

NAHJ
AL-BALĀGHĀH

SELECTION FROM SERMONS,
LETTERS AND SAYINGS

OF

AMIR AL-MU'MININ, 'ALI
IBN ABI TĀLIB

Selected and Compiled by:

as-Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn al-Husayn
ar-Radi al-Musawi

Translated by:
Syed Ali Raza

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FOREWORD

We have made up our mind, with the power and strength of Allah, to start the printing of the first part of the English translation of *Nahj al-balāghah*.

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 Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, and a special reference to the book (*Nahj al-balāghah*) and the biography of its compiler as-Sayyid ash-Sharif ar-Radi, may Allah 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 Allah, the introduction will be completed in the near future to be attached to the first volume, and that the technical indexes will be printed with the third and final volume.

Finally, we seek guidance and success from Allah, 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)

21/7/1399

16/6/1979

Tehran, IRAN.

**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE MOST COMPASSIONATE,
THE MERCIFUL.**

*Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all beings;
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
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,
who are immune from Thy wrath
and have never gone astray.*

*O Allah! send your blessings to the head of
your messengers and the last of
your prophets Muhammad,
and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your
prophets and envoys.*

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

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

TRANSLITERATION

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>
ء	'	ل	l
ب	b	م	m
ت	t	ن	n
ث	th	و	w
ج	j	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ي	y
خ	kh	ة	ah
د	d		
ذ	dh		
ر	r		
ز	z		
س	s		
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		
ط	ṭ		
ظ	ẓ		
ع	‘		
غ	gh		
ف	f		
ق	q		
ك	k		

			<i>Long Vowels</i>
		ا	ā
		و	ū
		ي	ī
			<i>Short Vowels</i>
		ا	a
		و	u
		ي	i

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PART ONE

NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

PREFACE

**By the compiler of Nahj al-balāghah,
al-`Allamah ash-Sharif ar-Radi**



***In the Name of Allah, the Merciful
the Compassionate.***

So now, praise is due to Allah who has held praise as the price of His bounties, protection against His retribution, pathway to His paradises and means for multiplication of His good treatment, and blessings be on his Messenger, the Prophet of Mercy, the torch of the people, the chosen one from the origin of greatness and family of long-standing honours, the plantation of all-engrossing glory and the branch of sublimity full of fruits and foliage, and on the members of his family who are lanterns of darkness, protection of the peoples, brilliant minarets of religion and high standards of greatness, Allah may shower upon them all blessings befitting their distinction as reward for their actions and suitable to the chastity of their lineage so long as the morning dawns and the stars twinkle.

In my early age at the dawn of youth I commenced writing a book on the characteristics of the Imams covering the account of their virtues and masterpieces of their utterances. The purpose of the compilation was stated by me in the beginning of the book. Therein I completed the portion relating to the account of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali (peace be upon him) but I could not complete that part concerning the other Imams due to impediments of the time and obstacles of the days. I divided the book into several chapters and sections, in a manner for its last section to comprise whatever had been related to `Ali's (p. b. u. h.) short utterances such as counsels, maxims arid, proverbs but not long lectures and detailed discourses.

A number of my friends and brothers-in-faith, while wondering at its delicate and blossoming expressions, admired the contents of this particular section, and desired me to complete a book which should cover all the forms of the utterances of Amir almu'minin, including diverse materials such as lectures, letters, counsels, ethics, etc., as they were convinced that the entire proceedings would comprise wonders and surprises of eloquence and rhetorics, brilliant jewels of Arabic language and shining expressions about faith; collected in any other work, nor found together in any other book, because Amir al-mu'minin was the fountain of eloquence and the source of rhetorics. Through him the hidden delicacies of eloquence and rhetorics came to light, and from him were learnt its principles and rules. Every speaker and orator had to tread on his footprints and every eloquent preacher availed of his utterances.

Even then none could equal him and so the credit for being the first and foremost remained with him, because his utterances are those that carry the reflection of Divine knowledge and savour of the Prophet's utterance. Accordingly, I acceded to their request as I knew that it meant great reward, handsome reputation and a treasure of recompense.

The object of this compilation is to bring forth Amir almu'minin's greatness and superiority in the art of rhetorics, in addition to his countless qualities and innumerable distinctions, and to show that he had risen to the highest pinnacle of this attainment; was singular among all those predecessors whose utterances are quoted here and there, whereas his own utterances are such an on-rushing stream that its flow cannot be encountered and such a treasure of delicacies that cannot be matched. Since I proudly trace my descent from him I have a pleasure of quoting a couplet of al-Farazdaq:

"These are my forefathers O ' Jarir."

When we get together, can you claim forth their equals?¹

In my view Amir al-mu'minin's utterances are divisible in three categories; firstly Sermons and Decrees, secondly Letters and Communications and thirdly Maxims and Counsels, Allah willing I have decided to compile first the Sermons, then Letters, and finally the Maxims and Counsels, whilst proposing a separate Chapter for each category, leaving blank pages in between each so that if anything has been left out and becomes handy afterwards it may be inserted therein, whereas any utterance which is routine or in reply to some question or has some other aim does not fit in with any of my divisions should be included in the category for which it is most suitable or to which its subject matter is most akin. In this compilation, some sections and sentences have crept in whose arrangement savours of disarray and disorderliness. This is because I am only collecting the most representative brilliant utterances but do not wish to arrange or array them.

The characteristic of Amir al-mu'minin ² in which he is unparalleled and is shared by no one, is that his utterances on reclusion, piety, remembrance of Allah and admonition are such that when a person peruses them without bearing in mind that they are the words of a man who enjoys great and ruling position and who controls destinies of men he can have no doubt that it is the utterance of a man who has no interest other than reclusion and no activity save worshipping; who is confined to the interior of some house or the valley of some mountain where he hears no-thing save his own murmur and sees no one except himself. He would not believe that this is the utterance of one who plunges in battles with drawn sword severing heads and vanquishing the heroes and comes back with his sword dripping with blood and heart's fluid. And despite all this he is supreme among the recluse and chief among the saints. This distinction is one of those astonishing characteristics of Amir al-mu'minin with which he collected in himself contradictory qualities and patched together diverse greatnesses. I often mention these to my brethren-in-faith and put them wondering over it. It is indeed a subject to ponder over and think about.

Within this compilation, some repetition of words or subject matter are to be expected, as the utterances of Amir al-mu'minin have been known to be related in numerous forms. Sometimes it happened that a particular utterance was found in a particular form in a tradition and was taken down in that very form. There-after, the same utterance was found in some other tradition either with acceptable addition or in a more attractive style of expression. In such a case with a view to further the object of compilation and to preserve the beautiful utterance from being lost it was decided to repeat it elsewhere. It has also happened that a particular utterance had appeared earlier but due to remoteness it has been entered again. This is through omission, not by intent.

In spite of all this I do not claim that I have collected Amir al-mu'minin's utterances from all sources and that no single sentence of any type or construction has been left out. In fact I do not rule out the possibility that whatever has been left out might be more than what has been collected, and what has been in any knowledge and use is far less than what has remained beyond my reach. My task was to strive to the best of my capacity and it was Allah's part to make the way easy and guide me to the goal; Allah may will so.

Having completed my work, both in the collection and compilation of this manuscript; *Nahj al-balāghah*, the pathway of rhetoric would be the appropriate title of the book, in that it would open the doors of eloquence for the reader and shorten its approach for him; the scholar and the student would meet their needs from it while the rhetoricians as well as the recluse would find their objectives in it as well. In this book would be found a wonderful discussion on Allah's One-ness, Justness and His being free from body and form, that would quench every thirst (for learning), provide cure for every malady (of un-belief) and remove every doubt. I seek from Allah succour, protection against straying, correctness of action and His assistance. I seek His protection against mistakes of heart before mistakes of tongue and against mistakes of speech before mistakes of action. He is my Reliance and He is the best Trustee.

NOTES

PREFACE

1. al-Farazdaq whose name was Hammâm ibn Ghâlib belonged to the tribe of Bani Dârim and was a notable poet. He was generally at loggerheads with another Arab poet named Jarir ibn `Atiyyah and they showed their merit only in mutual abuse and boasting over each other. The quoted couplet of al-Farazdaq is a link from that chain, wherein he addresses Jarir saying "My forefathers were such as you have just heard, now you come forward with what your forefathers were, and if there were any one like mine, name them before all of us." Reciting this couplet about his own forefathers as-Sayyid ar-Radi challenges every one to bring forth their like, if any. al-Farazdaq had addressed only Jarir but its quotation here has made it general and universal when its addressee is no more one single individual, but every person can consider himself to be its addressee. Despite this generality and universality the challenge to "name their like" remains unresponded like the Qur'anic challenge "then bring forth its Like."

as-Sayyid ar-Radi has pointed at this relationship and distinction at such an appropriate moment that there can be no better occasion, because the greatness of the personality (namely Amir al-mu'minin) through whom he claims pride has already been mentioned and eyes have stood dazzled at the brilliance of his status while mind has acknowledged the sublimity of his position. Now hearts can easily be made to bow before the height and greatness of this individual who bears relationship to him. Thus at the moment when heart and mind were already inclined as-Sayyid ar-Radi's eloquence-conscious eyes turned the sight towards himself as he was the ray of the sun whose abundant light dazzles the eye, and a scion of the same lineal tree whose root is in the earth and whose branch extends up to the sky. Now who is there who would remain unaffected by this relationship and distinction and refuse to acknowledge his greatness and sublimity?

2. In the World such persons are rarely found in whom besides one or two virtuous qualities other qualities might also attain prominence, much less the convergence of all contradictory qualities, because every temperament is not suited for the development of every quality, each quality has a peculiar tempo and each virtue needs a particular climate, and they are appropriate only for such qualities or virtues with which they accord, but where there is contradiction instead of harmony the natural tendencies act as obstacles and do not allow any other quality to grow. For example; generosity and bountifulness demand that a person should possess the feeling of pity and God-fearing so that on seeing anyone in poverty or want his heart would rend, and his feelings would be disturbed at other's tribulations while the dictates of bravery and fighting require that instead of pity and compassion there should be the passion of blood-shed and killing, prompting the person at every moment to enter into scuffle, ready to kill or be killed. These two qualities differ so widely that it is not possible to fuse the delicacies of generosity into the stiff manifestations of bravery just as bravery cannot be expected from Hātim nor generosity from Rustam. But the personality of `Ali ibn Abi Tālib (p.b.u.h.) showed full accord with every greatness and complete harmony with every accomplishment, and there was no good attribute or accomplishment which he lacked, nor any robe of greatness or beauty which did not fit his body. Thus the contradictory qualities of generosity and bravery were found in him side by side. If he rained like the cloud in generosity, he also fought bravely standing firm as a mountain. Thus his generosity and liberty of nature was of a degree that even during days of want and starvation whatever he earned as the wage of his day's toil its major part was distributed among the poor and the starving, and he would never allow a beggar to return disappointed from his door, so much so that even when in the battle field the enemy ask-

ed him his sword he threw it before him being confident of the prowess of his naked arm.

An Urdu couplet says:

The unbeliever depends on his sword but the believer fights even without it.

And his bravery and courage was such that the onslaught of armies could not shake the firmness of his foot with the result that he achieved success in every encounter and even the bravest fighter could not save his life in an encounter with him. Thus Ibn Qutaybah writes in *al-Ma`ārif*, "Whomever he encountered was prostrated." The heartless nature of the brave is not wont to thinking or pondering nor do they have anything to do with foresight or fore judging but `Ali (p.b.u.h.) had the quality of thinking of the highest degree. Thus, ash-Shāfi`i said as follows:

What can I say about a man in whom three qualities existed with three other qualities that were never found together in any other man — Generosity with want, Bravery with sagacity and Knowledge with practical achievements.

It was the result of this proper thinking and correct judgement that when after the death of the Prophet some people advised him to fight and promised to enlist warriors for him he rejected this advice, although on such occasions even a slight support is enough to encourage the heartless brave, yet `Ali (p.b.u.h.) far-sighted mind at once foresaw that if battle was raged at that moment the voice of Islam would be submerged under the clutter of swords, and then even if success was achieved it would be said that the position was gained by dint of sword and that there was no right for it. Thus, by withholding his sword on the one hand he provided protection to Islam and on the other saved his own right from the imputation of bloodshed.

When the veins are full of daring blood and the bosom full of flames of anger and wrath it is extremely difficult to curb the passion of vengeance by adopting the course of forgiving and, despite authority and power, to pardon and overlook. But `Ali's (p.b.u.h.) metal used to shine on such occasions when his forgiving nature would accommodate even his blood-thirsty foes. Thus, at the end of the Battle of Jamal he made a general proclamation that no one who flees away from the field or seeks our protection would be molested and he let go without any punishment even such enemies as Marwān ibn Hakam and `Abdullah ibn Zubayr. And the treatment that he meted out to `A'ishah matchless manifestation of his nobility and high character — is that in spite of her open enmity and rebellion he sent with her women in men's garb to escort her to Medina.

By giving his own personal malice the garb of fundamental differences man not only deceives others but also tries to keep himself under deception, and in these conditions such a delicate situation arises that a man fails to distinguish and separate his personal malice from a fundamental difference but easily mixing them together considers that he has followed the Command of Allah, and in this way he satisfies his passion for vengeance as well. But Amir al-mu'minin's discerning eyes never got deceived nor did they willingly deceive themselves. Thus, on an occasion when after prostrating the opponent he placed himself on his bosom the vanquished opponent spat on his face. As man his rage should have risen and his hand should have moved quicker but instead of being enraged he got off from the man's bosom lest his action would be tarnished by personal feeling, and slew him only after the anger had subsided.

