of Allāh. Sometimes they regard themselves beyond all the bounds and limitations of religious law and consider every evil act to be lawful for them. This deviation from faith and irreligiousness is named Sufism (complete devotion to Allāh). Its unlawful principles are called “*aṭ-ṭarīqah*” (ways of achieving communion with Allāh) and the followers of this cult are known as Sufis. First of all Abū Hāshim al-Kūfī and Shāmī adopted this nickname. He was of Umayyad descent and a fatalist (believing that man is bound to act as pre-ordained by Allāh). The reason for giving him this name was that, in order to make a show of his asceticism and fear for Allāh, he put on a woollen cloak. Later on this nickname became common and various grounds were put forth as the basis of this name. For example, one ground is that ‘Sufi’ has three letters “*ṣād*”, “*wāw*” and “*fā*”. “*ṣād*” stands for “*ṣabr*” (endurance), “*ṣidq*” (truthfulness) and “*ṣafā*” (purity of heart); “*wāw*” stands for “*wudd*” (love), “*wird*” (repeating Allāh’s name) and “*wafā*” (faithfulness to Allāh); and “*fā*” stands for “*fard*” (unity), “*faqr*”, (destitution) and “*fanā*” (death or absorption in Allāh’s Self). The second view is that it has been derived from “*aṣ-Ṣuffah*”, which was a platform near the Prophet’s mosque which had a covering of date-palm leaves. Those who stayed there were called *Aṣḥābu’ṣ-Ṣuffah* (people of the platform). The third view is that the name of the progenitor of an Arab tribe was Ṣūfah, and this tribe performed the duties of serving the pilgrims and the Ka‘bah, and it is with reference to their connection with this tribe that these people were called Sufis. This group is divided among various sects but the basic sects are seven only.

1) al-Waḥdatiyyah (unitarian) : This sect believes in the oneness of all existence. Its belief is that everything of this world is Allāh, so much so that they assign to even polluted things the same godly position. They liken Allāh with the river and the waves rising in it, and argue that the waves which sometimes rise and sometimes fall have no separate existence other than the river, but their existence is exactly the existence of the river. Therefore, nothing can be separated from its own existence.

2) al-Ittiḥādiyyah (the unitists) : They believe that they have united with Allāh and Allāh has united with them. They liken Allāh with fire and themselves with iron that lies in the fire and acquires its form and property.

3) al-Ḥulūliyyah (the formists) : Their belief is that Allāh takes the form of those who claim to know Him and the perfect ones, and their bodies are places of His stay. In this way, they are seemingly men but really Allāh.

4) al-Wāṣiliyyah (the combiners) : This sect considers itself to have combined with Allāh. Their belief is that the laws of the *sharī'ah* are a means of development of human personality and character, and that when the human self combines with Allāh it no more needs perfection or development. Consequently, for the "*wāṣilīn*", worship and ritual become useless, because they hold that when truth and reality is achieved *sharī'ah* remains of no avail. Therefore, they can do anything and they cannot be questioned.

5) az-Zarrāqiyyah (the revellers) : This sect regards vocal and instrumental music as worship, and earns the pleasures of this world through a show of asceticism and begging from door to door. They are ever engaged in relating concocted stories of miraculous performances of their leaders to over-awe the common people.

6) al-'Ushshāqiyyah (the lovers) : The theory of this sect is that apparency is the means to reality, meaning that carnal love is the means to achieve love of Allāh. That is, in order to reach the stage of Allāh's love it is necessary to have love with some human beauty. But the love which they regard as love for Allāh is just the product of mental disorder through which the lover inclines to one individual with all his attention and his final aim is to have access to the beloved. This love can lead to the way of evil and vice, but it has no connection with the love of Allāh.

A Persian couplet says :

The truth of the fact is that carnal love is like a jinn and a jinn cannot give you guidance.

SERMON 209

Someone ¹ asked Amīr al-mu'minīn about concocted traditions and contradictory sayings of the Prophet current among the people, whereupon he said:

Certainly, what is current among the people is both right and wrong, true and false, repealing and repealed, general and particular, definite and indefinite, exact and surmised. Even during the Prophet's days false sayings had been attributed to him, so much so that he had to say during his sermon that, "Whoever attributes falsehoods to me makes his abode in Hell." Those who relate traditions are of four categories, ² no more.

7) at-Talqīniyyah (the encounterers) : According to this sect, the reading of religious sciences and books of scholarship is thoroughly unlawful.

Rather, the position that is achieved by an hour of spiritual effort of the Sufis cannot be achieved by seventy years of reading books.

According to Shī'ah 'Ulamā' all these sects are on the wrong path and out of the fold of Islam. In this connection, numerous sayings of the Imāms are related. In this sermon also Amīr al-mu'minīn has regarded the severance of 'Āṣim ibn Ziyād from this world as the mischief of Satan, and he forcefully dissuaded him from adopting that course. (For further study, see *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, al-Ḥajj Mirā Ḥabibu'llāh al-Khū'ī, vol.13, pp.132 -417; vol. 14, pp. 2 -22).

¹ This was Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī who was one of the relaters of traditions through Amīr al-mu'minīn.

² In this sermon Amīr al-mu'minīn has divided the traditionists into four categories.

The first category is that of a man concocts a tradition and attributes it to the Prophet. Traditions were in fact falsified and attributed to him, and this process continued, with the result that numerous novel traditions came into being. This is a fact which cannot be denied but if anyone does deny it his basis would be not knowledge or sagacity but oratory or argumentative necessity. Thus, once, 'Alamu'l-hudā (Ensign of Guidance) as-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā had a chance of meeting the Sunni 'ulamā' (scholars) in

confrontation and on this occasion as-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā proved by historical facts that the traditions related about the merits of the great companions are concocted and counterfeit. On this, the (Sunni) *‘ulamā* argued that it was impossible that someone should dare speak a lie against the Prophet and prepare a tradition himself and attribute it to him. as-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā said there is a tradition of the Prophet that :

A lot of false things will be attributed to me after my death and whoever speaks a lie against me would be preparing his abode in Hell. (al-Bukhārī, vol.1, p.38; vol.2, p.102; vol.4, p.207; vol.8, p.54; Muslim, vol.8, p.229; Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, pp.319 -320; at-Tirmidhī, vol.4, p.524; vol.5, pp. 35 -36, 40,199, 634; Ibn Mājah, vol.1, pp. 13—15)

If you regard this tradition as true then you should agree that false things have been attributed to the Prophet, but if you regard it false, this would prove our point. However, these were people whose hearts were full of hypocrisy and who used to prepare traditions of their own accord in order to create mischief and dispersion in religion and to misguide Muslims of weak convictions. They remained mixed with them as they used to do during the lifetime of the Prophet; and just as they remained busy in activities of mischief and destruction in those days, in the same way, even after the Prophet, they were not unmindful of deforming the teachings of Islam and metamorphosing its features. Rather, in the days of the Prophet they were always afraid lest he unveiled them and put them to shame, but after the Prophet their hypocritical activities increased and they attributed false things to the Prophet without demur for their own personal ends, and those who heard them believed in them because of their status as companions of the Prophet, thinking that whatever they said was correct and whatever they gave out was true. Afterwards also, the belief that all the companions are correct put a stopper on their tongues, as a result of which they were taken to be above criticism, questioning, discussion and censure. Besides, their conspicuous performance had made them prominent in the eyes of the government, and also because of this it needed courage and daring to speak against them. This is proved by Amīr al-mu’minīn’s words:

These people gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell, through falsehood and slanderings. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people.

Along with the destruction of Islam, the hypocrites also aimed at amassing

wealth, and they were doing so freely by claiming to be Muslims, because of which they did not want to remove the veil of Islam (from their faces) and to come out openly, but they wanted to continue their Satanic activities under the garb of Islam and engaged themselves in its basic destruction and spreading of division and dispersal by concocting traditions. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written :

When they were left free they too left many things. When people observed silence about them they also observed silence about Islam, but they continued their underground activities such as the fabrication of falsehoods to which Amīr al-mu'minīn has alluded, because a lot of untrue matters had been mixed with the traditions by the group of people of wrong beliefs who aimed at misguidance and the distortion of views and beliefs, while some of them also aimed at extolling some particular party with whom they had other worldly aims as well.

On the expiry of this period, when Mu'āwiyah took over the leadership of religion and occupied the throne of temporal authority, he opened an official department for the fabrication of false traditions, and ordered his officers to fabricate and popularise traditions in disparagement of the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (the Household of the Holy Prophet) and in extolment of 'Uthmān and the Umayyads, and announced rewards and grants of land for this work. Consequently, a lot of traditions about self-made distinctions gained entry in the books of traditions. Thus, Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Madā'inī has written in his book *Kitāb al-aḥdāth* and Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has quoted it, namely :

Mu'āwiyah wrote to his officers that they should take special care of those who were adherents of 'Uthmān, his well-wishers and lovers and to award high positions, precedence and honour to those who related traditions about his merits and distinctions, and to convey to him whatever is so related by any person, along with his name, the name of his father and the name of his tribe. They did accordingly and heaped up traditions about the merits and distinctions of 'Uthmān because Mu'āwiyah used to award them rewards, clothes, grants and lands.

When the fabricated traditions about the merits of 'Uthmān had been spread throughout the realm, then, with the idea that the position of the earlier Caliphs should not remain low, Mu'āwiyah wrote to his officers:

As soon as you receive this order of mine you should call upon the people to

prepare traditions about the distinctions of the companions and other caliphs also, and take care that if any Muslim relates any tradition about Abū Turāb (‘Alī) you should prepare a similar tradition about the companions to contradict it because this gives me great pleasure and cools my eyes, and it weakens the position of Abū Turāb and his partymen, and is more severe to them than the merits and distinctions of ‘Uthmān.