There is nothing in common between combat and encounter and reclusion and God-fearing because one shows valour and courage while the other supplication and submission. But Amir al-mu'minin was a unique combination of both these qualities as his hands that were bound in devotion were equally active in the battle-field, and side by side with relaxing in seclusion for devotion he was a common visitor of the field of action. The scene of the Night of Harir puts human wit in astonishment and wonder when closing his eyes to the bloody action around he spread his prayer cloth and engaged himself in prayer with full peace of mind and heart while arrows were darting off sometimes over his head and sometimes from his right or left. But he remained engaged in Allah's remembrance without any fear or apprehension. After finishing he again cast his hand on the sword's handle and the fierce battle that then followed in unparalleled in history. The position was that on all sides there was such hue and cry and fleeing activity that even voices falling on the ears could not be discerned. Of course, after every moment or so his own call of *Allahu Akbar* rose in the atmosphere and resounded in the ears, and every such call meant death of a foe. Those who counted these calls of *tabkir* recorded their number as five hundred and twenty three.

The taste for learning and God-knowing does not combine with material activity but Amir al-mu'minin adorned the meetings of learning and scholarship along with war-like pursuits, and he watered the field of Islam with springs of learning and truth along with shedding streams of blood (in battles).

Where there is perfection of learning, then even if there is not complete absence of action, there must no doubt exist shortness of action, but Amir al-mu'minin treaded the field of knowledge and action equally, as has been already shown in ash-Shāfi'i's verse.

Examples of harmony in utterance and action are quite rare but Amir al-mu'minin's action preceded his utterance, as he himself says:

O' people I do not exhort you to any action but that I myself first proceed towards it before you and do not desist you from any matter but that I first desist from it myself.

As soon as we think of a recluse and a pious man we visualize a face full of frowns because for piety severity of temper and hardness of face are inseparable so much so that the thought of a smile on the lips of a pious man is regarded as a sin. But despite extreme piety and self-denial Amir al-mu'minin always had such appearance that his light temper and brightness of face was apparent from his looks and his lips always bore playful smile. He never showed frowns on his fore-head like the dry recluse, so much so that when people could not find any defect in him this very lightness of temper was taken to be his fault, while hard temper and bitter face was held to be a virtue.

If a man possesses cheerful heart and joyous temper he cannot command authority over others; but Amir al-mu'minin's cheerful face was so full of awe and dignity that no eye could face it. Once Mu'awiyah tauntingly said "Allah bless `Ali. He was a man of cheerful taste," then Qays ibn Sa'd retorted. "By Allah despite cheerful disposition and entertaining countenance he was more awe-inspiring than a hungry lion and this awe was due to his piety not like your awe over the non-descripts of Syria."

Where there is rule and authority there is also a crowd of servants and workers, checks of grandeur and eminence with equipment of pageantry but Amir al-mu'minin's period of rule was an example of the highest simplicity. In him people saw only a tattered turban in place of a Royal Crown, patched apparel in place of the regal robes and the floor of earth in place of the ruler's throne. He never liked grandeur and pageantry nor allowed show of external grandiosity. Once he was passing on a horse back when Harb ibn Shurahbil started walking with him and began talking. Then Amir al-mu'minin said to him, "Get back because walking on foot with me by one like you is mischievous for the ruler (me) and an insult to the believer (you).

In short he was such a versatile personality in whom numerous contradictory qualities had joined together and all the good attributes were centered in their full brightness as though his oneself was a collection of several selves and each self was an astounding portrait of achievement which showed forth the delineation of distinction in its untainted form, and on whose accomplishment one wonders with bewilderment.

A Persian couplet says:

*The figure of my beloved is so beautiful that when I cast my glance on
the body from head to foot.*

*Every spot thereof calls my attention claiming to be the most en-
chanting.*

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NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

PART ONE

SELECTION FROM THE SERMONS OF
AMIR AL-MU'MININ `ALI IBN ABI
TALIB (P.B.U.H.) 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 1

In this sermon he recalls the creation of Earth and Sky and the birth of Adam.

Praise is due to Allah whose worth cannot be described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by calculators and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the diving of understanding cannot reach; He for whose description no limit has been laid down, no eulogy exists, no time is ordained and no duration is fixed. He brought forth creation through His Omnipotence, dispersed winds through His Compassion, and made firm the shaking earth with rocks.

The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him, the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His One-ness, the perfection of believing in His One-ness is to regard Him Pure, and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and

everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute. Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and who recognises His like regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognises parts for Him; and who recognises parts for Him mistook Him; and who mistook Him pointed at Him; and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him.

Whoever said in what is He, held that He is contained; and whoever said on what is He held He is not on something else. He is a Being but not through phenomenon of coming into being. He exists but not from non-existence. He is with everything but not in physical nearness. He is different from everything but not in physical separation. He acts but without connotation of movements and instruments. He sees even when there is none to be looked at from among His creation. He is only One, such that there is none with whom He may keep company or whom He may miss in his absence.

The Creation of the Universe

He initiated creation most initially and commenced it originally, without undergoing reflection, without making use of any experiment, without innovating any movement, and without experiencing any aspiration of mind. He allotted all things their times, put together their variations gave them their properties, and determined their features knowing them before creating them, realizing fully their limits and confines and appreciating their propensities and intricacies.

When Almighty created the openings of atmosphere, expanse of firmament and strata of winds, He flowed into it water whose waves were stormy and whose surges leapt one over the other. He loaded it on dashing wind and breaking typhoons, ordered them to shed it back (as rain), gave the wind control over the vigour of the rain, and acquainted it with its limitations. The wind blew under it while water flowed furiously over it.

Then Almighty created forth wind and made its movement sterile, perpetuate its position, intensified its motion and spread it far and wide. Then He ordered the wind to raise up deep waters and to intensify the waves of the oceans. So the wind churned it like the churning of curd and pushed it fiercely into the firmament throwing its front position on the rear and the stationary on the flowing till its level was raised and the surface was full of foam. Then Almighty raised the foam on to the open wind and vast firmament and made therefrom the seven skies and made the lower one as a stationary surge and the upper one as protective ceiling and a high edifice without any pole to support it or nail to hold it together. Then He decorated them with stars and the light of meteors and hung in it the shining sun and effulgent moon under the revolving sky, moving ceiling and rotating firmament.

The Creation of the Angels

Then He created the openings between high skies and filled them with all classes of His angels. Some of them are in prostration and do not kneel up. Others in kneeling position and do not stand up. Some of them are in array and do not leave their position. Others are extolling Allah and do not get tired. The sleep of the eye or the slip of wit or languor of the body or the effect of forgetfulness does not affect them.

Among them are those who work as trusted bearers of His message, those who serve as speaking tongues for His prophets and those who carry to and fro His orders and injunctions. Among them are the protectors of His creatures and guards of the doors of the gardens of Paradise. Among them are those also whose steps are fixed on earth but their necks are protruding into the skies, their limbs are getting out on all sides, their shoulders are in accord with the columns of the Divine Throne, their eyes are down cast before it, they have spread down their wings under it and they have rendered between themselves and all else curtains of honour and screens of power. They do not think of their Creator through image, do not impute to Him attributes of the created, do not confine Him within abodes

and do not point at Him through illustrations.

Description of the Creation of Adam

Allah collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay which He dripped in water till it got pure, and kneaded it with moisture till it became gluey. From it He carved an image with curves, joints, limbs and segments. He solidified it till it dried up for a fixed time and a known duration. Then He blew into it out of His Spirit whereupon it took the pattern of a human being with mind that governs him, intelligence which he makes use of, limbs that serve him, organs that change his position, sagacity that differentiates between truth and untruth, tastes and smells, colours and species. He is a mixture of clays of different colours, cohesive materials, divergent contradictories and differing properties like heat, cold, softness and hardness.

Then Allah asked the angels to fulfil His promise with them and to accomplish the pledge of His injunction to them by acknowledging Him through prostration to Him and submission to His honoured position. So Allah said :

"Be prostrate towards Adam and they prostrated except Iblis (Satan)."
(Qur'an, 2:34; 7:11;17:61;18:50; 20:116)

Self-importance withheld him and vice overcame him. So that he took pride in his own creation with fire and treated contemptuously the creation of clay. So Allah allowed him time in order to let him fully deserve His wrath, and to complete (man's) test and to fulfil the promise (He had made to Satan). Thus, He said:

"Verily you have been allowed time till the known Day." (Qur'an, 15:38;
38:81)

Thereafter, Allah inhabited Adam (p.b.u.h.) in a house where He made his life pleasant and his stay safe, and He cautioned him of Iblis and his enmity.

Then his enemy (Iblis) envied his abiding in Paradise and his contacts with the virtuous. So he changed his conviction into wavering and determination into weakness. He thus converted his happiness into fear and his prestige into shame. Then Allah offered to Adam (p.b.u.h.) the chance to repent, taught him words of His Mercy, promised him return to His Paradise and sent him down to the place of trial and procreation of progeny.

Allah chooses His Prophets

From his (Adam) progeny Allah chose prophets and took their pledge for his revelation and for carrying His message as their trust. In course of time many people perverted Allah's trust with them and ignored His position and took compeers along with Him. Satan turned them away from knowing Him and kept them aloof from His worship. Then Allah sent His Messengers and series of His prophets towards them to get them fulfil the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence namely the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, means of living that sustain them, deaths that make them die, ailments that turn them old and incidents that successively betake them.

Allah never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet deputed by Him, or a book sent down from Him or a binding argument or a standing plea. These Messengers were such that they did not feel little because of smallness of their number or of largeness of the number of their falsifiers. Among them was either a predecessor who would name the one to follow or the follower who had been introduced by the predecessor.

The Prophethood of Muhammad

In this way ages passed by and times rolled on, fathers passed away while sons took their places till Allah deputed Muhammad (peace be upon him and

his progeny) as His Prophet, in fulfilment of His promise and in completion of His Prophethood. His pledge had been taken from the Prophets, his traits of character were well reputed and his birth was honourable. The people of the earth at this time were divided in different parties, their aims were separate and ways were diverse. They either likened Allah with His creation or twisted His Names or turned to else than Him. Through Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) Allah guided them out of wrong and with his efforts took them out of ignorance.

Then Allah chose for Muhammad - peace be upon him and on his progeny, to meet Him, selected him for His own nearness, regarded him too dignified to remain in this world and decided to remove him from this place of trial. So He drew him towards Himself with honour. Allah may shower His blessing on him, and his progeny.

The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah

But the Prophet left among you the same which other Prophets left among their peoples, because Prophets do not leave them untended (in dark) without a clear path and a standing ensign, namely the Book of your Creator clarifying its permission and prohibitions, its obligations and discretion, its repealing injunctions and the repealed ones, its permissible matters and compulsory ones, its particulars and the general ones, its lessons and illustrations, its long and the short ones, its clear and obscure ones, detailing its abbreviations and clarifying its obscurities.

In it there are some verses whose knowledge ¹ is obligatory and others whose ignorance by the people is permissible. It also contains what appears to be obligatory according to the Book ² but its repeal is signified by the Prophet's action (*sunnah*) or that which appears compulsory according to the Prophet's action but the Book allows not following it. Or there are those which are obligatory in a given time but not so after that time. Its prohibitions also differ. Some are major regarding which there exists the

threat of fire (Hell), and others are minor for which there are prospects of forgiveness. There are also those of which a small portion is also acceptable (to Allah) but they are capable of being expanded.

In this very sermon he spoke about Hajj

Allah has made obligatory upon you the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to His sacred House which is the turning point for the people who go to it as beasts or pigeons go towards spring water. Allah the glorified made it a sign of their supplication before His Greatness and their acknowledgement of His Dignity. He selected from among His creation those who on listening to His call responded to it and testified His word. They stood in the position of His Prophets and resembled His angels who surround the Divine Throne securing all the benefits of performing His worship and hastening towards His promised forgiveness. Allah the glorified made it (His sacred House) an emblem for Islam and an object of respect for those who turn to it. He made obligatory its pilgrimage and laid down its claim for which He held you responsible to discharge it. Thus, Allah the glorified said :

. . . And (purely) for Allah, is incumbent upon mankind, the pilgrimage to the House, for those who can afford to journey thither. And whoever denieth then verily, Allah is Self-sufficiently independents of the worlds (Qur'an, 3:96).

1. "The foremost in religion (*din*) is His knowledge." The literal meaning of *din* is obedience, and its popular sense is code, whether literal sense is taken or the popular one, in either case, if the mind is devoid of any conception of Divinity, there would be no question of obedience, nor of following any code; because when there is no aim there is no point in advancing towards it; where there is no object in view there is no sense in making efforts to achieve it. Nevertheless, when the nature and guiding faculty of man bring him in contact with a superior Authority and his taste for obedience and impulse of submission subjugates him before a Deity, he finds himself bound by certain

limitations as against abject freedom of activity. These very limitations are *din* (Religion) whose point of commencement is knowledge of Allah and acknowledgement of His Being.

After pointing out the essentials of Divine knowledge Amir al-mu'minin has described its important constituents and conditions. He has held those stages of such knowledge which people generally regard as the point of highest approach to be insufficient. He says that its first stage is that with the natural sense of search for the unknown and the guidance of conscience or on hearing from the followers of religions an image of the Unseen Being known as Allah is formed in the mind. This image in fact is the forerunner of the obligation to thinking and reflection and to seeking His knowledge. But those who love idleness, or are under pressure of environment, do not undertake this search despite creation of such image and the image fails to get testified. In this case they remain deprived of Divine knowledge, and since their inaccess to the stage of testifying after the formation of image is by volition they deserve to be questioned about it. But one who is moved by the power of this image goes further and considers thinking and reflection necessary. In this way one reaches the next stage in the attainment of Divine knowledge, namely to search for the Creator through diversification of creation and species of creatures, because every picture is a solid and in-flexible guide to the existence of its painter and every effect to the action of its cause. When he casts his glance around himself he does not find a single thing which might have come into existence without the act of a maker so much so that he does not find the sign of a footstep without a walker nor a construction without a builder. How can he comprehend that this blue sky with the sun and the moon in its expanse and the earth with the exuberance of its grass and flowers could have come into existence without the action of a Creator. Therefore, after observing all that exists in the world and the regulated system of the entire creation no one can help concluding that there is a Creator for this world of diversities because existence cannot come out of non-existence, nor can existence sprout forth from nothingness.

The holy Qur'an has pointed to this reasoning thus:

... *What! about Allah is there any doubt, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?...* (14:10).

But this stage would also be insufficient if this testimony in favour of Allah is tarnished by belief in the divinity of some other deity.

The third stage is that His existence should be acknowledged along with belief in Unity and One-ness. Without this the testimony to Allah's existence cannot be complete because if more gods are believed in He would not be One whereas it is necessary that He should be One. The reason is that in case of more than one god the question would arise whether one of them created all this creation or all of them together. If one of them created it there should be some differentia to distinguish him otherwise he would be accorded preferential position without reason, which is unacceptable to the mind. If all have created it collectively then the position has only two forms; either he cannot perform his functions without the assistance of others or he is above the need for their assistance. The first case means his incapability and being in need of others while the other case means that they are several regular performers of a single act and the fallacy of both has already been shown. If we assume that all the gods performed the act of creation by dividing among themselves then, in this case all the creation will not bear the same relationship towards the creator since each creature will bear relationship only to its own creator whereas every creature should have one and the same relationship to all creators. This is because all the creation should have one and the same relationship to all the creators as all the created in their capacity to accept effect and all the creators in their capacity to produce effect should be similar. In short there is no way but to acknowledge Him as One because in believing in numerous creators there remains no possibility of the existence of any other thing, and destruction proves implicit for the earth, the sky and everything in creation. Allah the glorified has expassed this argument in the following words:

Had there been in (the heavens and the earth [other]) gods except Allah, they both had been in disorder.. . (Qur'an, 21:22).

The fourth stage is that Allah should be regarded free of all defects and deficiencies, and devoid of body, form, illustration, similarity, position of place or time, motion, stillness, incapability and ignorance because there can be no deficiency or defect in the perfect Being nor can anyone be deemed like Him because all these attributes bring down a being from the high position of the Creator to the low position of the created. That is why along with Unity, Allah has held purity from deficiency of equal importance.

Say: `He (Allah) is One (alone).

Allah, the needless.

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten.,

And there is none like unto Him' (Qur'an, 112:1-4).

Vision perceiveth Him not, and He perceiveth (all) vision; He is the Subtle, the All-aware (Qur'an, 6:104).

So coin ye not any similitudes to Allah; verily Allah knoweth (every-thing) and ye know not. (Qur'an, 16:74).

... Nothing whatsoever (is there) like the like of Him; and He (alone) is the All-hearing and the All-seeing. (Qur'an, 42:11).

The fifth stage of completing His Knowledge is that attributes should not be put in Him from outside lest there be duality in His One-ness, and deviating from its proper connotation Unity may fall in the labyrinth of one in three and three in one, because His Being is not a combination of essence and form so that attributes may cling to Him like smell in the flowers or brightness in the stars. Rather, He is the fountain head of all attributes and needs no medium for manifestation of His perfect Attributes. If He is named Omniscient it is because the signs of his knowledge are manifest. If He is called Omnipotent it is because every particle points to His Omnipotence and Activity, and if to Him is attributed the power to listen or to see it is because the cohesion of the entire creation and its administration cannot be done without hearing or seeing but the existence of these attributes in Him cannot be held to be in the same way as in the creation namely that He should be capable to know only after He acquires knowledge or He should be powerful and strong only after energy runs into His limbs because taking attributes as separate from His Being would connote duality and where there is duality unity disappears. That is how Amir al-mu'minin has rejected the idea of attributes being addition to His Being, presented Unity in its true significance, and did not allow Unity to be tainted with stains of multiplicity. This does not mean that adjectives cannot at all be attributed to Him, as this would be giving support to those who are groping in the dark abyss of negativism, although every nook and corner in the entire existence is brimming with His attributes and every particle of creation stands witness that He has knowledge, He is powerful, He hears, He sees. He nurtures under His care and allows growth under His mercy. The intention is that for Him nothing can be suggested to serve as an adjunct to Him, because His self includes attributes and His attributes connote His Self. Let us learn this very theme in the words of al-Imam Abu `Abdillah Ja`far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (p.b.u.h.) comparing it with the belief in Unity adopted by other religions and then appreciate who is the exponent of the true concept of Unity.

The Imam says :

Our Allah the Glorified, the Magnificent has ever had knowledge as His Self even though there was nothing to know, sight as His Self even though there was nothing to know, sight as His Self even though there was nothing to behold, hearing as His Self even though there was no-thing to hear, and Potent as His Self even though there was nothing to be under His Potent. When He created the things and the object of knowledge came into existence His knowledge became related to the known, hearing related to the heard, sight related to the seen, and potent related to its object. (*at-Tawhid* by ash-Shaykh as-Saduq, p.139)

This is the belief over which the Imams of the Prophet's family are unanimous, but the majority group has adopted a different course by creating the idea of differentiation between His Self and Attributes. ash-Shahristani says on page 42 of his book *Kitāb al-milal wan-niḥal*:

According to Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari Allah knows through (the attribute of) knowledge, is Powerful through activity, speaks through speech, hears through hearing and sees through sight.

If we regard attributes distinct from Self in this manner there would be two alternatives; either the attributes must have existed in Him from ever or they must have occurred later. In the first case we have to recognise as many eternal objects as the attributes which all will share with Him in being eternal, but "Allah is above what the people deem Him to have equals." In the second case in addition to subjecting Him to the alternations it would also mean that before the acquiring of the attributes He was neither silent, nor powerful, nor hearer nor beholder and this runs counter to the basic tenet of Islam.

... Allah hath decreed trade lawful and hath forbidden interest... (Qur'an, 2:275).

And when you have finished the prayer remember Allah standing, and sitting, and reacting, and when ye are secure (from danger) establish prayer . . . (Qur'an, 4:103).

O ye men! eat of what is in the earth lawful and good and follow not the foot-steps of Satan; for verily he is an open enemy unto you, (Qur'an, 2:168).

(And) say thou: 'I am only a man like you, it is revealed unto me that your god is but one God, therefore whosoever desirith to meet his Lord, let him do good deeds, and associate not any one in the worship of his Lord' (Qur'an, 18:110).

What! enjoin ye upon the people righteousness and ye forget your own selves? Yet ye read the scripture? What: do ye riot understand? (Qur'an, 2:44)

2. About the Qur'an Amir al-mu'minin says that it contains description of the permitted, and the forbidden acts such as "Allah has allowed sale and purchase but prohibited usury."

It clarifies obligatory and optional acts such as "when you have finished the prayer (of fear) remember Allah rising, sitting or lying and when you feel safe (from the enemy) then say the prayers (as usual)."

Here prayer is obligatory while other forms of remembering (Allah) are optional. It has repealing and repealed verses such as about the period of seclusion after husband's death "four months and ten days" or the repealed one such as "till one year without going out" which shows that this period of seclusion should be one year. In particular places it permits the forbidden such as "whoever is compelled without being wilfully wrongful or transgressor, commits no sins."

It has positive injunctions such "One should not add anyone with Allah in worship." It has particular and general injunctions. Particular is the one where the word shows generality but the sense is limited such as "I have made you superior over worlds." O' Bani Isra'il.

Here the sense of "Worlds," is confined to that particular time, al-though the word is general in its literal meaning. The general injunctions are one which is extensive in meaning such as "Allah has knowledge of every-thing." It has lessons and illustrations lessons such as "Allah caught him in the punishment of this world and the next and there is lesson in it."

So seized him Allah, with the chastisement in the hereafter, and the life before (it) (Qur'an, 79:25)

Verily in this there is a lesson unto him who feareth (Allah) (Qur'an, 79:26)

A kind word and pardon is better than charity that is followed by injury, and verily Allah is Self-sufficient, the Most forbearing. (Qur'an, 2:263)

And remember when We made a covenant with you and raised the `tūr` (the Mountain) above you (saying), `Hold ye fast that which We have bestowed upon you with the strength (of determination) and remember that which is therein so that you may guard (yourself) against evil.` (Qur'an, 2:63)

So we made it a lesson for (those of) their own times and for those (of their posterity) who came after them and an exhortation unto those who guard (themselves) against evil. (Qur'an, 2:66)

He it is Who fashioneth you in the wombs (of your mothers) as He liketh; There is no god but HE, the All-mighty, the All-wise. (Qur'an, 3:5)

Obedience and a fair word; but when the affair is determined then if they be true to Allah, it would certainly be better for them. (Qur'an, 47:21)

O` those who believe! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, and do not straiten them in order that ye may take a part of what ye have given, unless they are guilty of manifest lewdness; but deal kindly with them, and if ye hate them, it may be that ye hate a thing while Allah hath placed in it abundant good.(Qur'an, 4:19)

Say thou (unto the people of the Book), `Dispute ye with us about Allah; whereas He is our Lord and your Lord, and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; to Him (alone) we are (exclusively) loyal?` (Qur'an, 2:139)

"There is a lesson in it for him who fears Allah," and illustration such as "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a grain which grows seven ears each one of which bears hundred grains." It has unspecific and specific verses. Unspecific is one which has no limitation on specification such as "Recall when Moses told his people `Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow.` "

Specific is one where denotation is limited such as Allah says that "the cow should be such that it has neither been used for ploughing nor for irrigation fields." There is clear and obscure in it. Clear is that which has no intricacy such as "Verily Allah has sway over everything," while obscure is that whose meaning has complication such as "the Merciful (Allah) occupies the throne," whose apparent meaning gives the impression as if Allah is bodily sitting on the Throne although the intention

is to press His authority and control. In it there are brief injunctions such as "establish prayer" and those of deep meanings such as the verses about which says :

"That the sense is not known except to Allah and those immersed in knowledge." Then Amir al-mu'minin dilates upon this theme in a different style says that there are somethings in it which are necessary to know, such as "So know that there is no god but Allah" and there are others which are not necessary to know such as "*aliflām mim*" etc. It has also injunctions which have been repealed by the Prophet's action such as "As for your women who commit adultery get four male witnesses and if four witnesses do appear shut such women in the house till death ends their life." This punishment was current in early Islam but was later replaced by stoning in the case of married women. In it there are some injunctions which repealed the Prophet's action such as "Turn your face towards Masjid al-harām" by which the injunction for facing Bayt al-maqdis was repealed. It also contains injunctions which are obligatory only at a particular time after which their obligation ends, such as "when the call for prayer is made on Friday then hasten towards remembrance of Allah." It has also indicated grades of prohibitions as the division of sins into light and serious ones — light such as "Tell the believers to lower their eyes" and serious ones such as "whoever kills a Believer wilfully his award is to remain in Hell for ever." It also contains injunctions where a little performance is enough but there is scope for further performance such as "Read the Qur'ān as much as you easily can."

Verily your Lord, certainly is He the All-mighty, the All-merciful. (Qur'ān, 26:9)

Say thou (O' Our Prophet Muhammad) unto the believer men that they cast down their gaze and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; verily Allah is All-aware of what (all) ye do. (Qur'ān, 24:30)

Not equal are those of the believers who sit (holding back) other than those hurt, and those who strive in the way of Allah with their wealth and their selves (lives). Allah hath raised the strivers with their wealth and selves (lives), in rank above those sitting (holding back); Unto all (in faith) Allah hath promised good; but those who strive, He hath distinguished above those who sit (holding [by]) a great recompense. (Qur'ān, 4:95)

Verily, thy Lord knowest that thou standest up (in the Night Prayer) night two-third of the night, and (sometimes) half of it, and (sometimes) a third of it, and a group of those with thee; and Allah measureth (well) the

night and the day; Knoweth He that never can ye take (correct) account of it, so turneth He unto you (mercifully so recite ye whatever be easy (in the prayers) to be read of the Qur'an; Knoweth He that there may be among you sick, and others travelling in the earth seeking of the grace of Allah, and others fighting in the way of Allah, so recite ye as much as it can easily be done of it, and establish ye the (regular) prayers, and pay ye the (prescribed) poor-rate, and offer ye unto Allah a goodly loan; and whatsoever of good ye send on before hand for yourselves, ye will (surely) find it with Allah, that is the best and the greatest recompense; and seek ye the forgiveness of Allah; Verily, Allah is Oft forgiving, the Most Merciful. (Qur'an, 73:20)

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SERMON 2

Delivered on return from Şiffin Arabia before proclamation of Prophethood

I praise Allah seeking completion of His Blessing, submitting to His Glory and expecting safety from committing His sins. I invoke His help being in need of His Sufficiency (of protection). He whom He guides does not get astray, He with whom He is hostile gets no protection. He whom He supports does not remain needy. Praise is most weighty of all that is weighed and the most valuable of all that is treasured.

I stand witness that there is no god but Allah the One. He has no like. My testimony has been tested in its frankness, and its essence is our belief. We shall cling to it for ever till we live and shall store it facing the tribulations that overtake us because it is the foundation stone of Belief (*imān*) and the first step towards good actions and Divine pleasure. It is the means to keep Satan away.

I also stand witness that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) is His slave and His Prophet. Allah sent him with the illustrious religion,

effective emblem, written Book,¹ effulgent light, sparkling gleam and decisive injunction in order to dispel doubts, present clear proofs, administer warning through signs and to warn of punishments. At that time people had fallen in vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilegied, system had become topsy-turvy, openings were narrow, passage was dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed.

Allah was being disobeyed, Satan was given support and Belief had been forsaken. As a result the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house² with bad neighbours. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were in a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honoured.

**In the same sermon Amir al-mu'minin referred to Al an-Nabi
(the Household of the Holy Prophet) as under.**

They are the trustees of His secrets, shelter for His affairs, source of knowledge about Him, centre of His wisdom, valleys for His books and mountains of His religion. With them Allah straightened the bend of religion's back and removed the trembling of its limbs.