When his letters were read to the people, a large number of such traditions were related extolling the companions that are all fabricated with no truth at all. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.11, pp.43-47)

In this connection Abū ‘Abdillāh Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arafah known as Niṭṭawayh (244/858 — 323/935) who was one of the prominent scholars and traditionists has written, and Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd has quoted him, that :

Most of the false traditions about the merits of the companions were fabricated during the days of Mu‘āwiyah in order to gain position in his audience because his view was that in this way he could disgrace Banū Hāshim and render them low. (*ibid.*)

After that, fabrication of traditions became a habit, the world seekers made it a means of securing position with kings and nobles and to amass wealth. For example, Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm an-Nakha‘ī (2nd cent. A.H.) fabricated a tradition about the flight of pigeons, in order to please al-Mahdī ibn al-Manṣūr (the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph) and to secure position near him. (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.12, pp.323-327; *Mīzān al-i‘tidāl*, vol. 3, pp.337-338; *Lisān al-mīzān*, vol.4, p.422). Abū Sa‘īd al-Madā’inī and others made it a means of livelihood. The limit was reached when the al-Karrāmiyyah and some of the al-Mutaṣawwifah gave the ruling that the fabrication of traditions for the prevention of sin or for persuasion towards obedience was lawful. Consequently, in connection with persuading and dissuading, traditions were fabricated quite freely, and this was not regarded against the religious law or morality. Rather, this work was generally done by those who bore the appearance of asceticism or fear of Allāh and who passed their nights in praying and days in filling their registers with false traditions. An idea about the number of these fabricated traditions can be had from the fact that out of six hundred thousand traditions al-Bukhārī selected only two thousand seven hundred and sixty-one traditions, (*Tārīkh*

Baghdād, vol.2, p.8; *al-Irshād as-sārī*, vol.1, p.28; *Şifatu'ş-şafwah*, vol.4, p.143). Muslim thought fit for selection only four thousand out of three hundred thousand (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.13, p.101; *al-Muntẓam*, vol.5, p.32; *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*, vol.2, pp.151,157; *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol.5, p.194). Abū Dāwūd took four thousand and eight hundred out of five hundred thousand (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.9, p.57; *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*, vol.2, p.154; *al-Muntẓam*, vol.5, p.97; *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol.2, p.404), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal took thirty thousand out of nearly one million traditions (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.4, pp.419—420; *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*, vol.2, p.17; *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol.1, p.64; *Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb*, vol.1, p.74). But when this selection is studied some traditions which come across can, in no circumstances, be attributed to the Prophet. The result is that a group of considerable number has cropped up among Muslims who, in view of these (so-called) authoritative collections and true traditions, completely reject the evidentiary value of the traditions. (For further reference see *al-Ghadīr*, vol.5, pp.208—378).

The second category of relaters of traditions are those who, without appreciating the occasion or context, related whatever they could recollect, right or wrong. Thus, in al-Bukhārī (vol.2, pp.100—102; vol.5, p.98); Muslim (vol.3, pp.41—45); at-Tirmidhī (vol.3, pp.327—329); an-Nasā'ī (vol.4, p.18); Ibn Mājah (vol.1, pp.508—509); Mālik ibn Anas (*al-Muwatta'*, vol.1, p.234); ash-Shāfi'ī (*Ikhtilāfu'l-ḥadīth*, on the side lines of '*al-Umm*', vol.7, p.266); Abū Dāwūd (vol.3, p.194); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (vol.1, pp.41,42) and al-Bayhaqī (vol.4, pp.72—74) in the chapter entitled '*weeping over the dead*' it is stated that when Caliph 'Umar was wounded Ṣuhayb came weeping to him, then 'Umar said:

O' Ṣuhayb, you weep over me, while the Prophet had said that the dead person is punished if his people weep over him.

When after the death of Caliph 'Umar this was mentioned to 'Ā'ishah, she said: "May Allāh have mercy on 'Umar. The Messenger of Allāh did not say that weeping of relations causes punishment on the dead, but he said that the punishment of an unbeliever increases if his people weep over him." After this 'Ā'ishah said that according to the holy Qur'ān no person has to bear the burden of another, so how could the burden of those who weep be put on the dead. After this the following verse was quoted by 'Ā'ishah:

. . . *And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; . . .*
(Qur'ān, 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38).

The wife of the Holy Prophet 'Ā'ishah relates that once the Prophet passed by a Jewish woman over whom her people were weeping. The Prophet then remarked, "Her people are weeping over her but she is undergoing punishment in the grave."

The third category of the relaters of traditions is of those who heard some repealed traditions from the Prophet but could not get any chance to hear the repealing traditions which he could relate to others. An example of a repealing tradition is the saying of the Prophet which also contains a reference to the repealed tradition, namely : "I had disallowed you to visit graves, but now you can visit them." (Muslim, vol.3, p.65; at-Tirmidhī, vol.3, p.370; Abū Dāwūd, vol.3, pp.218, 332; an-Nasā'ī, vol.4, p.89; Ibn Mājah, vol.1, pp.500—501; Mālik ibn Anas, vol.2, p.485; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, pp.145,452; vol.3, pp.38,63,66,237,350; vol.5, pp.350,355,356,357, 359,361; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, vol.1, pp.374—376; and al-Bayhaqī, vol 4, pp.76—77). Herein the permission to visit graves has repealed the previous restriction on it. Now, those who heard only the repealed tradition continued acting according to it.

The fourth category of relaters of traditions is of those who were fully aware of the principles of justice, possessed intelligence and sagacity, knew the occasion when a tradition was first uttered (by the Prophet) and were also acquainted with the repealing and the repealed traditions, the particular and the general, and the timely and the absolute. They avoided falsehood and fabrication. Whatever they heard remained preserved in their memory, and they conveyed it with exactness to others. It is they whose traditions are the precious possession of Islam, free from fraud and counterfeit and worthy of being trusted and acted upon. That collection of traditions which has been conveyed through trustworthy bosoms like that of Amīr al-mu'minīn and has remained free from cutting, curtailing, alteration or change particularly present Islam in its true form. The position of Amīr al-mu'minīn in Islamic knowledge has been most certainly proved through the following traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet such as :

Amīr al-mu'minīn, Fair ibn 'Abdullāh, Ibn 'Abbās and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar have narrated from the Holy Prophet that he said :

I am.the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its door. He who wants to acquire

First : The lying hypocrites

The hypocrite is a person who makes a show of faith and adopts the appearance of a Muslim; he does not hesitate in sinning nor does he keep aloof from vice; he wilfully attributes false things against the Messenger of Allāh — may Allāh bless him and his descendants. If people knew that he was a hypocrite and a liar, they would not accept anything from him and would not confirm what he says.

Rather they say that he is the companion of the Prophet, has met him, heard (his sayings) from him and acquired (knowledge) from him. They therefore accept what he says. Allāh too had warned you well about the hypocrites and described them fully to you. They have continued after the Holy Prophet. They gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell through falsehoods and

(my) knowledge should come through its door. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp.126—127; *al-Istī'āb*, vol.3, p.1102; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p.22; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.2, p.377; vol.4, p.348; vol.7, p. 172; vol.11, pp.48—50; *Tadhkirah al-ḥuffāz*, vol.4, p.28; *Majmā' az-zawā'id*, vol.9, p.114; *Tahhib at-tahdhīb*, vol.6, p.320; vol.7, p.337; *Lisān al-mīzān*, vol.2, pp.122—123; *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, p. 170; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.6, pp.152, 156, 401; *'Umdah al-qārī*, vol. 7, p.631; *Sharḥ al-mawāhib al-ladunniyyah*, vol.3, p.143).

Amīr al-mu'minīn and Ibn 'Abbās have also narrated from the Holy Prophet that:

I am the store-house of wisdom and 'Alī is its door. He who wants to acquire wisdom should come through its door. (*Ḥilyah al-awliyā'*, vol.1, p.64; *Maṣābiḥ as-sunnah*, vol.2, p.275; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.1 1, p.204; *Kanz al-'ummāl*, vol.6, p.401; *ar-Riyāḍ an-naḍirah*, vol.2, p.193).

If only people could take the Prophet's blessings through these sources of knowledge. But it is a tragic chapter of history that although traditions are accepted through the Khārijites and enemies of the Prophet's family, whenever the series of relaters includes the name of any individual from among the Prophet's family there is hesitation in accepting the tradition.

slandering. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people and amassed wealth through them. People are always with the rulers and after this world, except those to whom Allāh affords protection. This is the first of the four categories.

Second: Those who are mistaken

Then there is the individual who heard (a saying) from the Holy Prophet but did not memorise it as it was, but surmised it. He does not lie wilfully. Now, he carries the saying with him and relates it, acts upon it and claims that : “I heard it from the Messenger of Allāh.” If the Muslims come to know that he has committed a mistake in it, they will not accept it from him, and if he himself knows that he is on the wrong he will give it up.

Third: Those who are ignorant

The third man is he who heard the Prophet ordering to do a thing and later the Prophet refrained the people from doing it, but this man did not know it, or he heard the Prophet refraining people from a thing and later he allowed it, but this man did not know it. In this way he retained in his mind what had been repealed, and did not retain the repealing tradition. If he knew that it had been repealed he would reject it, or if the Muslims knew, when they heard it from him, that it had been repealed they would reject it.