In the same Sermon he spoke about the hypocrites

They sowed vices, watered them with deception and harvested destruction. None in the Islamic community can be taken *at par* with the Progeny³ of the Prophet (Ālu Muhammad).

One who was under their obligation cannot be matched with them. They are the foundation of religion and pillar of Belief. The forward runner has to turn back to them while the follower has to overtake them. They possess the chief characteristics for vicegerency. In their favour exists the will and succession (of the Prophet). This is the time when right has returned to its owner and diverted to its centre of return.

1. The Preserved Record.

2. Good House means 'Mecca' while the bad neighbours mean the 'Unbelievers of Quraysh.'

3. About the Progeny of the Prophet Amir al-mu'minin has said that no person in the world can be brought *at par* with them, nor can any one be deemed their equal in sublimity, because the world is overladen with their obligations and has been able to secure eternal blessings only through their guidance. They are the corner stone and foundation of religion and the sustenance for its life and survival. They are such strong pillars of knowledge and belief that they can turn away the stormy flow of doubt and suspicion. They are such middle course among the paths of excess and backwardness that if some one goes far towards excess and exaggeration or falls behind then unless he comes back or steps forward to that middle course he cannot be on the path of Islam. They possess all the characteristics which give the superiority in the right for vicegerency and leadership. Consequently, no one else in the *ummah* enjoys the right of patronage and guardianship. That is why the Prophet declared them his vicegerents and successors. About will and succession the commentator Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazili writes that there can be no doubt about the vicegerency of Amir al-mu'minin but succession cannot imply succession in position although the Shi'ite sect has so interpreted it. It rather implies succession of learning. Now, if according to him succession is taken to imply succession in learning even he does not seem to succeed in achieving his object, because even by this interpretation the right of succeeding the Prophet does not devolve on any other person. When it is agreed that learning is the most essential requirement of *khilafah* (caliphate) because the most important functions of the Prophet's Caliph consist of dispensation of justice, solving problems of religious laws, clarifying intricacies and administration of religious penalties. If these functions are taken away from the Prophet's deputy his position will come down to that of a worldly ruler. He cannot be regarded as the pivot of religious authority. Therefore either we should keep governmental authority separate from Prophet's vicegerency or accept the successor of Prophet's knowledge to suit that position.

The interpretation of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid could be acceptable if Amir al-mu'minin had uttered this sentence alone, but observing that it was uttered soon after `Ali's (p.b.u.h.) recognition as Caliph and just after it the sentence "Right has returned to its owner" exists, this interpretation of his seems baseless. Rather, the Prophet's will cannot imply any other will except that for vicegerency and caliphate, and succession would imply not succession in property nor in knowledge because this was not an occasion to mention it here but it must mean the succession in the right leadership which stood proved as from Allah not only on the ground of kinship but on the ground of qualities of perfection.

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SERMON 3

Known as the Sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyah¹

Beware ! By Allah the son of Abu Quḥafah (Abu Bakr)² dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly upto me. I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it.

Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are feeble and the young grow old and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (on his death). I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throats. I watched the plundering of my inheritance till the first one went his way but handed over the Caliphate to Ibn al-Khattab after himself.

(Then he quoted al-A`sha's verse):

My days are now passed on the camel's back (in difficulty) while there were days (of ease) when I enjoyed the company of Jābir's brother Hayyan.³

It is strange that during his lifetime he wished to be released from the caliphate but he confirmed it for the other one after his death. No doubt these two shared its udders strictly among themselves. This one put the Caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses therefore. One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its rein the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown. Consequently, by Allah people got involved in recklessness, wickedness, unsteadiness and deviation.

Nevertheless, I remained patient despite length of period and stiffness of trial, till when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of Caliphate) in a group⁶ and regarded me to be one of them. But good Heavens! what had I to do with this "consultation"? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones? But I remained low when they were low and flew high when they flew high. One of them turned against me because of his hatred and the other got inclined the other way due to his in-law relationship and this thing and that thing, till the third man of these people stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder. With him his children of his grand-father, (Umayyah) also stood up swallowing up Allah's wealth' like a camel devouring the foliage of spring, till his rope broke down, his actions finished him and his gluttony brought him down prostrate.

At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Hasan and Husayn were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like the herd of sheep and

goats. When I took up the reins of government one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allah saying :

That abode in the hereafter, We assign it for those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein) ; and the end is (best) for the pious ones. (Qur'an, 28:83)

Yes, by Allah, they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.

(It is said that when Amir al-mu'minin reached here in his sermon a man of Iraq stood up and handed him over a writing. Amir al-mu'minin began looking at it, when Ibn `Abbas said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin, I wish you resumed your Sermon from where you broke it." Thereupon he replied, "O' Ibn `Abbas it was like the foam of a Camel which gushed out but subsided." Ibn `Abbas says that he never grieved over any utterance as he did over this one because Amir al-mu'minin could not finish it as he wished to.)

ash-Sharif ar-Radi says: The words in this sermon "like the rider of a camel" mean to convey that when a camel rider is stiff in drawing up the rein then in this scuffle the nostril gets bruised, but if he lets it loose in spite of camel's unruliness, it would throw him somewhere and would get out of control.

"*ashnaq an-nāgah* " is used when the rider holds up the rein and raises the camel's head upwards. In the same sense the word "*shanaqa an-nāgah*" is used. Ibn as-Sikkīt has mentioned this in *Islāh al-mantiq*. Amir al-mu'minin has said "*ashnaqa lahā*" instead of "*ashnagaha*," this is because he has used this word in harmony with "*aslasa lahā*" and harmony could be retained only by using both in the same form. Thus, Amir al-mu'minin has used "*ashnaga lahā*" as though in place of "*in rafā`a lahā ra'sahā*," that is, "if he stops it by holding up the reins."

1. This sermon is known as the sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*, and is counted among the most famous sermons of Amir al-mu'minin. It was delivered at ar-Rah̄bah. Although some people have denied it to be Amir almu'minin's utterance and by attributing it to as-Sayyid ar-Radi (or ash-Sharif ar-Radi) have laid blame on his acknowledged integrity, yet truth-loving scholars have denied its veracity. Nor can there be any ground for this denial because `Alī's (p.b.u.h.) difference of view in the matter of Caliphate is not a secret matter, so that such hints should be regarded as something alien. And the events which have been alluded to in this sermon are preserved in the annals of history which testifies them word by word and sentence by sentence. If the same events which are related by history are recounted by Amir al-mu'minin then what is the ground for denying them? If the memory of discouraging circumstances faced by him soon after the death of the Prophet appeared unpalatable to him it should not be surprising. No doubt this sermon hits at the prestige of certain personalities and gives a set back to the faith and belief in them but this cannot be sustained by denying the sermon to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance, unless the true events are analysed and truth unveiled; otherwise just denying it to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance because it contains disparagement of certain individuals carries no weight, when similar criticism has been related by other historians as well. Thus (Abu `Uthman) `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāhidh has recorded the following words of a sermon of Amir al-mu'minin and they are not less weighty than the criticism in the "Sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*."

Those two passed away and the third one rose like the crow whose courage is confined to the belly. It would have been better if both his wings had been cut and his head severed.

Consequently, the idea that it is the production of as-Sayyid ar-Radi is far from truth and a result of partisanship and partiality. Or else if it is the result of some research it should be brought out. Otherwise, remaining in such wishful illusion does not alter the truth, nor can the force of decisive arguments be curbed down by mere disagreement and displeasure.

Now we set forth the evidence of those scholars and traditionists who have clearly held it of be Amir al-mu'minin's production, so that its historical importance should become known. Among these scholars some are those before as-Sayyid ar-Radi's period, some are his contemporaries and some are those who came after him but they all related it through their own chain of authority.

1) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid al-Mu'tazili writes that his master Abu'l-Khayr Musaddiq ibn Shabib al-Wasiti (d. 605 A. H.) stated that he heard this sermon from ash-Shaykh Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn Ahmad al-Baghdadi (d. 567 A. H.) known as Ibn al-Khashshab and when he reached where Ibn `Abbas expressed sorrow for this sermon having remained incomplete Ibn al-Khashshāb said to him that if he had heard the expression of sorrow from Ibn `Abbas he would have certainly asked him if there had remained with his cousin any further unsatisfied desire because excepting the Prophet he had already spared neither the predecessors nor followers and had uttered all that he wished to utter. Why should therefore be any sorrow that he could not say what he wished? Musaddiq says that Ibn al-Khashshāb was a man of jolly heart and decent taste. I inquired from him whether he also regarded the sermon to be a fabrication when he replied "By Allah, I believe it to be Amir al-mu'minin's word as I believe you to be Musaddiq ibn Shabib" I said that some people regard it to be as-Sayyid ar-Radi's production when he replied : "How can ar-Radi have such guts or such style of writing. I have seen as-Sayyid ar-Radi's writings and know his style of composition. Nowhere does his writing match with this one and I have already seen it in books written two hundred years before the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radi, and I have seen it in familiar writings about which I know by which scholars or men of letters they were compiled. At that time not only ar-Radi but even his father Abu Ahmad an-Naqib has not been born."

2) Thereafter Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes that he saw this sermon in the compilations of his master Abu'l-Qasim Abdullah ibn Ahmad) al-Balkhi (d. 317 A. H.). He was the Imam of the Mu'tazilites in the reign of al-Muqtadir Billāh while al-Muqtadir's period was far earlier than the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radi.

3) He further writes that he saw this sermon in Abu Ja'far (Muhammad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmān), Ibn Qibah's book *al-Insāf*. He was the pupil of Abu'l-Qāsim al-Balkhi and a theologian of Imamiyyah (Shi'ite) sect. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 205—206)

4) Ibn Maytham al-Bahrāni (d. 679 A.H.) writes in his commentary that he had seen one such copy of this sermon which bore writing of al-Muqtadir Billah's minister Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Furāt (d. 312 A.H.). (*Sharh al-balāghah*, vol.1., pp.252-253)

5) al-'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir al-Majlisi has related the following chain of authority about this Sermon from ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Din ar-Rāwandī's compilation *Minhaj al-bara'ah fi Sharh Nahj al-balāghah*:

ash-Shaykh Abu Nasr al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim informed me from al-Hājib Abu'l-Wafi' Muhammad ibn Badi', al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Badi' and al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmān and they from al-Hafiz Abu Bakr (Ahmad ibn Musa) ibn Marduwayh al-Isbahāni (d. 416 A.H.) and he from al-Hafiz Abu'l-Qāsim Sulayman ibn Ahmad at-Tabarāni (d. 360 A.H.) and he from Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Abbār and he from Is'haq ibn Said Abu Salamah ad-Dimashqi and he from Khulayd ibn Da'laj and he from 'Atā' ibn Abi Rabāh and he from Ibn 'Abbās. (*Bihār al-anwār*, 1st ed., vol.8, pp. 160-161)

6) In the context al-'Allāmah al-Majlisi has written that this sermon is also contained in the compilations of Abu 'Ali (Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb) al-Jubba'i (d. 303 A.H.).

7) In connection with this very authenticity al-'Allāmah al-Majlisi writes :

al-Qādi 'Abd al Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Asadābādi (d. 415 A.H.) who was a strict Mu'tazilite explains some expressions of this sermon in his book *al-Mughni* and tries to prove that it does not strike against any preceding caliph but does not deny it to be Amir al-mu'minin's composition. (*ibid.*, p.161)

8) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, Ibn Babawayh (d. 381 A.H.) writes :

Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ishāq at-Tālaqāni told us that 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Yahya al-Jaludi (d. 332 A.H.) told him that Abn 'Abdillāh Ahmad ibn 'Ammar ibn Khālid told him that Yahya ibn 'Abd al-Hamid al-Himmāni

(d. 228 A.H.) told him that `Isā ibn Rashid related this sermon from `Ali ibn Hudhayfah and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbas. (*Ilal ash-shari`*, vol.1, chap. 122, p.144; *Ma`ani al-akhbar*, chap.22, pp.360-361)

- 9) Then Ibn Bābawayh records the following chain of authorities.-

Muhammad ibn `Ali Mājilawayh related this sermon to us and he took it from his uncle Muhammad ibn Abi'l-Qāsim and he from Ahmad ibn Abi `Abdillah (Muhammad ibn Khalid) al-Barqi and he from his father and he from (Muhammad) Ibn Abi `Umayr and he from Abin ibn `Uthman and he from Abān ibn Taghlib and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbas. (*Ilal ash-shara`i`*, vol.1, chap.122, p.146; *Ma`anial-akhbār*, chap.22, p.361)

- 10) Abu Ahmad al-Hasan ibn `Abdillāh ibn Said al-`Askari (d.382 A.H.) who counts among great scholars of the Sunnis has written commentary and explanation of this sermon that has been recorded by Ibn Babawayh in *Ilal ash-shara`i`* and *Ma`ani al-akhbār*.

- 11) as-Sayyid Ni`matullāh al-Jaza'iri writes:

The author of *Kitab algharāt* Abu Is'hāq, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ath-Thaqafi al-Kufi (d. 283 A.H.) has related this sermon through his own chain of authorities. The date of completion of writing this book is Tuesday the 13th Shawwāl 255 A.H. and in the same year, Murtaḍā al-Musawi was born. He was older in age than his brother as-Sayyid ar-Radi. (*Anwar an-Nu`maniyyah*, p.37)

- 12) as-Sayyid Radi ad-Din Abu'l-Qāsim `Ali ibn Musā, Ibn Tāwus al-Husayni al-Hulli (d. 664 A.H.) has related this sermon from *Kitab al-ghārāt* with the following chain of authorities:-

This sermon was related to us by Muhammad ibn Yusuf who related it from al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn `Abd al-Karim az-Za`farāni and he from Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Ghallābi and he from Ya`qub ibn Ja`far ibn Sulayman and he from his father and he from his grand-father and he from Ibn `Abbas. (Translation of *at-Tara`if*, p.202).