Fourth: Those who memorize truthfully

The last, namely the fourth man, is he who does not speak a lie against Allāh or against His Prophet. He hates falsehood out of fear for Allāh and respect for the Messenger of Allāh, and does not commit mistakes, but retains (in his mind) exactly what he heard (from the Prophet) , and he relates it as he heard it without adding anything or omitting anything. He heard the repealing tradition, he retained it and acted upon it, and he heard the repealed tradition and rejected it. He also understands the particular and the general, and he knows the definite and indefinite, and gives everything its due position.

The sayings of the Prophet used to be of two types. One was particular and the other common. Sometimes a man would hear him but he would not know what Allāh, the Glorified, meant by it or what the Messenger of Allāh meant by it. In this way the listener carries it and memorizes it without knowing its meaning and its real intention, or what was its reason. Among the companions of the Messenger of Allāh all were not in the habit of putting him questions and ask him the meanings, indeed they always wished that some Bedouin or stranger might come and ask him (peace be upon him) so that they would also listen. Whenever any such thing came before me, I asked him about its meaning and preserved it. These are the reasons and grounds of differences among the people in their traditions.

* * * * *

SERMON 210

The greatness of Allāh and the creation of the Universe

It is through the strength of Allāh's greatness and His subtle power of innovation that He made solid dry earth out of the water of the fathomless, compact and dashing ocean. Then He made from it layers and separated them into seven skies after they had been joined together. So, they became stationary at His command and stopped at the limit fixed by Him. He so made the earth that it is born by deep blue, surrounded and suspended water which is obedient to His command and has submitted to His awe while its flow has stopped due to fear of Him.

He also created high hills, rocks of stones and lofty mountains. He put them in their positions and made them remain stationary. Their peaks rose into the air while their roots remained in the water. In this way He raised the mountains above the plains and fixed their foundations in the vast expanse wherever they stood. He made their peaks high and made their bodies lofty. He made them like pillars for the earth and fixed them in it like pegs. Consequently, the earth became stationary;

otherwise it might bend with its inhabitants or sink inwards with its burden, or shift from its positions.

Therefore, glorified is He who stopped it after the flowing of its waters and solidified it after the watery state of its sides. In this way He made it a cradle for His creatures and spread it for them in the form of a floor over the deep ocean which is stationary and does not move and is fixed and does not flow. Severe winds move it here and there and clouds draw up water from it.

Verily in this there is a lesson unto him who feareth (Allāh) (Qur'ān, 79:26)

* * * * *

SERMON 211

About those who give up supporting right

O' my Allāh! whoever listens to our utterance which is just and which seeks the prosperity of religion and the worldly life and does not seek mischief, but rejects it after listening, then he certainly turns away from Thy support and desists from strengthening Thy religion. We make Thee a witness over him and Thou art the greatest of all witness, and we make all those who inhabit Thy earth and Thy skies witness over him. Thereafter, Thou alone can make us needless of his support and question him for his sin.

* * * * *

SERMON 212

The Sublimity of Allāh and a eulogy of the Prophet

Praise be to Allāh who is above all similarity to the creatures, is above the words of describers, who displays the wonders of His management for the on-lookers, is hidden from the imagination of

thinkers by virtue of the greatness of His glory, has knowledge without acquiring it, adding to it or drawing it (from someone), and Who is the ordainer of all matters without reflecting or thinking. He is such that gloom does not concern Him, nor does He seek light from brightness, night does not overtake Him nor does the day pass over Him (so as to affect Him in any manner). His comprehension (of things) is not through eyes and His knowledge is not dependent on being informed.

A part of the same sermon about the Prophet

Allāh deputed the Prophet with light, and accorded him the highest precedence in selection. Through him Allāh united those who were divided, overpowered the powerful, overcame difficulties and levelled rugged ground, and thus removed misguidance from right and left.

* * * * *

SERMON 213

The Prophet's nobility of descent

I stand witness that He is just and does justice, He is the arbiter Who decides (between right and wrong). I also stand witness that Muḥammad is. His slave. His Messenger and the Chief of His creatures. Whenever Allāh divided the line of descent, He put him in the better one, and therefore, no evil-doer ever shared with him nor was any vicious person his partner.

Beware ! surely Allāh, the Glorified, has provided for virtue those who are suited to it, for truth pillars (that support it), and for obedience protection (against deviation). In every matter of obedience you will find Allāh, the Glorified's succour that will speak through tongues and accord firmness to hearts. It has sufficiency for those who seek sufficiency, and a cure for those who seek cure.

The characteristics of the virtuous whose guidance must be followed

Know that, certainly, those creatures of Allāh who preserve His knowledge offer protection to those things which He desires to be protected and make His springs flow (for the benefit of others). They contact each other with friendliness and meet each other with affection. They drink water from cups that quench the thirst and return from the watering places fully satiated. Misgiving does not affect them and backbiting does not gain ground with them. In this way Allāh has tied their nature with good manners. Because of this they love each other and meet each other. They have become superior, like seeds which are selected by taking some and throwing away others. This selection has distinguished them and the process of choosing has purified them.

Therefore, man should secure honour by adopting these qualities. He should fear the day of Doom before it arrives, and he should appreciate the shortness of his life and the shortness of his sojourn in the place of stay which has only to last for his change over to the next place. He should therefore do something for his change over and for the known stages of his departure. Blessed be he who possesses a virtuous heart, who obeys one who guides him, desists from him who takes to ruin, catches the path of safety with the help of him who provides him light (of guidance) and by obeying the leader who commands him, hastens towards guidance before its doors are closed, gets open the door of repentance and removes the (stain of) sins. He has certainly been put on the right path and guided towards the straight road.

* * * * *

SERMON 214

A prayer which Amīr al-mu'minīn often recited

Praise be to Allāh Who made me such that I have not died nor am I sick, nor have my veins been infected with disease, nor have I been hauled up for my evil acts, nor am I without progeny, nor have I forsaken my religion, nor do I disbelieve in my Lord, nor do I feel strangeness

with my faith, nor is my intelligence affected, nor have I been punished with the punishment of peoples before me. I am a slave in Thy possession, I have been guilty of excesses over myself. Thou hast exhausted Thy pleas over me and I have no plea (before Thee). I have no power to take except what Thou givest me, and I cannot evade except what Thou savest me from.

O' my Allāh! I seek Thy protection from becoming destitute despite Thy riches, from being misguided despite Thy guidance, from being molested in Thy realm and from being humiliated while authority rests with Thee.

O' my Allāh! let my spirit be the first of those good objects that Thou takest from me and the first trust out of Thy favours held in trust with me.

O' my Allāh! we seek Thy protection from turning away from Thy command or revolting against Thy religion, or being led away by our desires instead of by guidance that comes from Thee.

* * * * *

SERMON 215

Delivered at the battle of Şiffin

Mutual rights of the ruler and the ruled

So now, Allāh, the Glorified, has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favour. If there is any right which is only in favour of a person with no (corresponding) right accruing against him it is solely for Allāh, the Glorified, and not for His creatures by virtue of His might over His creatures and by virtue of the justice permeating all His decrees. Of

course, He the Glorified, has created His right over creatures that they should worship Him, and has laid upon Himself (the obligation of) their reward equal to several times the recompense as a mark of His bounty and the generosity that He is capable of.

Then, from His rights, He, the Glorified, created certain rights for certain people against others. He made them so as to equate with one another. Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others. The greatest of these rights that Allāh, the Glorified, has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. This is an obligation which Allāh, the Glorified, has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection, and an honour for their religion. Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast.

If the ruled fulfil the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfils their rights, then right attains the position of honour among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the *sunnah* gains currency.

In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler, or the ruler oppresses the ruled, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion and the ways of the *sunnah* are forsaken. Then desires are acted upon, the commands (of religion) are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous and there is no hesitation in disregarding even great rights, nor in committing big wrongs. In such circumstances, the virtuous are humiliated while the vicious are honoured, and there are serious chastisements from Allāh, the Glorified, onto the people.

You should therefore counsel each other (for the fulfilment of your obligations) and cooperate with each other. However extremely eager a person may be to secure the pleasure of Allāh, and however fully he strives for it, he cannot discharge (his obligation for) obedience to Allāh, the Glorified, as is really due to Him, and it is an obligatory right

of Allāh over the people that they should advise each other to the best of their ability and cooperate with each other for the establishment of truth among them. No person, however great his position in the matter of truth, and however advanced his distinction in religion may be, is above cooperation in connection with the obligations placed on him by Allāh. Again, no man, however small he may be regarded by others, and however humble he may appear before eyes, is too low to cooperate or to be afforded cooperation in this matter.

One of Amīr al-mu'minīn's companions replied to him by a long speech wherein he praised him much and mentioned his own listening to him and obeying him, whereupon Amīr al-mu'minīn said:

If a man in his mind regards Allāh's glory as being high and believes in his heart that Allāh's position is sublime, then it is his right that on account of the greatness of these things he should regard all other things small. Among such persons he on whom Allāh's bounty is great and Allāh's favours are kind has a greater obligation, because Allāh's bounty over any person does not increase without an increase in Allāh's right over him.

In the view of virtuous people, the worst position of rulers is that it may be thought about them that they love glory, and their affairs may be taken to be based on pride. I would really hate that it may occur to your mind that I love high praises or to hear eulogies. By the grace of Allāh I am not like this. Even If I had loved to be mentioned like this, I would have given it up in submissiveness before Allāh, the Glorified, rather than accept greatness and sublimity to which He is more entitled. Generally, people feel pleased at praise after good performances; but do not mention for me handsome praise for the obligations I have discharged towards Allāh and towards you, because of (my) fear about those obligations which I have not discharged and for issuing injunctions which could not be avoided, and do not address me in the manner despots are addressed.