- 13) Shaykh at-Tāifah, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan at-Tusi (d. 460 A.H. writes : (Abu'l-Fath Hilāl ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far) al-Haffār related this sermon

to us. He related it from Abu'l-Qāsim (Ismi`il ibn `Ali ibn `Ali) ad-Di`bili and he from his father and he from his brother Di`bil (ibn `Ali al-Kuzā'i) and he from Muhammad ibn Salāmah ash-Shāmi and he from Zurārah ibn A`yan and he from Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali (ash-Shaykh as-Saduq) and he from Ibn `Abbas. (*al-Amāli*, p.237)

- 14) ash-Shaykh al-Mufid (Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu`mān, d. 413 A.H.) who was the teacher of as-Sayyid ar-Radi writes about the chain of authorities of this sermon :

A number of relaters of traditions have related this sermon from Ibn `Abbas through numerous chains. (*al-Irshad*, p.135)

- 15) `Alam al-Hudā (emblem of guidance) as-Sayyid al-Murtadā who was the elder brother of as-Sayyid ar-Radi has recorded it on pp. 203,204 of his book *ash-Shāfi*.

- 16) Abu Mansur at-Tabarsi writes:

A number of relaters have given an account of this sermon from Ibn `Abbas through various chains. Ibn `Abbas said that he was in the audience of Amir al-mu'minin at ar-Rahbah (a place in Kufah) when conversation turned to Caliphate and those who had preceded him as Caliphs when Amir al-mu'minin breathed a sigh and delivered this sermon. (*al-Ihtijāj*, p. 101)

- 17) Abu'l-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn `Abdillāh and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafī (d. 654 A.H.) write:

Our ash-Shaykh Abu'l-Qāsim an-Nafis al-Anbāri related this sermon to us through his chain of authorities that ends with Ibn `Abbas, who said that after allegiance had been paid to Amir al-mu'minin as Caliph he was sitting on the pulpit when a man from the audience enquired why he had remained quiet till then whereupon Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon ex-tempore. (*Tadhkarat khawaṣṣ al-ummah*, p.73)

- 18) al-Qādi Ahmad ibn Muhammad, ash-Shihāb al-Khafāji (d. 1069 A.H.) writes with regard to its authenticity:

It is stated in the utterances of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali (Allah may be pleased with him) that "It is strange during life time he (Abu Bakr) wanted to give up the Caliphate but he strengthened its foundation for the other one after his death." (*Sharh durrat alghawwas*, p.17)

19) ash-Shaykh `Alā ad-Dawlah as-Simnāni writes :

Amir al-mu'minin Sayyid al-'Arifin `Ali (p.b.u.h.) has stated in one of his brilliant Sermons "this is the *Shiqshiqah* that burst forth." (*al-'Urwah li ahl al-khalwah wa'l jawah*, p.3, manuscript in Nasiriah Library, Lucknow, India)

20) Abu'l-Fall Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maydini (d. 518 A.H.) has written in connection with the word *Shiqshiqah*:

One sermon of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali is known as *Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah* (the sermon of the Camel's Foam). (*Majma` alamthāl*, vol.1, p.369)

21) In fifteen places in *an-Nihāyah* while explaining the words of this sermon Abu's-Sa`ādāt Mubāarak ibn Muhammad, Ibn al-Athir al4azari (d. 606 A.H.) has acknowledged it to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance.

22) Shaykh Muhammad Tāhir Patni while explaining the same words in *Majma` bihār al-anwār* testifies this sermon to be Amir al-mu'minin's by saying, "Ali says so."

23) Abu'l-Fadl ibn Manzur (d. 711 A.H.) has acknowledged it as Amir al-mu'minin's utterance in *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 12, p. 54 by saying, "In the sayings of `Ali in his sermon 'It is the camel's foam that burst forth then subsided.' "

24) Majdu'd-Din al-Firuz 'ābādi (d. 816/817 A.H.)has recorded under the word "*Shiqshiqah* "in his lexicon (*al-Qāmus*, vol. 3, p. 251) :

Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah is by `Ali so named because when Ibn `Abbās asked him to resume it where he had left it, he said, "O' Ibn `Abbās! it was the foam of a camel that burst forth then subsided."

25) The compiler of *Muntaha al-adab* writes :

Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah of `Ali is attributed to `Ali (Allāh may honour his face).

26) ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh, Mufti of Egypt, recognising it as Amir al-mu'minin's utterance, has written its explanations.

27) Muhammad Muhyi'd-Din `Abd al-Hamid, Professor in the Faculty of Arabic Language, al-Azhar University has written annotations on *Nahj al-balāghah* adding a foreword in the beginning wherein he recognizes all such sermons which contain disparaging remarks to be the utterances of Amir al-mu'minin.

In the face of these evidences and undeniable proofs is there any scope to hold that it is not Amir al-mu'minin's production and that as-Sayyid ar-Radi prepared it himself?

2. Amir al-muminin has referred to Abu Bakr's accession to the Caliphate metaphorically as having dressed himself with it. This was a common metaphor. Thus, when `Uthmān was called to give up the Caliphate he replied, "I shall not put off this shirt which Allah has put on me." No doubt Amir al-mu'minin has not attributed this dressing of Caliphate to Allah but to Abu Bakr himself because according to unanimous opinion his Caliphate was not from Allah but his own affair. That is why Amir almu'minin said that Abn Bakr dressed himself with the Caliphate. He knew that this dress had been stitched for his own body and his position with relation to the Caliphate was that of the axis in the hand-mill which cannot retain its central position without it nor be of any use. Similarly, he held "I was the central pivot of the Caliphate, were I not there, its entire system would have gone astray from the pivot. It was I who acted as a guard for its organization and order and guided it through all difficulties. Currents of learning flowed from my bosom and watered it on all sides. My position was high beyond imagination but lust of world seekers for governance be-came a tumbling stone for me and I had to confine myself to seclusion. Blinding darkness prevailed all round and there was intense gloom every-where. The young grew old and the old departed for the graves but this patience-breaking period would not end. I kept watching with my eyes the plundering of my own inheritance and saw the passing of Caliphate from one hand to the other but remained patient as I could not stop their high-handedness for lack of means."

NEED FOR THE PROPHET'S CALIPH AND THE MODE OF HIS APPOINTMENT.

After the Prophet of Islam the presence of such a personality was inevitable who could stop the community from disintegration and guard the religious law against change, alteration and interference by those who wanted to twist it to suit their own desires. If this very need is denied then there is no sense in attaching so much importance to the succession of the Prophet that the assemblage in Saqifah of Banu Sā'idah should

have been considered more important than the burial of the Prophet. If the need is recognised, the question is whether or not the Prophet too realised it. If it is held he could not attend to it and appreciate its need or absence of need it would be the biggest proof for regarding the Prophet's mind to be blank for thinking of means to stop the evils of innovations and apostasy in spite of having given warnings about them. If it is said that he did realise it but had to live it unresolved on account of some advantage then instead of keeping it hidden the advantage should be clearly indicated otherwise silence without purpose would constitute delinquency in the discharge of the obligations of Prophethood. If there was some impediment, it should be disclosed otherwise we should agree that just as the Prophet did not leave any item of religion incomplete he did not leave this matter either and did propose such a course of action for it, that if it was acted upon religion would have remained safe against the interference of others.

The question now is what was that course of action. If it is taken to be the consensus of opinion of the community then it cannot truly take place as in such consensus acquiescence of every individual is necessary; but taking into account the difference in human temperaments it seems impossible that they would agree on any single point. Nor is there any ex-ample where on such matters there has been no single voice of dissent. How then can such a fundamental need be made dependent on the occurrence of such an impossible event — need on which converges the future of Islam and the good of the Muslims. Therefore, mind is not prepared to accept this criterion. Nor is tradition in harmony with it, as al-Qadi `Adud ad-Din al-Iji has written in *Sharh al-mawāqif*:

You should know that Caliphate cannot depend upon unanimity of election because no logical or traditional argument can be advanced for it.

In fact when the advocates of unanimous election found that unanimity of all votes is difficult they adopted the agreement of the majority as a substitute for unanimity, ignoring the difference of the minority. In such a case also it often happens that the force of fair and foul or correct and incorrect ways turns the flow of the majority opinion in the direction where there is neither individual distinction nor personal merit as a result of which competent persons remain hidden while incompetent individuals stand forward. When capabilities remain so curbed and personal ends stand in the way as hurdles, how can there be expectation for the election of correct person. Even if it is assumed that all voters have independent unbiased view, that none of them has his own objective and that

none has any other consideration, it is not necessary that every verdict of the majority should be correct, and that it cannot go astray. Experience shows that after experiment the majority has held its own verdict to be wrong. If every verdict of the majority is correct then its first verdict should be wrong because the verdict which holds it wrong is also that of the majority. In this circumstances if the election of the Caliph goes wrong who would be responsible for the mistake, and who should face the blame for the ruination of the Islamic polity. Similarly on whom would be the liability for the bloodshed and slaughter following the turmoil and activity of the elections. When it has been seen that even those who sat in the audience of the Holy Prophet could not be free of mutual quarrel and strife how can others avoid it.

If with a view to avoid mischief it is left to the people of authority to choose anyone they like then here too the same friction and conflict would prevail because here again convergence of human temperaments on one point is not necessary nor can they be assumed to rise above personal ends. In fact here the chances of conflict and collision would be stronger because if not all at least most of them would themselves be candidates for that position and would not spare any effort to defeat their opponent, creating impediments in his way as best as possible. Its inevitable consequence would be mutual struggle and mischief-mongering. Thus, it would not be possible to ward off the mischief for which this device was adopted, and instead of finding a proper individual the community would just be-come an instrument for the achievement of personal benefits of the others. Again, what would be the criterion for these people in authority? The same as has usually been, namely whoever collects a few supporters and is able to create commotion in any meeting by use of forceful words would count among the people of authority. Or would capabilities also be judged? If the mode of judging the capabilities is again this very common vote then the same complications and conflicts would arise here too, to avoid which this way was adopted. If there is some other standard, then instead of judging the capabilities of the voters by it why not judge the person who is considered suitable for the position in view. Further, how many persons in authority would be enough to give a verdict? Apparently a verdict once accepted would be precedent for good and the number that would give this verdict would become the criterion for future. al-Qādi `Adud ad-Din al-'Iji writes:

Rather the nomination of one or two individuals by the people in authority is enough because we know that the companions who were strict in religion deemed it enough as the nomination of Abu Bakr by `Umar and of `Uthmān by `Abd ar-Rahmān. (*Sharh al-mawāqif*, p.351)

This is the account of the "unanimous election " in the Hall of Bani Sā'idah and the activity of the consultative assembly : that is, one man's action has been given the name of unanimous election and one individual's deed given the name of consultative assembly. Abu Bakr had well understood this reality that election means the vote of a person or two only which is to be attributed to common simple people. That is why he ignored the requirements of unanimous election, majority vote or method of choosing through electoral assembly and appointed `Umar by nomination. `A'ishah also considered that leaving the question of caliphate to the vote of a few particular individuals means inviting mischief and trouble. She sent a word to `Umar on his death saying:

Do not leave the Islamic community without a chief. Nominate a Caliph for it and leave it not without an authority as otherwise I apprehend mischief and trouble.

When the election by those in authority proved futile it was given up and only "might is right" became the criteria — namely whoever subdues others and binds them under his sway and control is accepted as the Caliph of the Prophet and his true successor. These are those self-adopted principles in the face of which all the Prophet's sayings uttered in the "Feast of the Relatives," on the night of *hijrah*, at the battle of Tabuk, on the occasion of conveying the Qur'anic chapter "*al-Barā'ah* " (*at-Tawbah*, chap.9) and at Ghadir (the spring of) Khumm. The strange thing is that when each of the first three caliphates is based on one individual's choice how can this very right to choose be denied to the Prophet himself, particularly when this was the only way to end all the dissensions, namely that the Prophet should have himself settled it and saved the community from future disturbances and spared it from leaving this decision in the hands of people who were themselves involved in personal aims and objects. This is the correct procedure which stands to reason and which has also the support of the Prophet's definite sayings.

3. Hayyān ibn as-Samin al-Hanafī of Yamāmah was the chief of the tribe Banu Hanifah and the master of fort and army. Jābir is the name of his younger brother while al-A`sha whose real name was Maymun ibn Qays ibn Jandal enjoyed the position of being his bosom friend and led decent happy life through his bounty. In this verse he has compared his current life with the previous one that is the days when he roamed about in search of livelihood and those when he led a happy life in Hayyan's company. Generally Amir al-mu'minin's quoting of this verse has been taken to compare this troubled period with the peaceful days passed under the care and protection of the Prophet when he was free from all sorts of troubles and enjoyed mental peace. But taking into account the

occasion for making this comparison and the subject matter of the verse it would not be far fetched if it is taken to indicate the difference between the unimportant position of those in power during the Prophet's life time and the authority and power enjoyed by them after him, that is, at one time in the days of the Prophet no heed was paid to them because of `Ali's personality but now the time had so changed that the same people were masters of the affairs of the Muslim world.

4. When `Umar was wounded by Abu Lu'lu'ah and he saw that it was difficult for him to survive because of the deep wound he formed a consultative committee and nominated for it `Ali ibn Abi Tālib, `Uthmān ibn `Affān, `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf, az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwām, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās, and Talhah ibn `Ubaydillāh and bound them that after three days of his death they should select one of themselves as the Caliph while for those three days Suhayb should act as Caliph. On receipt of these instructions some members of the committee requested him to indicate what ideas he had about each of them to enable them to proceed further in their light. `Umar therefore disclosed his own view about each individual. He said that Sa'd was harsh-tempered and hot headed; `Abd ar-Rahmān was the Pharaoh of the community; az-Zubayr was, if pleased, a true believer but if displeased an un-believer; Talhah was the embodiment of pride and haughtiness, if he was made caliph he would put the ring of the caliphate on his wife's finger while `Uthmān did not see beyond his kinsmen. As regards `Ali he is enamoured of the Caliphate although I know that he alone can run it on right lines. Nevertheless, despite this admission, he thought it necessary to constitute the consultative Committee and in selecting its members and laying down the working procedure he made sure that the Caliphate would take the direction in which he wished to turn it. Thus, a man of ordinary prudence can draw the conclusion that all the factors for `Uthmān's success were present therein. If we look at its members we see that one of them namely `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf is the husband of `Uthmān's sister, next Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqis besides bearing malice towards `Ali is a relation and kinsman of `Abd ar-Rahmān. Neither of them can be taken to go against `Uthmān. The third Talhah ibn `Ubaydillāh about whom Prof. Muhammad `Abduh writes in his annotation on *Nahj al-balāghah* :

Talhah was inclined towards `Uthmān and the reason for it was no less than that he was against `Ali, because he himself was a at-Taymi and Abu Bakr's accession to the Caliphate had created bad blood between Bani Taym and Bann Hāshim.

As regards az-Zubayr, even if he had voted for `Ali what could his single vote achieve. According to at-Tabari's statement Talhah was not present in ` Medina at that time

but his absence did not stand in the way of `Uthman's success. Rather even if he were present, as he did actually reach at the meeting (of the Committee), and he is taken to be `Ali's supporter, still there could be no doubt in `Uthmān's success because `Umar's sagacious mind had set the working procedure that:

If two agree about one and the other two about another then `Abdullāh ibn `Umar should act as the arbitrator. The group whom he orders should choose the Caliph from among themselves. If they do not accept `Abdullāh ibn `Umar's verdict, support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf, but if the others do not agree they should be beheaded for opposing this verdict. (at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp. 2779 — 2780; Ibn al-Athir, vol. 3, p.67).

Here disagreement with the verdict of `Abdullāh ibn `Umar has no meaning since he was directed to support the group which included `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf. He had ordered his son `Abdullah and Suhayb that:

If the people differ, you should side with the majority, but if three of them are on one side and the other three on the other, you should side with the group including `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf. (at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp. 2725, 2780; Ibn al-Athir, vol. 3, pp. 51, 67).

In this instruction the agreement with the majority also means support of `Abd ar-Rahmān because the majority could not be on any other side since fifty blood-thirsty swords had been put on the heads of the opposition group with orders to fall on their heads on `Abd ar-Rahmān's behest. Amir al-mu'minin's eye had fore-read it at that very moment that the caliphate was going to `Uthmān as appears from his following words which he spoke to al-Abbās ibn `Abd al-Muttalib:

"The Caliphate has been turned away from us." al-`Abbas asked how could he know it. Then he replied, " `Uthmān has also been coupled with me and it has been laid down that the majority should be supported; but if two agree on one and two on the other, then support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahmān ibn `Awf. Now Sa'd will support his cousin `Abd ar-Rahmān who is of course the husband of `Uthman's sister." (*ibid.*)

However, after `Umar's death this meeting took place in the room of `A'ishah and on its door stood Abu Talhah al-Ansāri with fifty men having drawn swords in their hands. Talhah started the proceedings and inviting all others to be witness said that he gave his right of vote to `Uthmān. This touched az-Zubayr's sense of honour as his mother Safiyyah daughter of

`Abd al-Muttalib was the sister of Prophet's father. So he gave his right of vote to `Ali. Thereafter Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqās made his right of vote to `Abd ar-Rahmān. This left three members of the consultative committee out of whom `Abd ar-Rahmān said that he was willing to give up his own right of vote if `Ali (p.b.u.h.) and `Uthmān gave him the right to choose one of them or one of these two should acquire this right by with-drawing. This was a trap in which `Ali had been entangled from all sides namely that either he should abandon his own right or else allow `Abd ar-Rahmān to do as he, wished. The first case was not possible for him; that is, to give up his own right and elect `Uthmān or `Abd ar-Rahmān. So, he clung to his right, while `Abd ar-Rahmān separating himself from it assumed this power and said to Amir al-mu'minin, "I pay you allegiance on your following the Book of Allah, the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the conduct of the two Shaykhs, (Abu Bakr and `Umar). Ali replied, "Rather on following the Book of Allah, the *sunnah* of the Prophet and my own findings." When he got the same reply even after repeating the question thrice he turned to `Uthmān saying, "Do you accept these conditions." He had no reason to refuse and so he agreed to the conditions and allegiance was paid to him. When Amir al-mu'minin saw his rights being thus trampled he said :

This is not the first day when you behaved against us. I have only to keep good patience. Allah is the Helper against whatever you say. By Allah, you have not made `Uthmān Caliph but in the hope that he would give back the Caliphate to you.

After recording the events of *ash-Shura* (consultative committee), Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that when allegiance had been paid to `Uthmān, `Ali addressed `Uthmān and `Abd ar-Rahmān saying, "May Allah sow the seed of dissension among you," and so it happened that each turned a bitter enemy of the other and `Abd ar-Rahmān did not ever after speak to `Uthmān till death. Even on death bed he turned his face on seeing him.

On seeing these events the question arises whether *ash-Shura* (consultative committee) means confining the matter to six persons, thereafter to three and finally to one only. Also whether the condition of following the conduct of the two Shaykhs for caliphate was put by `Umar or it was just a hurdle put by `Abd ar-Rahmān between `Ali (p.b.u.h.) and the Caliphate, although the first Caliph did not put forth this condition at the time of nominating the second Caliph, namely that he should follow the former's footsteps. What then was the occasion for this condition here?

However, Amir al-mu'minin had agreed to participate in it in order to avoid mischief and to put an end to arguing so that others should be silenced and should not be able to claim that they would have voted in his favour and that he himself evaded the consultative committee and did not give them an opportunity of selecting him.

5. About the reign of the third Caliph Amir al-mu'minin says that soon on `Uthman's coming to power Banu Umayyah got ground and began plundering the *Bayt al-mal* (public fund), and just as cattle on seeing green grass after drought trample it away, they recklessly fell upon Allah's money and devoured it. At last this self-indulgence and nepotism brought him to the stage when people besieged his house, put him to sword and made him vomit all that he had swallowed.

The maladministration that took place in this period was such that no Muslim can remain unmoved to see that Companions of high position were lying uncared for, they were stricken with poverty and surrounded by pennilessness while control over *Baytul māl* (public fund) was that of Banu Umayyah, government positions were occupied by their young and inexperienced persons, special Muslim properties, were owned by them, meadows provided grazing but to their cattle, houses were built but by them, and orchards were but for them. If any compassionate person spoke about these excesses his ribs were broken, and if someone agitated this capitalism he was expelled from the city. The uses to which *zakāt* and charities which were meant for the poor and the wretched and the public fund which was the common property of the Muslims were put may be observed from the following few illustrations;

1) al-Hakam ibn Abi'l-`As who had been exiled from Medina by the Prophet was allowed back in the city not only against the Prophet's *sunnah* but also against the conduct of the first two Caliphs and he was paid three hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*Ansāb al ashraf*, vol. 5, pp. 27, 28 125)

2) al-Walid ibn `Uqbah who has been named hypocrite in the Qur'an was paid one hundred thousand Dirhams from the Muslim's public fund. (*al-Iqd al farid*, vol.3, p.94)

3) The Caliph married his own daughter Umm Abān to Marwān ibn al-Hakam and paid him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, pp.198—199).

4) He married his daughter `A'ishah to Hārith ibn al-Hakam and granted him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*ibid.*)

5) `Abdullāh ibn Khālid was paid four hundred thousand Dirhams. (*al-Ma'ārif* of Ibn Qutaybah, p.84)

6) Allowed the *khums* (one fifth religious duty) from Africa (amounting) to five hundred thousand Dinars) to Marwān ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid.*)

7) Fadak which was withheld from the angelic daughter of the Prophet on the ground of being general charity was given as a royal favour to Marwān ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid.*)

8) Mahzur a place in the commercial area of Medina which had been declared a public trust by the Prophet was gifted to Hārith ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid.*)

9) In the meadows around Medina no camel except those of Banu Umayyah were allowed to graze. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.I, p. 199)

10) After his death (`Uthman's) one hundred and fifty thousand Dinars (gold coins) and one million Dirhams (silver coins) were found in his house. There was no limit to tax free lands; and the total value of the landed estate he owned in Wādi al-Qurā and Hunayn was one hundred thousand Dinars. There were countless camels and horses. (*Muruj adh-dhahab*, vol.I, p.435)

11) The Caliph's relations ruled all the principal cities. Thus, at Kufah, al-Walid ibn `Uqbah was the governor but when in the state of intoxication of wine he led the morning prayer in four instead of two *rak'ah* and people agitated he was removed, but the Caliph put in his place a hypocrite like Sa'id ibn al-'As. In Egypt `Abdullāh ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Sarh, in Syria Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyān, and in Basrah, `Abdullāh ibn `Amir were the governors appointed by him (*ibid.*)

SERMON 4

Amir al-mu'minin's far-sightedness and his staunch conviction in Belief

Through us you got guidance in the darkness and secured high position, and through us you got out of the gloomy night. The ears which do not listen to the cries may become deaf. How can one who remained deaf to the loud cries (of the Qur'an and the Prophet) listen to (my) feeble voice. The heart that has ever palpitated (with fear of Allah) may get peace.

I always apprehended from you consequences of treachery and I had seen you through in the garb of the deceitful. The curtain of religion had kept me hidden from you but the truth of my intentions disclosed you to me. I stood for you on the path of truth among misleading tracks where you met each other but there was no leader and you dug but got no water.

Today I am making these dumb things speak to you (i.e. my suggestive ideas and deep musings etc.) which are full of descriptive power. The opinion of the person who abandons me may get astray. I have never doubted in the truth since it has been shown to me. Musa (Moses)' did not entertain fear for his own self. Rather he apprehended mastery of the ignorant and away of deviation. Today we stand on the cross-roads of truth and untruth. The one who is sure of getting water feels no thirst.

1. The reference is to that even of Moses when sorcerers were sent for to confront him and they showed their sorcery by throwing ropes and sticks on the ground and Moses felt afraid. Thus, the Qur'an records:

... it seemed to him (Moses), by their sorcery as if they were running. Then Moses felt in himself a fear. We said: Fear not! Verily thou art the uppermost. (20:66-68)

Amir al-mu'minin says that the ground for Moses fear was not that since he saw

ropes and sticks moving he might have entertained fear for his life but the cause of his fear was lest people be impressed with this sorcery and get astray, and untruth might prevail on account of this craft. That is why Moses was not consoled by saying that his life was safe but by saying that he would prove superior, and his claim would be upheld. Since his fear was for the defeat of the truth and victory of the untruth, not for his own life, the consideration was given to him for the victory of truth and not for the protection of his life.

Amir al-mu'minin also means that he too had the same fear viz. that the people should not be caught in the trap of these (Talhah, az-Zubayr, etc.) and fail into misguidance by getting astray from the true faith. Other-wise, he himself never feared for his own life.

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SERMON 5

**Delivered when the Holy Prophet died and 'Abbas
ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and Abu Sufyān ibn Harb
offered to pay allegiance to Amir al-mu'minin for the
Caliphate**

O' People! ¹

Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension and put off the crowns of pride. Prosperous is one who rises with wings (i.e. when he has power) or else he remains peaceful and others enjoy ease. It (i.e. the aspiration for Caliphate) is like turbid water or like a morsel that would suffocate the person who swallows it. One who plucks fruits before ripening is like one who cultivated in another's field.

If I speak out they would call me greedy towards power but if I keep quiet they would say I was afraid of death. It is a pity that after all the ups and downs (I have been through). By Allāh the son of Abu Talib² is more familiar with

death than an infant with the breast of its mother. I have hidden know-ledge; if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells.

1. When the Holy Prophet died Abu Sufyān was not in Medina. He was coming back when on his way he got the news of this tragedy. At once he enquired who had become the leader and Chief. He was told that people had paid allegiance to Abu Bakr. On hearing this the acknowledged mischief-monger of Arabia went into deep thought and eventually went to `Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib with a proposal. He said to him, "Look, these people have by contrivance made over the Caliphate to the Taym and deprived Bann Hishām of it for good, and after himself this man would place over our heads a haughty man of Banu `Adi. Let us go to `Ali ibn Abi Talib and ask him to get out of his house and take to arms to secure his right." So taking `Abbas with him he came to `Ali and said: "Let me your hand; I pay allegiance to you and if anyone rises in opposition I would fill the streets of Medina with men of cavalry and infantry." This was the most delicate moment for Amir al-mu'minin. He regarded himself as the true head and successor of the Prophet while a man with the backing of his tribe and party like Abu Sufyan was ready to support him. Just a signal was enough to ignite the flames of war. But Amir al-mu'minin's foresight and right judgement saved the Muslims from civil war as his piercing eyes perceived that this man wanted to start civil war by rousing the passions of tribal partisanship and distinction of birth, so that Islam should be struck with a convulsion that would shake it to its roots. Amir al-mu'minin there-fore rejected his counsel and admonished him severely and spoke forth the words, whereby he has stopped people from mischief mongering, and undue conceit, and declared his stand to be that for him there were only two courses - either to take up arms or to sit quietly at home. If he rose for war there was no supporter so that he could suppress these rising insurgences. The only course left was quietly to wait for the opportunity till circumstances were favourable.