Do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true

thing is said to me, because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them. Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring.¹ I do not escape erring in my actions but that Allāh helps me (in

¹ That the innocence of angels is different from the innocence of man needs no detailed discussion. The innocence of angels means that they do not possess the impulse to sin, but the innocence of man means that, although he has human frailties and passions, yet he possesses a peculiar power to resist them and he is not over-powered by them so as to commit sins. This very ability is called innocence and it prevents the rising up of personal passions and impulses. Amīr al-mu'minīn's saying that "I do not regard myself above erring" refers to those human dictates and passions, and his saying that "Allāh helps me in avoiding 'errors'" refers to innocence. The same tone is found in the Qur'ān in the words of Prophet Yusuf that :

I exculpate not myself, verily (one's) self is wont to bid (him to) evil, except such as my Lord hath had mercy on; verily my Lord is Oft-forgiving, All-merciful. (12:53)

Just as in this verse, because of the existence of exception, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, similarly, due to the existence of the exception "but that Allāh helps me in avoiding errors" in Amīr al-mu'minīn's saying, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, otherwise the Prophet's innocence too will have to be rejected. In the same way, the last sentence of this sermon should not be taken to mean that before the proclamation of prophethood he had been under the influence of pre-Islamic beliefs, and that just as others had been unbelievers he too might have been in darkness and misguidance, because from his very birth Amīr al-mu'minīn was brought-up by the Prophet and the effect of his training and up-bringing permeated him. It cannot therefore be imagined that he who had from infancy trod in the foot-prints of the Prophet would deviate from guidance even for a moment. Thus, al-Mas'ūdī has written :

Amīr al-mu'minīn never believed in any other god than Allāh so that there could be the question of his accepting Islam. He rather followed the Prophet in all his actions and (virtually) initiated him, and in this very state he attained majority. (*Murūj adh-dhahab*, vol.2, p.3).

avoiding errors) in matters in which He is more powerful than I. Certainly, I and you are slaves owned by Allāh, other than Whom there is no Lord except Him. He owns our selves which we do not own. He took us from where we were towards what means prosperity to us. He altered our straying into guidance and gave us intelligence after blindness.

* * * * *

SERMON 216

About the excesses of the Quraysh

O' my Allāh ! I beseech Thee to take revenge on the Quraysh and those who are assisting them, for they have cut asunder my kinship and over-turned my cup, and have joined together to contest a right to which I was entitled more than anyone else. They said to me: "If you get your right, that will be just, but if you are denied the right, that too will be just. Endure it with sadness or kill yourself in grief." I looked around but found no one to shield me, protect me or help me except the members of my family. I refrained from flinging them into death and therefore closed my eyes despite the dust, kept swallowing saliva despite (the suffocation of) grief and endured pangs of anger although it was more bitter than colocynth and more grievous than the bite of knives.

Here, by those whom Allāh led from darkness into guidance, the reference is to the persons whom Amīr al-mu'minīn was addressing. Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes in this connection :

The reference here is not to his own self because he had never been an unbeliever so as to have accepted Islam after that, but in these words he is referring to those group of people whom he was addressing. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.11, p.108)

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This utterance of Amīr al-mu'minīn has already appeared in an earlier Sermon (171), but I have repeated it here because of the difference of versions.

**A part of the same sermon about those who
went to Baṣrah to fight Amīr al-mu'minīn**

They marched on my officers and the custodians of the public treasury which is still under my control and on the people of a metropolis, all of whom were obedient to me and were in allegiance to me. They created division among them, instigated their party against me and attacked my followers. They killed a group of them by treachery, while another group took up swords against them and fought with the swords till they met Allāh as adherents to truth.

* * * * *

SERMON 217

**When Amīr al-mu'minīn passed by the corpses of Ṭalḥah
ibn 'Ubaydullāh and 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn 'Attāb ibn Asīd
who were both killed in the battle of Jamal, he said:**

Abū Muḥammad (Ṭalḥah) lies here away from his own place. By Allāh, I did not like that the Quraysh should lie killed under the stars. I have avenged myself with the descendants of 'Abd Manāf, but the chief persons of Banū Jumah¹ have escaped me. They had stretched their necks towards a matter for which they were not suited, and therefore their necks were broken before they reached the goal.

¹ In the battle of Jamal a group of Banū Jumah was with 'Ā'ishah, but the chief men of this group fled away from the battle-field. Some of them were: 'Abdullāh aṭ-Ṭawīl ibn Ṣafwān, Yaḥyā ibn Ḥakīm, 'Āmir ibn Mas'ūd and Ayyūb ibn Ḥabīb. From this group (Banū Jumah) only two persons were killed.

* * * * *

SERMON 218

Qualities of the God-fearing and the pious

He (the believer) kept his mind alive and killed (the desires of) his heart till his body became thin, his bulk turned light and an effulgence of extreme brightness shone for him. It lighted the way for him and took him on the (right) path. Different doors led him to the door of safety and the place of (his permanent) stay. His feet, balancing his body, became fixed in the position of safety and comfort, because he kept his heart (in good acts) and pleased his Allāh.

* * * * *

SERMON 219

Amīr al-mu'minīn recited the verse

*Engage (your) vying in exuberance, until ye come to the graves.*¹
(Qur'ān, 102:1 - 2)

Then he said:

¹ The genesis of the descending of this verse is that the tribes of Banū 'Abd Manāf and Banū Sahn began to boast against each other over the abundance of their wealth and the number of their tribesmen, and in order to prove they had a greater number each one began to include their dead as well, whereupon this verse was revealed to the effect that abundance of riches and majority in numbers has made you so forgetful that you count the dead also with the living. This verse is also taken to mean that abundance of riches and progeny has made you forgetful till you reached the graves, but the utterance of Amīr al-mu'minīn supports the first meaning.

How distant (from achievement) is their aim, how neglectful are these visitors and how difficult is the affair. They have not taken lessons from things which are full of lessons, but they took them from far off places. Do they boast on the dead bodies of their fore-fathers, or do they regard the number of dead persons as a ground for feeling boastful of their number? They want to revive the bodies that have become spiritless and the movements that have ceased. They are more entitled to be a source of lesson than a source of pride. They are more suitable for being a source of humility than of honour.

They looked at them with weak-sighted eyes and descended into the hollow of ignorance. If they had asked about them from the dilapidated houses and empty courtyards, they would have said that they went into the earth in the state of misguidance and you too are heading ignorantly towards them. You trample their skulls, want to raise constructions on their corpses, you graze what they have left and live in houses which they have vacated. The days (that lie) between them and you are also bemoaning you and reciting elegies over you.

They are your fore-runners in reaching the goal and have arrived at the watering places before you. They had positions of honour and plenty of pride. They were rulers and holders of positions. Now they have gone into the interstice where earth covers them from above and is eating their flesh and drinking their blood. They lie in the hollows of their graves lifeless, no more growing, and hidden, not to be found. The approach of dangers does not frighten them, and the adversity of circumstances does not grieve them. They do not mind earthquakes, nor do they pay heed to thunders. They are gone and not expected back. They are existent but unseen. They were united but are now dispersed. They were friendly and are now separated.

Their accounts are unknown and their houses are silent, not because of length of time or distance of place, but because they have been made to drink the cup (of death) which has changed their speech into dumbness, their hearing into deafness and their movements into stillness. It seems as though they are fallen in slumber. They are neighbours not feeling affection for each other, or friends who do not

meet each other. The bonds of their knowing each other have been worn out and the connections of their friendship have been cut asunder. Everyone of them is therefore alone although they are a group, and they are strangers, even though friends. They are unaware of morning after a night and of evening after a day. The night or the day when they departed has become ever existent for them.¹ They found the dangers of their places of stay more serious than they had apprehended, and they witnessed that its signs were greater than they had guessed. The two objectives (namely paradise and hell) have been stretched for them upto a point beyond the reach of fear or hope. Had they been able to speak they would have become dumb to describe what they witnessed or saw.

Even though their traces have been wiped out and their news has stopped (circulating), eyes are capable of drawing a lesson, as they looked at them, ears of intelligence heard them and they spoke without uttering words. So, they said that handsome faces have been destroyed and delicate bodies have been smeared with earth. We have put on a worn-out shroud. The narrowness of the grave has over-whelmed us and strangeness has spread among us. Our silent abodes have been ruined. The beauty of our bodies has disappeared. Our known features have become hateful. Our stay in the places of strangeness has become long. We do not get relief from pain, nor widening from narrowness.

Now, if you portray them in your mind, or if the curtains concealing them are removed from them for you, in this state when their ears have lost their power and turned deaf, their eyes have been filled with dust and sunk down, their tongues which were very active have been cut into pieces, their hearts which were ever wakeful have become motionless in their chests, in every limb of theirs a peculiar

¹ This means that for him he who dies in the day it is always day whereas for him who dies in the night the darkness of night never dispels, because they are at a place where there is no turning of the moon and the sun and no rotation of the nights and the days. The same meaning has been expressed by a poet like this :

*There is sure to be a day without a night,
Or a night that would come without a day.*

decay has occurred which has deformed it, and has paved the way for calamity towards it, all these lie powerless, with no hand to help them and no heart to grieve over them, (then) you would certainly notice the grief of (their) hearts and the dirt of (their) eyes.

Every trouble of theirs is such that its position does not change and the distress does not clear away. How many a prestigious body and amazing beauty the earth has swallowed, although when in the world he enjoyed abundant pleasures and was nurtured in honour. He clung to enjoyments (even) in the hour of grief. If distress befell him he sought refuge in consolation (derived) through the pleasures of life and playing and games. He was laughing at the world while the world was laughing at him because of his life full of forgetfulness. Then time trampled him like thorns, the days weakened his energy and death began to look at him from near. Then he was overtaken by a grief which he had never felt, and ailments appeared in place of the health he had previously possessed.