Amir al-mu'minin's quitness at this stage was indicative of his high policy and far-sightedness, because if in those circumstances Medina had become the centre of war its fire would have engulfed the whole of Arabia in its flames. The discord and scuffle that had already begun among *muhajirun* (those who came from Mecca) and *ansār* (the locals of Medina) would have increased to maximum, the wire-pullings of the hypocrites would have had full play, and Islam's ship would have been caught in such a whirlpool that its balancing would have been difficult; Amir al-mu'minin suffered trouble

and tribulations but did not raise his hands. History is witness that during his life at Mecca the Prophet suffered all sorts of troubles but he was not prepared to clash or struggle by abandoning patience and endurance, because he realised that if war took place at that stage the way for Islam's growth and fruition would be closed. Of course, when he had collected supporters and helpers enough to suppress the flood of unbelief and curb the disturbances, he rose to face the enemy. Similarly, Amir at-mu minor, treating the life of the Prophet as a torch for his guidance refrained from exhibiting the power of his arm because he was realising that rising against the enemy without helpers and supporters would become a source of revolt and defeat instead of success and victory. Therefore, on this occasion Amir al-muminin has likened the desire for Caliphate to turbid water or a morsel suffocating the throat. Thus, even where people had forcibly snatched this morsel and wanted to swallow it by forcible thrusting, it got stuck up in their throat. They could neither swallow it nor vomit it out. That is, they could neither manage it as is apparent from the blunders they committed in connection with Islamic injunctions, nor were they ready to cast off the knot from their neck.

He reiterated the same ideas in different words thus: "If had I attempted to pluck the unripe fruit of Caliphate then by this the orchard would have been desolated and I too would have achieved nothing, like these people who cultivate on other's land but can neither guard it, nor water it at proper time, nor reap any crop from it. The position of these people is that if I ask them to vacate it so that the owner should cultivate it himself and protect it, they say how greedy I am, while if I keep quiet they think I am afraid of death. They should tell me on what occasion did I ever feel afraid, or flew from battle-field for life, whereas every small or big encounter is proof of my bravery and a witness to my daring and courage. He who plays with swords and strikes against hillocks is not afraid of death. I am so familiar with death that even an infant is not so familiar with the breast of its mother. Hark! The reason for my silence is the knowledge that the Prophet has put in my bosom. If I divulge it you would get perplexed and bewildered. Let some days pass and you would know the reason of my inaction, and perceive with your own eyes what sorts of people would appear on this scene under the name of Islam, and what destruction they would bring about. My silence is because this would happen, otherwise it is not silence without reason."

A Persian hemistich says :

"Silence has meaning which cannot be couched in words."

2. About death Amir al-mu'minin says that it is so dear to him that even an infant does not so love to leap towards the source of its nourishment while in its mother's lap. An infant's attachment with the breast of its mother is under the effect of a natural impulse but the dictates of natural impulses change with the advance of age. When the limited period of infancy ends and the infant's temperament changes, he does not like even to look at what was so familiar to him but rather turns his face from it in disgust. But the love of prophets and saints for union with Allah is mental and spiritual, and mental and spiritual feelings do not change, nor does weakness or decay occur in them. Since death is the means and first rung towards this goal their love for death increases to such an extent that its rigours become the cause of pleasure for them and its bitterness proves to be the source of delight for their taste. Their love for it is the same as that of the thirsty for the well or that of a lost passenger for his goal. Thus when Amir al-mu'minin was wounded by `Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muljam's fatal attack, he said, "I was but like the walker who has reached (the goal) or like the seeker who has found (his object) and whatever is with Allah is good for the pious." The Prophet also said that there is no pleasure for a believer other than union with Allah.

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SERMON 6

Delivered on being advised not to chase Talhah ibn `Ubaydillah and az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwām for fighting.¹

By Allah I shall not be like the badger, which feigns sleep on continuous (sound of) stone-throwing till he who is in search of it find it or he who is on the look out for it overpowers it. Rather, I shall ever strike the deviators from truth with the help of those who advance towards it, and the sinners and doubters with the help of those who listen to me and obey, till my day (of death) comes. By Allah I have been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet died till today.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin showed intention to chase Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, he was advised to leave them on their own lest he received some harm from them. Amir al-mu'minin uttered these words in reply, the sum total whereof is : "How long can I be a mere spectator to my right being snatched and keep quiet. Now, so long as I have breath of life I shall fight them and make them suffer the consequences of their conduct. They should not think that I can be easily over-powered like the badger."

Dabu` means badger. Its nickname is Umm `Amir and Umm Turrayq. It is also called "the glutton", because it swallows everything and eats up whatever it gets as if several bellies were contained in one, and they do not have their fill. It is also called *Na`thal*. It is a very simple and silly animal. Its slyness is apparent from the way it is easily caught. It is said that the hunter surrounds its den and strikes it with his foot or a stick, and calls out softly "Bow your head Umm Turrayq, conceal yourself Umm `Amir." On repeating this sentence and patting the ground, it conceals itself in a corner of the den. Then the hunter says "Umm `Amir is not in its den, it is sleeping." On hearing this it stretches its limbs and feigns sleep. The hunter then puts the knot in its feet and drags it out, and it falls like a coward into his hand without resistance.

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SERMON 7

About the hypocrites

They' have made Satan the master of their affairs, and he has taken them as partners. He has laid eggs and hatched them in their bosoms. He creeps and crawls in their laps. He sees through their eyes, and speaks with their tongues. In this way he has led them to sinfulness and adorned for them foul things like the action of one whom Satan has made partner in his domain and speaks untruth through his tongue.

1. Amir al-mu'minin says about the hypocrites (i.e. those who opposed him before and during his Caliphate) that they are partners in action of Satan and his helpers and supporters. He too has befriended them so much that he has made his abode with them, resides on their bosoms, lays eggs and hatches young one from them there, while

these young ones jump and play in their laps without demur. He means that Satanic evil ideas take birth in their bosoms and grow and thrive there. There is no restraint on them, nor restriction of any kind. He has so permeated in their blood and mingled in their spirit that both have become completely unified. Now eyes are theirs but sight is his, the tongue is theirs but the words are his, as the Prophet had said, "Verily, Satan permeates the progeny of Adam like blood." That is, just as the circulation of blood does not stop, in the same way the quick succession of Satan's evil ideas know no break and he draws man towards evil in sleep and wakefulness, and in every posture, rising or sitting. He so paints them with his dye that their word and action reflect an exact portrait of his word and action. Those whose bosoms shine with the effulgence of faith prevent such evil ideas but some are already ready to welcome those evils and these are the persons who under the garb of Islam are ever after advancement of heresy.

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SERMON 8

Said about az-Zubayr at a time for which it was appropriate

He asserts that he swore allegiance to me with his hand but did not swear with his heart.¹ So he does admit allegiance. As regards his claiming it otherwise than with his heart he should come forward with a clear argument for it. Otherwise, he should return to wherefrom he has gone out.²

1. When after swearing allegiance on the hand of Amir al-mu'minin, az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwām broke the allegiance, then sometimes he put forth the excuse that he was forced to swear allegiance and that forced allegiance is no allegiance, and sometimes he said that allegiance was only for show. His heart did not go in accord with it. As though he himself admitted with his tongue the duplicity of his outer appearance and inner self. But this excuse is like that of the one who reverts to apostasy after adopting Islam and to avoid penalty may say that he had accepted Islam only by the tongue, not in the heart. Obviously, such an excuse cannot be heard, nor can avoid punishment by this argument.

If az-Zubayr suspected that `Uthmān was slain at Amir al-mu'minin's insistence, this suspicion should have existed when he was taking oath for obedience and stretching his hand for allegiance, not now that his expectations were getting frustrated and hopes had started dawning from somewhere else.

6. Amir al-mu'minin has rejected his claim in short form thus : that when he admits that his hands had paid allegiance then until there is justification for breaking of the allegiance he should stick to it. But if, according to him his heart was not in accord with it he should produce other proof for it. Since proof about the state of heart cannot be adduced how can he bring such proof, and an assertion without proof is unacceptable to his mind.

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SERMON 9

Cowardice of the people of Jamal

They' thunder like clouds and shone like lightning but despite both these things they exhibited cowardice, while we do not thunder till we pounce upon the foe nor do we show flow (of words) until we have not virtually rained.

1. About the people of Jamal (i.e. the enemy in the battle of Jamal) Amir al-mu'minin says that they rose thundering, shouting and stampeding but when encounter took place they were seen flying like straw. At one time they made loud claims that they would do this and would do that and now they showed such cowardice as to flee from the battle-field. About himself Amir al-mu'minin says, that "We do not threaten the enemy before battle, nor utter boasts, nor terrorise the enemy by raising unnecessary cries because it is not the way of the brave to use the tongue instead of the hand." That is why on this occasion he said to his comrades. "Beware of excessive talk as it is cowardice."

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SERMON 10

About Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr

Beware ! Satan¹ has collected his group and assembled his horse-men and foot-soldiers. Surely, with me is my sagacity. I have neither deceived myself nor ever been deceived. By Allah I shall fill to the brim for them a cistern from which I alone would draw water. They can neither turn away from it nor return to it.

1. When Talhah and az-Zubayr broke away by violating the Oath of allegiance and set for Basrah in the company of 'A'ishah, Amir al-mu'minin spoke in these words which are part of the long speech.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that in this sermon Satan denotes the real Satan as well as Mu'awiyah because Mu'awiyah was secretly conspiring with Talhah and az-Zubayr and instigating them to fight against Amir almu'minin; but the reference to the real Satan is more appropriate, obvious and in accord with the situation and circumstances.

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SERMON 11

Delivered in the Battle of Jamal when Amir al-mu'minin gave the standard to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah¹

Mountains² may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succour is but from Allah, the Glorified.

1. Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah was Amir al-mu'minin's son but called Ibn Hanafiyah after his mother. His mother's name was Khawlah bint Ja'far. She was known as Hanafiyah after her tribe Banu Hanifah. When people of Yamamah were declared apostates for refusing to *pay zakat* (religious tax) and were killed and their women-folk were brought to Medina as slave girls, this lady also came to Medina with them. When her tribesmen came to know it they approached Amir al-mu'minin and requested him to save her from the blemish of slavery and protect her family honour and prestige. Consequently, Amir al-mu'minin set her free after purchasing and married her whereafter Muhammad was born.

Most historians have written his surname as Abu'l-Qasim. Thus, the author of *al-Isti'ab* (vol.3, pp.1366, 1367—1368, 1370, 1371—1372) has narrated the opinion of Abu Rashid ibn Hafs az-Zuhri that from among the sons of the companions (of the Prophet) he came across four individuals everyone of whom was named Muhammad and surnamed Abu'l-Qasim, namely (1) Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah, (2) Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr (3) Muhammad ibn Talhah and (4) Muhammad ibn Sa'd. After this he writes that Muhammad ibn Talhah's name and surname was given by the Prophet. al-Waqidi writes that the name and surname of Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr was suggested by 'A'ishah. Apparently the Holy Prophet's giving the name of Muhammad ibn Talhah seems incorrect since from some traditions it appears that the Prophet had reserved it for a son of Amir al-mu'minin and he was Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah.

As regards his surname it is said that the Prophet had particularised it and that he had told 'Ali that a son would be born to you after me and I have given him my name and surname and after that it is not permissible for anyone in my people to have this name and surname together.

With this opinion before us how can it be correct that the Prophet had given this very name and surname to anyone else since particularisation means that no one else would share it. Moreover, some people have recorded the surname of Ibn Talhah as Abu Sulayman instead of Abu'l-Qasim and this further confirms our view point. Similarly, if the surname of Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr was on the ground that his son's name was Qasim who was among the theologians of Medina, then what is the sense in 'A'ishah having suggested it. If she had suggested it along with the name how could Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr tolerate it later on since having been brought up under the care of Amir al-mu'minin the Prophet's saying could not remain concealed from him. Moreover, most people have recorded his surname as Abu 'Abd ar-Rahmān, which weakens the view of Abu Rashid.

Let alone these people's surname being Abu'l-Qasim, even for Ibn al-Hanafīyyah this surname is not proved. Although Ibn Khallikān (in *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol.4, p.170) has taken that son of Amir al-mu'minin for whom the Prophet had particularised this surname to be Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah, yet al-`Allāmah al-Māmagāni (in *Tanqih al-maqāl*, vol.3, Part 1, p.112) writes:

In applying this tradition to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah, Ibn Khallikān has got into confusion, because the son of Amir al-mu'minin whom the Prophet's name and surname together have been gifted by the Prophet, and which is not permissible to be given to any one else, is to the awaited last Imām (may our lives be his ransom), and not to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah, nor is the surname Abu'l-Q"im established for him, rather some of the Sunnis being ignorant of the real intention of the Prophet, have taken to mean Ibn al-Hanafīyyah.

However, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah was prominent in righteousness and piety, sublime in renunciation and worship, lofty in knowledge and achievements and heir of his father in bravery. His performance in the battles of Jamal and Siffīn had created such impression among the Arabs that even warriors of consequence trembled at his name. Amir al-mu'minin too was proud of his courage and valour, and always placed him forward in encounters. ash-Shaykh al-Bahā'i has written in *al-Kashkul* that `Ali ibn Abi Talib kept him abreast in the battles and did not allow Hasan and Husayn to go ahead, and used to say, "He is my son while these two are sons of the Prophet of Allāh." When a Khārijite said to Ibn al-Hanafīyyah that `Ali thrust him into the flames of war but saved away Hasan and Husayn he replied that he himself was like the right hand and Hasan and Husayn like `Ali's two eyes and that `Ali protected his eyes with his right hand. But al-`Allāmah al-Māmagāni has written in *Tanqih al-Maqāl* that this was not the reply of Ibn al-Hanafīyyah but of Amir al-mu'minin himself. When during the battle of Siffīn Muhammad mentioned this matter to Amir al-mu'minin in complaining tone he replied, "You are my right hand whereas they are my eyes, and the hand should protect the eyes."

Apparently it seems that first Amir al-mu'minin must have given this reply and thereafter someone might have mentioned it to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah and he must have repeated the same reply as there could be no more eloquent reply than this one and its eloquence confirms the view that it was originally the outcome of the eloquent tongue of Amir al-mu'minin and was later appropriated by Muhammad al-Hanafīyyah. Consequently, both these views can be held to be correct and there is no incongruity between them. However, he was born in the reign of the second Caliph and died in the reign of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān at the age of sixty-five years. Some writers have recorded the year of his death as 80 A.H.

and others as 81 A.H. There is a difference about the place of his death as well. Some have put it as Medina, some Aylah and some Ta'if.