He then turned to that with which the physician had made him familiar, namely suppressing the hot (diseases) with cold (medicines) and curing the cold with hot doses, but the cold things did nothing save aggravate the hot ailments, while the hot ones did nothing except increasing the coldness, nor did he acquire temperateness in his constitution but rather every ailment of his increased till his physicians became helpless, his attendants grew loathsome and his own people felt disgusted from describing his disease, avoided answering those who enquired about him and quarrelled in front of him About the serious news which they were concealing from him. Thus, someone would say “his condition is what it is” and would console them with hopes of his recovery, while another one would advocate patience on missing him, recalling to them the calamities that had befallen the earlier generations.

In this state when he was getting ready to depart from the world and leave his beloved ones, such a serious choking overtook him that his senses became bewildered and the dampness of his tongue dried tip. Now, there was many an important question whose reply he knew but he could not utter it, and many a voice that was painful for his heart that

he heard but remained (unmoved) as though he was deaf to the voice of either an elder whom he used to respect or of a younger whom he used to caress. The pangs of death are too hideous to be covered by description or to be appreciated by the hearts of the people in this world.

* * * * *

SERMON 220

Delivered after reciting the verse:

. . . therein declare glory unto Him in the mornings and the evenings; Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Allāh and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; they fear the day when the hearts and eyes shall writhe of the anguish. (Qur'ān, 24:36-37)

Certainly, Allāh, the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance the light for hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness.

In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with whom Allāh, precious are His bounties, whispered through their wits and spoke through their minds. With the help of the bright awakening of their ears, eyes and hearts they keep reminding others of the remembrance of the days of Allāh and making others feel fear for Him like guide-points in wildernesses. Whoever adopts the middle way, they praise his ways and give him the tidings of deliverance, but whoever goes right and left they vilify his ways and frighten him with ruin. In this way, they served as lamps in these darknesses and guides through these doubts.

There are some people devoted to the remembrance (of Allāh) who have adopted it in place of worldly matters so that commerce or trade

does not turn them away from it. They pass their life in it. They speak into the ears of neglectful persons warning against matters held unlawful by Allāh, they order them to practise justice and themselves keep practising it, and they refrain them from the unlawful and themselves refrain from it. It is as though they have finished the journey of this world towards the next world and have beheld what lies beyond it. Consequently, they have become acquainted with all that befell them in the interstice during their long stay therein, and the Day of Judgement fulfils its promises for them. Therefore, they removed the curtain from these things for the people of the world, till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear.

If you picture them in your mind in their admirable positions and well-known sittings, when they have opened the records of their actions and are prepared to render an account of themselves in respect of the small as well as the big things they were ordered to do but they failed to do, or were ordered to refrain from but they indulged therein, and they realized the weight of their burden (of bad acts) on their backs, and they felt too weak to bear them, then they wept bitterly and spoke to each other while still crying and bewailing to Allāh in repentance and acknowledgement (of their shortcomings), you would find them to be emblems of guidance and lamps in darkness, angels would be surrounding them, peace would be descending upon them, the doors of the sky would be opened for them and positions of honour would be assigned to them in the place of which Allāh had informed them. Therefore, He has appreciated their actions and praised their position. They call Him and breathe in the air of forgiveness, they are ever needy of His bounty and remain humble before His greatness, the length of their grief has pained their hearts, and the length of weeping their eyes. They knock at every door of inclination towards Allāh. They ask Him Whom generosity does not make destitute and from Whom those who approach Him do not get disappointed.

Therefore, take account of yourself for your own sake because the account of others will be taken by one other than you.

* * * * *

SERMON 221**Amīr al-mu'minīn recited the verse:**

O' thou man! what hath beguiled thee from thy Lord, the Most Gracious One. (Qur'ān, 82:6)

Then he said:

The addressee (in this verse) is devoid of argument and his excuse is most deceptive. He is detaining himself in ignorance.

O' man! what has emboldened you to (commit) sins, what had deceived you about your Allāh and what has made you satisfied with the destruction of yourself. Is there no cure for your ailment or no awakening from your sleep? Do you not have pity on yourself as you have on others? Generally, when you see anyone exposed to the heat of the sun you cover him with shade, or if you see anyone afflicted with grief that pains his body you weep out of pity for him. What has then made you patient over your own disease, what has made you firm in your own afflictions, and what has consoled you from weeping over yourself although your life is the most precious of all lives to you, and why does not the fear of an ailment that may befall you in the night keep you wakeful although you lie on the way to Allāh's wrath due to your sins?

You should cure the disease of langour in your heart by determination, and the sleep of neglectfulness in your eyes by wakefulness. Be obedient to Allāh, and love His remembrance, and picture to yourself that you are running away while He is approaching you. He is calling you to His forgiveness and concealing your faults with His kindness, while you are fleeing away from Him towards others. Certainly, Great is Allāh the powerful, Who is so generous, and how humble and weak are you and still so bold to commit His disobedience although you live in His protection and undergo changes of life in the

expanse of His kindness. He does not refuse you His kindness and does not remove His protection from you. In fact, you have not been without His kindness even for a moment, whether it be a favour that He conferred upon you or a sin of yours that He has concealed or a calamity that He has warded off from you. What is your idea about Him if you had obeyed Him? By Allāh, if this had been the case with two persons equal in power and matching in might (one being inattentive and the other showering favours upon you) then you would have been the first to adjudge yourself to be of bad behaviour and evil deeds.

I truthfully say that the world has not deceived you but you have had yourself deceived by it. The world had opened to you the curtains and divulged to you (everything) equally. And in all that it foretold you about the troubles befalling your bodies and the decay in your power, it has been too true and faithful in promise, and did not speak a lie to you or deceive you. There are many who advise you about it but they are blamed, and speak the truth about it but they are opposed. If you understand the world by means of dilapidated houses and forlorn abodes, then with your good understanding and far reaching power of drawing lessons you will find it like one who is kind over you and cautions about you. It is good abode for him who does not like it as an abode, and a good place of stay for him who does not regard it a permanent home for stay.

Only those who run away from this world today will be regarded virtuous tomorrow. When the earthquake occurs, the Day of Resurrection approaches with all its severities, the people of every worshipping place cling to it, all the devotees cling to the object of their devotion and all the followers cling to their leader. Then on that day even the opening of an eye in the air and the sound of a footstep on the ground will be assigned its due through His Justice and His Equity. On that day many an argument will prove void and a contention for excuses will stand rejected.

Therefore, you should now adopt for yourself the course with which your excuse may hold good and your plea may be proved. Take from the transient things of this world that which will stay for you (in the next

world), provide for your journey, keep (your) gaze on the brightness of deliverance and keep ready the saddles (for setting off).

* * * * *

SERMON 222

About keeping aloof from oppression and misappropriation.

‘Aqīl’s condition of poverty and destitution

By Allāh, I would rather pass a night in wakefulness on the thorns of *as-sa’dān* (a plant having sharp prickles) or be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allāh and His Messenger on the Day of Judgement as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of worldly wealth. And how can I oppress any one for (the sake of a life) that is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time.

By Allāh, I certainly saw (my brother) ‘Aqīl fallen in destitution and he asked me a *ṣā’* (about three kilogrammes in weight) out of your (share of) wheat, and I also saw his children with dishevelled hair and a dusty countenance due to starvation, as though their faces had been blackened by indigo. He came to me several times and repeated his request to me again and again. I heard him, and he thought I would sell my faith to him and follow his tread leaving my own way. Then I.(just) heated a piece of iron and took it near his body so that he might take a lesson from it, then he cried as a person in protracted illness cries with pain and he was about to get burnt with its branding. Then I said to him. “Moaning women may moan over you, O’ ‘Aqīl. Do you cry on account of this (heated) iron which has been made by a man for fun, while you are driving me towards the fire which Allāh, the Powerful, has prepared for (a manifestation of) His wrath? Should you cry from pain, but I should not cry from the flames?”

A stranger incident than this is that a man ¹ came to us in the night with a closed flask full of honey paste but I disliked it as though it was the saliva of a serpent or its vomit. I asked him whether it was a reward, or *zakāt* (poor-tax) or charity, for these are forbidden to us members of the Prophet's family. He said it was neither this nor that but a present. Then I said, "Childless women may weep over you. Have you come to deviate me from the religion of Allāh, or are you mad, or have you been overpowered by some jinn, or are you speaking without senses?"

By Allāh, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allāh to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it. What has 'Alī to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasures that will not last? We do seek protection of Allāh from the slip of wisdom and the evils of mistakes, and from Him we seek succour.

* * * * *

SERMON 223

Supplication

O' my Allāh ! preserve (the grace of) my face with easiness of life and do not disgrace my countenance with destitution, lest I may have to beg a livelihood from those who beg from Thee, try to seek the favour of Thy evil creatures, engage myself in praising those who give to me, and be tempted in abusing those who do not give to me, although behind all these Thou art the master of giving and denying.

... *Verily Thou over all things, art the All-powerful.* (Qur'ān, 66:8)

¹ It was al-Ash'ath ibn Qays.

* * * * *

SERMON 224

Transience of the world and the helplessness of those in graves

This is a house surrounded by calamities and well-known for deceitfulness. Its conditions do not last and those who inhabit it do not remain safe. Its conditions are variable and its ways changing. Life in it is blameworthy and safety in it is non-existent. Yet its people are targets; it strikes them with its arrows and destroys them through death.

Know, O' creatures of Allāh, that, certainly, you and all the things of this world that you have are (treading) on the lines of those (who were) before you. They were of longer ages, had more populated houses and were of more lasting traces. Their voices have become silent, their movements have become stationary, their bodies have become rotten, their houses have become empty and their traces have been obliterated. Their magnificent places and spread-out carpets were changed to stones, laid-in-blocks and cave-like dug out graves whose very foundation is based on ruins and whose construction has been made with soil. Their positions are contiguous, but those settled in them are like far flung strangers. They are among the people of their area but feel lonely, and they are free from work but still engaged (in activity). They feel no attachment with homelands nor do they keep contact among themselves like neighbours despite nearness of neighbourhood and priority of abodes. And how can they meet each other when decay has ground them with its chest, and stones and earth have eaten them.

It is as though you too have gone where they have gone, the same sleeping place has caught you and the same place has detained you. What will then be your position when your affairs reach their end and graves are turned upside down (to throw out the dead)?

There shall every soul realize what it hath sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allāh, their true Lord, and what they did fabricate (the false deities) will vanish (away) from them.
(Qur'ān, 10:30)

* * * * *

SERMON 225**upplication**

O ' my Allāh! Thou art the most attached to Thy lovers and the most ready to assist those who trust in Thee. Thou seest them in their concealments, knowest whatever is in their consciences, and art aware of the extent of their intelligence. Consequently, their secrets are open to Thee and their hearts are eager from Thee. If loneliness bores them, Thy remembrance gives them solace. If distresses befall them, they beseech Thy protection, because they know that the reins of affairs are in Thy hands, and that their movements depend upon Thy commands.

O ' my Allāh ! if I am unable to express my request or cannot see my needs, then guide me towards my betterment and take my heart towards the correct goal. This is not against (the mode of) Thy guidance nor anything new against Thy ways of support.

O ' my Allāh! deal with me through Thy forgiveness and do not deal with me according to Thy justice.

* * * * *

SERMON 226

**About a companion who passed away from this
world before the occurrence of troubles.**

May Allāh reward such and such man ¹ who straightened the curve,

¹ Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written (*in Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.14, pp.3 - 4) that the reference here is to the second Caliph 'Umar, and that these

sentences have been uttered in his praise as indicated by the word “ ‘Umar” written under the word “such and such” in as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī’s own hand in the manuscript of *Nahj al-balāghah* written by him. This is Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd’s statement, but it is to be seen that if as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī had written the word “ ‘Umar” by way of explanation it should have existed, as other explanations by him have remained, in those versions which have been copied from his manuscript. Even now there exists in al-Mūṣil (Iraq) university the oldest copy of *Nahj al-balāghah* written by the famous calligraphist Yāqūt al-Musta‘ṣimī; but no one has afforded any clue to this explanation of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī. Even if the view of Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd is accepted it would be deemed to represent the personal opinion of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī which may serve as a supplementary argument in support of an original argument but this personal view cannot be assigned any regular importance.

It is strange that two and a half centuries after as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī, namely in the seventh century A.H., Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd makes the statement that the reference here is to Caliph ‘Umar and that as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī himself had so indicated, as a result of which some other annotaters also followed the same line, but the contemporaries of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī who wrote about *Nahj al-balāghah* have given no such indication in their writings although as contemporaries they should have had better information about as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī’s writing. Thus, al-‘Allāmah ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir who was a contemporary of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī and wrote an annotation of *Nahj al-balāghah* under the name of *A’lām Nahj al-balāghah* writes in connection with this sermon :

Amīr al-mu’minīn has praised one of his own companions for his good conduct. He had died before the troubles that arose after the death of the Prophet of Allāh.

This is supported by the annotations of *Nahj al-balāghah* written by al-‘Allāmah Quṭbu’d-Dīn ar-Rāwandī (d. 573 A.H.). Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd (vol.14, p.4) and Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī (in *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.4, p.97) have quoted his following view.

By this Amīr al-mu’minīn refers to one of his own companions who died before the mischief and disruption that occurred following the death of the Prophet of Allāh.

al-‘Allāmah al-Ḥājj al-Mirzā Ḥabību’llāh al-Khū’ī is of the opinion that the person is Mālīk ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar on the ground that after the

assassination of Mālik the situation of the Muslim community was such as Amīr al-mu'minīn explains in this sermon.

al-Khū'ī adds that:

Amīr al-mu'minīn has praised Mālik repeatedly such as in his letter to the people of Egypt sent through Mālik when he was made the governor of that place, and like his utterances when the news of Mālik's assassination reached him, 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. Women have become barren to give birth to such as Mālik." Amīr al-mu'minīn had even expressed in some of his utterances that, "Mālik was to me as I was to the Holy Prophet." Therefore, one who possesses such a position certainly deserves such attributes and even beyond that. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol. 14, pp. 374 - 375)

If these words had been about Caliph 'Umar and there was some trustworthiness about it Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd would have recorded the authority or tradition and it would have existed in history and been known among the people. But here nothing is found to prove the statement except a few self-concocted events. Thus, about the pronouns in the words '*khayrahā*' and '*sharrahā*' he takes them to refer to the caliphate and writes that these words can apply only to one who enjoys power and authority because without authority it is impossible to establish the *sunnah* or prevent innovation. This is the gist of the argument he has advanced on this occasion; although there is no proof to establish that the antecedent of this pronoun is the caliphate. It can rather refer to the world (when Amīr al-mu'minīn says, "He achieved good [of this world] and remained safe from its evils.") and that would be in accord with the context. Again, to regard authority as a condition for the safeguarding of people's interest and the propagation of the *sunnah* means to close the door to prompting others to good and dissuading them from evil, although Allāh has assigned this duty to a group of the people without the condition of authority :

And that there should be among you a group who call (mankind) unto virtue and enjoin what is good and forbid wrong; and these are they who shall be successful. (Qur'ān, 3 : 104)

Similarly it is related from the Prophet :

So long as people go on prompting for good and dissuading from evil and assisting each other in virtue and piety they will remain in righteousness.

Again, Amīr al-mu'minīn, in the course of a will, says in general terms:

Establish the pillars of the Unity of Allāh and the *sunnah*, and keep both these lamps aflame.

In these sayings there is no hint that this obligation cannot be discharged without authority. Facts also tell us that (despite army and force, and power and authority) the rulers and kings could not prevent evil or propagate virtue to the extent to which some unknown godly persons were able to inculcate moral values by imprinting their morality on hearts and minds, although they were not backed by any army or force and they didn't have any equipment save destitution. No doubt authority and control can bend heads down before it, but it is not necessary that it should also pave the way for virtue in hearts. History shows that most of the rulers destroyed the features of Islam. Islam's existence and progress has been possible by the efforts of those helpless persons who possessed nothing save poverty and discomfiture.

If it is insisted that the reference here should only be to a ruler, then why should it not be taken to mean a companion of Amīr al-mu'minīn who had been the head of a Province such as Salmān al-Fārisī for whose burial Amīr al-mu'minīn went to al-Madā'in; and it is not implausible that Amīr al-mu'minīn might have uttered these words after his burial by way of comments on his life and way of governance. However, to believe that they are about Caliph 'Umar is without any proof. In the end, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has quoted the following statements of (the historian) aṭ-Ṭabarī in proof of his hypothesis :

“It is related from al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah that when Caliph ‘Umar died Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah said crying. ‘Oh ‘Umar, you were the man who straightened the curve, removed ills, destroyed mischief, revived the sunnah, remained chaste and departed without entangling in evils.’ (According to aṭ-Ṭabarī) al-Mughīrah related that ‘When ‘Umar was buried I came to ‘Alī and I wanted to hear something from him about ‘Umar. So, on my arrival Amīr al-mu'minīn came out in this state that he was wrapped in one cloth after bathing and was jerking the hair of his head and beard and he had no

doubt that the Caliphate would come to him. On this occasion he said, “May Allāh have mercy on ‘Umar.” Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah has correctly said that he enjoyed the good of the Caliphate and remained safe from its evils. By Allāh, she did not say it herself but was made to say so.’ ” (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, p.2763; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol.12, p.5; Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, p.140)

The relater of this event is al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah whose adultery with Umm Jamīl, the Caliph ‘Umar’s saving him from the penalty despite the evidence, and his openly abusing Amīr al-mu‘minīn in Kūfah under Mu‘āwiyah’s behest are admitted facts of history. On this ground what weight his statements can carry is quite clear. From the factual point of view also, this story cannot be accepted. al-Mughīrah’s statement that Amīr al-mu‘minīn had no doubt about his Caliphate is against the facts. What were the factors from which he made this guess when the actual facts were to the contrary. If the caliphate was certain for any one, it was ‘Uthmān. Thus, at the Consultative Committee ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf said to Amīr al-mu‘minīn: “O’ ‘Alī ! do not create a situation against yourself for I have observed and consulted the people and they all want ‘Uthmān.” (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol.1, p.2786; Ibn al-Athīr, vol.3, p.71; Abu’l-Fidā’, vol.1, p.166)

Consequently, Amīr al-mu‘minīn was sure not to get the caliphate as has already been stated on the authority of aṭ-Ṭabarī’s History, under the sermon of the Camel’s Foam (*ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*), namely that on seeing the names of the members of the Consultative Committee, Amīr al-mu‘minīn had said to al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib that the caliphate could not be given to anyone except ‘Uthmān since all the powers had been given to ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and he was ‘Uthmān’s brother-in-law (sister’s husband) and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ was a relative and tribesman of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān. These two would join in giving the caliphate to him.

At this stage, the question arises as to what the reason was that actuated al-Mughīrah to prompt Amīr al-mu‘minīn to say something about ‘Umar. If he knew that Amīr al-mu‘minīn had good ideas about ‘Umar, he should have also known his impression; but if he thought that Amīr al-mu‘minīn did not entertain good ideas about him then the purpose of his asking Amīr al-mu‘minīn would be none other than that whatever he may say he would, by exposing it, create an atmosphere against him and make the members of the Consultative Committee suspicious of him. The views of the members of the Consultative Committee are well understood from the very fact that by putting the condition of following the conduct of the first two Caliphs in

cured the disease, abandoned mischief and established the *sunnah*. He departed (from this world) with untarnished clothes and little shortcomings. He achieved good (of this world) and remained safe from its evils. He offered Allāh's obedience and feared Him as He deserved. He went away and left the people in dividing ways wherein the misled cannot obtain guidance and the guided cannot attain certainty.

electing the caliph they had shown their adherence to them. In these circumstances when al-Mughīrah tried to play this trick Amīr al-mu'minīn said just by way of relating a fact that 'Umar achieved the good (of this world) and remained safe from its evil. This sentence has no connection with praise or eulogy. 'Umar did in his days enjoy all kinds of advantages while his period was free from the mischiefs that cropped up later. After recording this statement Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes:

From this event the belief gains strength that in this utterance the allusion is towards 'Umar.

If the utterance means the word uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah about which Amīr al-mu'minīn has said that they are not her own heart's voice but she was made to utter them, then doubtlessly the reference is to 'Umar, but the view that these words were uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn in praise of 'Umar is not at all established. Rather, from this tradition it is evidently shown that these words were uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah. Allāh alone knows on what ground the words of Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah are quoted and then it is daringly argued that these words were uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn about 'Umar. It seems Amīr al-mu'minīn had uttered these words about someone on some occasion, then Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah used similar words on 'Umar's death and then even Amīr al-mu'minīn's words were taken to be in praise of 'Umar. Otherwise, no mind except a mad one can argue that the words uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah should be deemed a ground to hold that Amīr al-mu'minīn said these words in praise of 'Umar. Can it be expected, after (a glance at) the sermon of the Camel's Foam, that Amīr al-mu'minīn might have uttered these words. Again, it is worth consideration that if these words had been uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn on 'Umar's death, then at the Consultative Committee when he refused to follow the conduct of the (first) two Caliphs it should have been said to him that only the other day he has said that 'Umar had established the *sunnah* and banished innovations, so that when his conduct was in accord with the *sunnah* what was the sense in accepting the *sunnah* but refusing to follow his conduct.

* * * * *

SERMON 227

**(About allegiance to Amīr al-mu'minīn for the Caliphate.
A similar sermon in somewhat different version has already
appeared earlier.)**

You drew out my hand towards you for allegiance but I held it back and you stretched it but I contracted it. Then you crowded over me as the thirsty camels crowd on the watering cisterns on their being taken there, so much so that shoes were torn, shoulder-cloths fell away and the weak got trampled, and the happiness of people on their allegiance to me was so manifested that small children felt joyful, the old staggered (up to me) for it, the sick too reached for it helter skelter and young girls ran for it without veils.

* * * * *

SERMON 228

**Advice about fear of Allāh, and an account of those who remain
apprehensive of death and adopt abstemiousness**

Certainly, fear of Allāh is the key to guidance, provision for the next world, freedom from every slavery and deliverance from all ruin. With its help the seeker succeeds and he who makes for safety escapes and achieves his aims.

Perform (good) acts while such acts are being raised (in value), repentance can be of benefit, prayer can be heard, conditions are peaceful and the pens (of the two angels) are in motion (to record the actions). Hasten towards (virtuous) actions before the change of age (to oldness), lingering illness or snatching death (overtakes you). Certainly, death will

end your enjoyments, mar your pleasures and remove your objectives. It is an unwanted visitor, an invincible adversary and an unaccounting killer. Its ropes have entrapped you, its evils have surrounded you, its arrowheads have aimed at you, its sway over you is great, its oppression on you is continuous and the chance of its missing you is remote.

Very soon you will be overwhelmed with the gloom of its shades, the severity of its illness, the darkness of its distresses, the nonsense utterances of its pangs, the grief of its destruction, the darkness of its encompassment and the unwholesomeness of its taste. It will seem as if it has come to you all of a sudden, silenced those who were whispering to you, separated your group, destroyed your doings, devastated your houses and altered your successors to distribute your estate among the chief relatives, who did not give you any benefit, or the grieved near ones who could not protect (you), or those rejoicers who did not lament (you).

Therefore, it is upon you to strive, make effort, equip yourself, get ready and provide yourself from the place of provision. And let not the life of this world deceive you as it deceived those before you among the past people and by-gone periods—those who extracted its milk, benefited from its neglectfulness, passed a long time and turned its new things into old (by living long). Their abodes turned into graves and their wealth into inheritable estate. They do not know who came to them (at their graves) ; do not pay heed to those who weep over them, and do not respond to those who call them. Therefore, beware of this world as it is treacherous, deceitful and cheating, it gives and takes back, covers with clothes and uncovers. Its pleasure does not last, its hardship does not end and its calamity does not stop.

A part of the same sermon about ascetics

They are from among the people of this world but are not its people, because they remain in it as though they do not belong to it. They act herein on what they observe and hasten here in (to avoid) what they fear. Their bodies move among the people of the next world. They see that the people of this world attach importance to the death of their bodies but they themselves attach more importance to the death of the hearts of

those who are living.

* * * * *

SERMON 229

Amīr al-mu'minīn delivered this sermon at Dhiqār on his way to Baṣrah, and the historian al-Wāqidī has mentioned it (in Kitāb al-Jamal) .

About the Holy Prophet

The Prophet manifested whatever he was commanded and conveyed the messages of his Lord. Consequently, Allāh repaired through him the cracks, joined through him the slits and created (through him) affection among kin although they bore intense enmity in (their) chests and deep-seated rancour in (their) hearts.

* * * * *

SERMON 230

‘Abdullāh ihn Zama‘ah who was one of the followers of Amīr al-mu'minīn came to him during his Caliphate to ask for some money when Amīr al-mu'minīn said:

This money is not for me nor for you, but it is the collective property of the Muslims and the acquisition of their swords. If you had taken part with them in their fighting you would have a share equal to theirs, otherwise the earning of their hands cannot be for other than their mouths.

* * * * *

SERMON 231

**On Ja‘dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzūmī’s ¹
inability to deliver a sermon.**

About speaking the truth

Know that the tongue is a part of a man’s body. If the man desists, speech will not cooperate with him and when he dilates, speech will not give him time to stop. Certainly, we are the masters of speaking. Its veins are fixed in us and its branches are hanging over us.

Know that — may Allāh have mercy on you — you are living at a time when those who speak about right are few, when tongues are loath to utter the truth and those who stick to the right are humiliated. The people of this time are engaged in disobedience. Their youths are wicked, their old men are sinful, their learned men are hypocrites, and their speakers are sycophants. Their youngs do not respect their elders, and their rich men do not support the destitute.

* * * * *

SERMON 232

Causes for difference in the features and traits of people.

Dhi‘lib al-Yamāmī has related from Aḥmad ibn Qutaybah, and he from ‘Abdullāh ibn Yazīd and he from Mālik ibn Diḥyah who said, “We were with Amīr

¹ Once Amīr al-mu‘minīn asked his nephew (sister’s son) Ja‘dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzūmī to deliver a sermon, but when he rose for speaking his tongue faltered and he could utter nothing, whereupon Amīr al-mu‘minīn ascended the pulpit to speak and delivered a long sermon out of which a few sentences have been recorded here by as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī.

**al-mu'minīn when discussion arose about the
differences of men (in features and conduct) and then
Amīr al-mu'minīn said":**

They differ among themselves because of the sources ¹ of their clay

¹ Amīr al-mu'minīn has ascribed the differences in features and characters of people to the differences in the clay from which they are created and according to which their features are shaped and the skeletons of their characters are formed. Therefore, to the extent that their clay of origin is akin, their mental and imaginative tendencies too will be similar and to the extent by which they differ, there will be a difference in their inclinations and tendencies. By origins of a thing are meant those things on which its coming into existence depends, but they should not be its cause. The word “*ṭīn*” is the plural of “*ṭīnah*” which means origin or basis. Here “*ṭīnah*” means semen which after passing through various stages of development emerges in the human shape. Its origin means those constituents from which those items are created which help in the formation of semen. Thus, by saltish, sweet, soft or hard soil the reference is to these elementary constituents. Since those elementary constituents carry different properties the semen growing out of them will also bear different characteristics and propensities which will (eventually) show forth in the differences in features and conduct of those borne in it.

Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written (in *Shariḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.13, p.19) that “origins of *ṭīnah*” implies those preservative factors which are different in their properties as Plato and other philosophers have held. The reason for calling them “origins of *ṭīnah*” is that they serve as an asylum for the human body and prevent the elements from diffusion. Just as the existence of a thing hinges on its basis, in the same way the existence of this body which is made up of elements depends on preservative factors. So long as the preservative factor exists the body is also safe from disruption and disintegration and the elements too are immune to diffusion and dispersal. When it leaves the body the elements also get dispersed.

According to this explanation Amīr al-mu'minīn's words would mean that Allāh has created different original factors among whom some are vicious and some are virtuous, some are weak and some are strong, and every person will act according to his original factor. If there is similarity in the inclinations of two persons it is because their original factors are similar, and if their tendencies differ it is because their original factors do not have any

(from which they have been created). This is because they are either from saltish soil or sweet soil or from rugged earth or soft earth. They resemble each other on the basis of the affinity of their soil and differ according to its difference. Therefore, sometimes a person of handsome features is weak in intelligence, a tall statured person is of low courage, a virtuous person is ugly in appearance, a short statured person is far-sighted, a good-natured person has an evil trait, a person of perplexed heart has bewildering mind and a sharp-tongued person has a wakeful heart.

SERMON 233

**Spoken when Amīr al-mu'minīn was busy in the funeral
ablution (ghusl) of the Holy Prophet and shrouding him**

May my father and my mother shed their lives for you. O' Messenger of Allāh ! With your death the process of prophethood, revelation and heavenly messages has stopped, which had not stopped at the death of

similarity. But this conclusion is not correct because Amīr al-mu'minīn's words do not only refer to differences in conduct and behaviour but also of features and shape and the differences of features and shape cannot be the result of differences in original factors.

In any case, whether the original factors are the cause of differences in features and conduct or the elementary constituents are the cause, these words appear to lead to the negation of volition and to prove the compulsion (of destiny) in human actions, because if man's capacity for thinking and acting is dependent on "*ṭīnah*" then he would be compelled to behave himself in a fixed way on account of which he would neither deserve praise for good acts nor be held blame worthy for bad habits. But this hypothesis is incorrect because it is well established that just as Allāh knows everything in creation after its coming into being, in the same way He knew it before its creation. Thus, He knew what actions man would perform of his free will and what he would leave. Therefore, Allāh gave him capacity to act according to his free will, and created him from a suitable "*ṭīnah*". This *ṭīnah* is not the cause of his actions so as to snatch away from him his free will but the meaning of creating from suitable *ṭīnah* is that Allāh does not by force stand in man's way but allows him to tread the path he wants to tread of his own free will.

others (prophets). Your position with us (members of your family) is so special that your grief has become a source of consolation (to us) as against the grief of all others; your grief is also common so that all Muslims share it equally. If you had not ordered endurance and prevented us from bewailing, we would have produced a store of tears and even then the pain would not have subsided, and this grief would not have ended, and they would have been too little of our grief for you. But this (death) is a matter that cannot be reversed nor is it possible to repulse it. May my father and my mother die for you; do remember us with Allāh and take care of us.

* * * * *

SERMON 234

In ¹ this sermon Amīr al-mu'minīn has related his own condition

¹ Since the commencement of prophethood, the Prophet remained in Mecca for thirteen years. For him, this period was of the severest oppression and destitution. The unbelievers of the Quraysh had closed all the doors of livelihood upon him, and had left no deficiency in inflicting hardships upon him, so much so that in order to take his life they began contriving how to do away with him. Forty of their nobles assembled in the hall of audience (*Dār an-Nadwah*) for consultation, and decided that one individual should be picked out from every tribe and they should jointly attack him. In this way, Banū Hāshim would not dare to face all the tribes, and the matter would quieten down on the payment of blood price. To give a practical shape to this scheme, these people sat in ambush near the house of the Prophet on the night of the first of *Rabī' al-awwal*, so that when the Prophet slept in his bed he would be attacked. On this side the preparation for killing him was complete, and on the other side Allāh informed him of all the intrigues of the Quraysh unbelievers and commanded him to make 'Alī (p.b.u.h.) sleep on his bed and himself to immigrate to Medina. The Prophet sent for 'Alī (p.b.u.h.), and disclosing to him his plan, said: “ ‘Alī, you lie on my bed.” Amīr al-mu'minīn enquired: “ ‘O’ Messenger of Allāh, will your life be saved *by* my sleeping here?” The Prophet said: “Yes.” Hearing this Amīr al-mu'minīn performed a prostration in thanks-giving and, exposing himself fully to the danger, lay on the Prophet's bed while the

after the Prophet's immigration till his meeting with him.

I began following the path adopted by the Prophet and treading on the lines of his remembrance till I reached al-‘Arj.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: Amīr al-mu‘minīn’s words ‘*fa aṭa’u dhikrahu*’ constitute the highest forms of brevity and eloquence. He means to say that he was being given news about the Prophet from the commencement of his setting out till he reached this place, and he has expressed this sense in this wonderful expression.

* * * * *

Prophet left from the rear door. The Quraysh unbelievers were peeping and getting ready for the attack but Abū Lahab said: “It is not proper to attack in the night because there are women and children also in the house. When morning dawns you attack him, but keep watch during night that he should not move anywhere.” Consequently, they kept their eyes on the bed throughout the night and soon, on the appearance of the dawn, proceeded forward stealthily. Hearing the sound of their footsteps, Amīr al-mu‘minīn removed the covering from his face and stood up. The Quraysh gazed at him with stretched eyes as to whether it was an illusion or fact. After making sure that it was ‘Alī they enquired, “Where is Muḥammad?” and ‘Alī replied, “Did you entrust him to me, that now you are asking me?” They had no reply to this. Men ran to chase him but found footprints only up to the cave of Thawr. Beyond that there were neither footprints nor any sign of hiding in the cave. They came back bewildered while the Prophet after staying in the cave for three days left for Medina. Amīr al-mu‘minīn passed these three days in Mecca, returned to the people their properties lying in trust with the Prophet and set off towards Medina to join the Prophet. Upto al-‘Arj which is a place between Mecca and Medina, he kept getting news about the Prophet and he continued his anxious march in his search till he met the Prophet at Qubā on the twelfth of *Rabī‘ al-awwal*, and entered Medina with him. (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *at-Taḥsīn*, vol.9, pp. 148—151; *at-Tārīkh*, vol.1, pp.1232—1234; Ibn Sa’d, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.1, Part 1, pp.153—154; Ibn Hishām, *as-Sīrah*, vol.2, pp.124—128; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vol.4, p.25; al-Kāmil, vol.2, pp.101—104; Ibn Kathīr, *at-Taḥsīn*, vol.2, pp.302—303; *at-Tārīkh*, vol.3, pp.180—181; Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd, vol.13, pp.303—306; as-Suyūṭī, *ad-Durr al-manthūr*, vol.3, pp.179—180; al-‘Allāmah al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol.19, pp.28—103).

SERMON 235

About collecting provision for the next world while in this world and performing good acts before death

Perform (good) acts while you are still in the vastness of life, the books are open (for recording of actions), repentance is allowed, the runner away (from Allāh) is being called and the sinner is being given hope (of forgiveness) before the (light of) action is put off, time expires, life ends, the door for repentance is closed and angels ascend to the sky.

Therefore, a man should derive benefit from himself for himself, from the living for the dead, from the mortal for the lasting and from the departer for the stayer. A man should fear Allāh while he is given age to live upto his death, and is allowed time to act. A man should control his self by the rein and hold it with its bridle, thus by the rein he should prevent it from disobedience towards Allāh, and by the bridle he should lead it towards obedience to Allāh.

* * * * *

SERMON 236

About the two arbitrators (Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ) and disparagement of the people of Syria (ash-Shām).

Rude, low people and mean slaveṣ. They have been collected from all sides and picked up from every pack. They need to be taught the tenets (of Islam), disciplined, instructed, trained, supervised and led by the hand. They are neither *muhājirūn* (immigrants from Mecca), nor *anṣār* (helpers of Medina) nor those who made their dwellings in the abode (in Medina) and in belief.

Look! They have chosen for themselves one who is nearest of all of them to what they desire, while you have chosen one who is nearest to what you dislike. You may certainly recall that the other day ‘Abdullāh ibn Qays (Abū Mūsā) was saying : ‘ ‘It is a mischief, therefore, cut away your bow-string and sheathe your swords.’’ If he was right (in what he said) then he was wrong in marching (with us) without being forced, but if he was lying then he should be viewed with suspicion. Therefore, send ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās to face ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. Make use of these days and surround the borders of Islam. Do you not see that your cities are being attacked and your prowess is being aimed at?

* * * * *

SERMON 237

**Amīr al-mu’minīn describes herein the members
of the Prophet’s family**

They are life for knowledge and death for ignorance. Their forbearance tells you of their knowledge, and their silence of the wisdom of their speaking. They do not go against right nor do they differ (among themselves) about it. They are the pillars of Islam and the asylums of (its) protection. With them right has returned to its position and wrong has left its place and its tongue is severed from its root. They have understood the religion attentively and carefully, not by mere heresy or from relaters, because the relaters of knowledge are many but its understanders are few.

* * * * *

SERMON 238

When ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān was surrounded, ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās brought a letter to Amīr al-mu’minīn from ‘Uthmān in which he expressed the desire that Amīr al-mu’minīn should leave for his estate Yanbu‘ so that the proposal that was being

mooted out for him to become caliph should subside. ‘Uthmān had this request earlier also. Upon this Amīr al-mu’minīn said to Ibn al-‘Abbās:

O’ Ibn al-‘Abbās! ‘Uthmān just wants to treat me like the water-drawing camel so that I may go forward and backward with the basket. Once he sent me word that I should go out then sent me word that I should come back. Now, again he sends me word that I should go out. By Allāh, I continued protecting him till I feared lest I become a sinner.

* * * * *

SERMON 239

**Exhorting his men to jihād and asking
them to refrain from seeking ease**

Allāh seeks you to thank Him and assigns to you His affairs. He has allowed you time in the limited field (of life) so that you may vie with each other in seeking the reward (of Paradise). Therefore, tight up your girdles and wrap up the skirts. High courage and dinners do not go together. Sleep causes weakness in the big affairs of the day and (its) darkness obliterates the memories of courage.

* * * * *

*Allāh may bless our master Muḥammad, the Prophet,
and his descendants who are lamps of darkness
and trustworthy support, and may bestow
peace (upon them) abundantly
and profusely.*