2. When in the Battle of Jamal Amir al-mu'minin sent Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah to the battle-field, he told him that he should fix himself before the enemy like the mountain of determination and resoluteness so that the onslaught of the army should not be able to displace him, and should charge the enemy with closed teeth because by pressing teeth over the teeth tension occurs in the nerves of the skull as a result of which the stroke of the sword goes amiss, as he said at another place also viz. "Press together the teeth. It sends amiss the edge of the sword." Then he says, "My child, lend your head to Allah in order that you may be able to achieve eternal life in place of this one, because for a lent article there is the right to get it back. Therefore, you should fight being heedless of your life, other-wise also if your mind clings to life you will hesitate to advance towards deathly encounters and that would tell upon your reputation of bravery. Look, don't let your steps falter because the enemy is emboldened at the faltering of steps, and faltering steps fastens the feet of the enemy. Keep the last lines of the enemy as your aim so that the enemy may be overawed with loftiness of your intentions and you may feel ease in tearing through their lives, and their movement should also not remain concealed from you. Look, do not pay heed to their superiority in numbers, otherwise your valour and courage would suffer." This sentence can also mean that one should not wide open the eyes to be dazzled by the shining of weapons, and the enemy may make an attack by taking advantage of the situation. Also, always bear it in mind that victory is from Allah. "If Allah helps you no one can overpower you." Therefore, instead of relying on material means seek His support and succour.

(Remember O ye Believers!) *If Allah helpeth you, none shall over-come you . . .*
(Qur'an, 3:159)

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SERMON 12

When ¹ Allah gave him (Amir al-mu'minin) victory over the enemy at the Battle of Jamal one of his comrades said on that occasion, "I wish my brother so-and-so had been present and he too would have seen what success and victory Allah had given you," whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said:

"Did your brother hold me friend?" He said:

"Yes,"

Then Amir al-mu'minin said:

In that case he was with us. Rather in this army of ours even those persons were also present who are still in the loins of men and wombs of women. Shortly, time will bring them out and faith will get strength through them.

1. If a person falls short in his actions despite means and equipment, this would be indicative of the weakness of his will. But if there is an impediment in the way of action or his life comes to an end as a result of which his action remains incomplete, then in that case Allāh would not deprive him of the reward on the basis that actions are judged by intention. Since his intention in any case was to perform the action, therefore he should deserve reward to some extent.

In the case of action, there may be absence of reward because action can involve show or pretence but intention is hidden in the depth of heart. It can have not a jot of show or affectation. The intention would remain at the same level of frankness, truth, perfection and correctness where it is, even though there may be no action due to some impediment. Even if there is no occasion for forming intention but there is passion and zeal in the heart, a man would deserve reward on the basis of his heart's feelings. This is to what Amir al-mu'minin has alluded in this sermon, namely that "If your brother loved me he would share the reward with those who secured martyrdom for our support."

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SERMON 13

Condemning the people of Başrah¹

You were the army of a woman and in the command of a quadruped. When it grumbled you responded, and when it was wounded (hamstrung) you

fled away. Your character is low and your pledge is broken. Your faith is hypocrisy. Your water is brackish. He who stays with you is laden with sins and he who forsakes you secures Allah's mercy. As though I see your mosque prominent, resembling the surface of a boat, while Allah has sent chastisement from above and from below it and every one who is on it is drowned.²

Another version

By Allah, your city would certainly be drowned so much so that as though I see its mosque like the upper part of a boat or a sitting ostrich.

Another version

Like the bosom of a bird in deep sea.

Another version

Your city is the most stinking of all the cities as regards its clay, the nearest to water and remotest from the sky. It contains nine tenths of evil. He who enters it is surrounded with his sins and he who is out of it enjoys Allah's forgiveness. It seems as though I look at this habitation of yours that water has so engulfed it that nothing can be seen of it except the highest part of mosque appearing like the bosom of a bird in deep sea.

1. Ibn Maytham writes that when the Battle of Jamal ended then on the third day after it Amir al-mu'minin said the morning prayer in the central mosque of Basrah and after finishing it stood on the right side of the prayer place reclining against the wall and delivered this sermon wherein he described the lowness of character of the people of Basrah and their slyness, namely that they got enflamed at others' instigation without anything of their own and making over their command to a woman clung to a camel. They broke away after swearing allegiance and exhibited their low character and evil nature by practising double faced ness. In this sermon woman implies 'A'ishah and quadruped implies the camel (Jamal) after which this battle has been named the 'Battle of Jamal.'

This battle originated in this way that when although during the life time of `Uthman, `A'ishah used to oppose him and had left for Mecca leaving him in siege and as such she had a share in his assassination details of which would be stated at some suitable place but when on her return from Mecca towards Medina she heard from Abdullah ibn Salamah that after `Uthmān allegiance had been paid to `Ali (as Caliph) she suddenly exclaimed, "If allegiance has been paid to `Ali, I wish the sky had burst on the earth. Let me go back to Mecca." Consequently she decided to return to Mecca and began saying, "By Allah, `Uthmān has been killed helplessly. I shall certainly avenge his blood." On seeing this wide change in the state of affairs Abu Salamah said, "What are you saying as you yourself used to say "Kill this *Na`thal*; he had turned unbeliever." Thereupon she replied, "Not only I but everyone used to say so; but leave these things and listen what I am now saying, that is better and deserves more attention. It is so strange that first he was called upon to repent but before giving him an opportunity to do so he has been killed." On this Abu Salamah recited the following verses addressing her:

You started it and now you are changing and raising storms of wind and rain.

You ordered for his killing and told us that he had turned unbeliever.

We admit that he has been killed but under your orders and the real Killer is one who ordered it.

Nevertheless, neither the sky fell over us nor did the sun and moon fell into eclipse.

Certainly people have paid allegiance to one who can ward off the enemy with power and grandeur, does not allow swords to come near him and loosens the twist of the rope, that is, subs duces the enemy.

He is always fully armed for combat and the faithful is never like the traitor.

However, when she reached Mecca with a passion for vengeance she began rousing the people to avenge `Uthmān's blood by circulating stories of his having been victimised. The first to respond to this call was `Abdullah ibn `Amir al-Hadrami who had been the governor of Mecca in `Uthman's reign and with him Marwān ibn al-Hakam, Said ibn al-`As and other Umayyads rose to support her. On the other side Talhah ibn `Ubaydillah and az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwām also reached Mecca from Medina. From Yemen Ya'la ibn Munabbih who had been governor there during `Uthmān's caliphate and the former of governor of Basrah, `Abdullah ibn `Amir ibn Kurayz also reached there, and joining together began preparing their plans. Battle had been decided upon but discussion

was about the venue of confrontation. `A'ishah's opinion was to make Medina the venue of the battle but some people opposed and held that it was difficult to deal with Medinites, and that some other place should be chosen as the venue. At last after much discussion it was decided to march towards Basrah as there was no dearth of men to support the cause. Consequently on the strength of `Abdullah ibn `Amir countless wealth, and the offer of six hundred thousand Dirhams and six hundred camels by Ya`lā ibn Munabbih they prepared an army of three thousand and set off to Basrah. There was a small incident on the way on account of which `A'ishah refused to advance further. What happened was that at a place she heard the barking of dogs and enquired from the camel driver the name of the place. He said it was Haw'ab. On hearing this name she recalled the Prophet's admonition when he had said to his wives, "I wish I could know at which of you the dogs of Haw'ab would bark." So when she realised that she herself was that one she got the camel seated by patting and expressed her intention to abandon the march. But the device of her companions saved the deteriorating situation. `Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr swore to assure her that it was not Haw'ab, Talhah seconded him and for her further assurance also sent for fifty persons to stand witness to it. When all the people were on one side what could a single woman do by opposing. Eventually they were successful and `A'ishah resumed her forward march with the same enthusiasm.

When this army reached Basrah, people were first amazed to see the riding animal of `A'ishah. Jāriyah ibn Qudamah came forward and said, "O' mother of the faithfuls, the assassination of 'Uthmān was one tragedy but the greater tragedy is that you have come out on this cursed camel and ruined your honour and esteem. It is better that you should get back." But since neither the incident at Haw'ab could deter her nor could the Qur'ānic injunction: "*Keep sitting in your houses*" (33:33) stop her, what effect could these voices produce. Consequently, she disregarded all this.

When this army tried to enter the city the Governor of Basrah `Uthman ibn Hunayf came forward to stop them and when the two parties came face to face they drew their swords out of the sheaths and pounced upon each other. When a good number had been killed from either side `A'ishah intervened on the basis of her influence and the two groups agreed that till the arrival of Amir al-mu'minin the existing administration should continue and 'Uthmān ibn Hunayf should continue on his post. But only two days had elapsed when they made a nightly attack on 'Uthmān ibn Hunayf, killed forty innocent persons, beat 'Uthmān ibn Hunayf, plucked every hair of his beard, took him in their custody and shut him up. Then they attacked public treasury and while

ransacking it killed twenty persons on the spot, and beheaded fifty more after arresting them. Then they attacked the grain store, whereupon an elderly noble of Basrah Hukaym ibn Jabalah could not control himself and reaching there with his men said to `Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr, "Spare some of this grain for the city's populace. After all there should be a limit to oppression. You have spread killing and destruction all round and put `Uthmān ibn Hunayf in confinement. For Allāh's sake keep off these ruining activities and release `Uthmān ibn Hunayf. Is there no fear of Allāh in your hearts?" Ibn az-Zubayr said, "This is vengeance of `Uthmān's life." Hukaym ibn Jabalah retorted, "Were those who have been killed assassins of `Uthmān? By Allāh, if I had supporters and comrades I should have certainly avenged the blood of these Muslims whom you have killed without reason." Ibn az-Zubayr replied, "We shall not give anything out of this grain, nor will `Uthmān ibn Hunayf be released." At last the battle raged between these two parties but how could a few individuals deal with such a big force? The result was that Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his son al-Ashraf ibn Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his brother ar-Ri l ibn Jabalah and seventy persons of his tribe were killed. In short, killing and looting prevailed all round. Neither anyone's life was secure nor was there any way to save one's honour or property.

When Amir al-mu'minin was informed of the march to Basrah he set out to stop it with a force which consisted of seventy of those who had taken part in the battle of Badr and four hundred out of those companions who had the honour of being present at the Allegiance of Ridwān (Divine Pleasure). When he stopped at the stage of *Dhiqār* he sent his son Hasan (p.b.u.h.) and `Ammār ibn Yāsir to Kufah to invite its people to fighting. Consequently, despite interference of Abu Musā al-Ash`ari seven thousand combatants from there joined Amir al-mu'minin's army. He left that place after placing the army under various commanders. Eye witnesses state that when this force reached near Basrah first of all a contingent of *ansar* appeared foremost. Its standard was held by Abu Ayyub al-Ansāri. After it appeared another contingent of 1000 whose commander was Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Ansāri. Then another contingent came in sight. Its standard was borne by Abu Qatādah ibn ar-Rabi`. Then a crowd of a thousand old and young persons was seen. They had signs of prostration on their fore-heads and veils of fear of Allāh on their face. It seemed as if they were standing before the Divine Glory on the Day of Judgement. Their Commander rode a dark horse, was dressed in white, had black turban on his head and was reciting the Qur`ān loudly. This was `Ammār ibn Yāsir. Then another contingent appeared. Its standard was in the hand of Qays ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubādah. Then an army came to sight. Its leader wore white dress and had a black turban on his head. He was so handsome that all eyes were centred on

him. This was `Abdullāh ibn `Abbas. Then followed a contingent of the companions of the Prophet. Their standard bearer was Qutham ibn al-`Abbas. Then after the passing of a few contingents a big crowd was seen, wherein there was such a large number of spears that they were overlapping and flags of numerous colours were flying. Among them a big and lofty standard was seen with distinctive position. Behind it was seen a rider guarded by sublimity and greatness. His sinews were well-developed and eyes were cast downwards. His awe and dignity was such that no one could look at him. This was the Ever Victorious Lion of Allāh namely `Ali ibn Abi Talib (p.b.u.h.). On his right and left were Hasan and Husayn (p.b.u.h.). In front of him Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah walked in slow steps carrying the banner of victory and glory, and on the back were the young men of Banu Hāshim, the people of Badr and `Abdullah ibn Ja'far ibn Abi Talib. When this army reached the place *az-Zāwiyah*, Amir al-mu'minin alighted from the horse, and after performing four *rak'ah* of prayer put his cheeks on the ground. When he lifted his head the ground was drenched with tears and the tongue was uttering these words :

O' Sustainer of earth, heaven and the high firmament, this is Basrah. Fill our lap with its good and protect us from its evils.

Then proceeding forward he got down in the battle-field of Jamal where the enemy was already camping. First of all Amir al-mu'minin announced in his army that no one should attack another, nor take the initiative. Saying this he came in front of the opposite army and said to Talhah and az-Zubayr, "You ask `A'ishah by swearing in the name of Allāh and His Prophet whether I am not free from the blame of `Uthmān's blood, and whether I used the same words for him which you used to say, and whether I pressurised you for allegiance or you swore it of your own free will." Talhah got exasperated at these words but az-Zubayr relented, and Amir al-mu'minin turned back after it, and giving the Qur'an to Muslim (a young man from the tribe of `Abd Qays) sent him towards them to pronounce to them the verdict of the Qur'an. But people took both of them within their aim and covered this godly man with their arrows. Then `Ammār ibn Yāsir went to canvass and convince them and caution them with the consequences of war but his words were also replied by arrows. Till now Amir al-mu'minin had not allowed an attack as a result of which the enemy continued feeling encouraged and went on raining arrows constantly. At last with the dying of a few valiant combatants consternation was created among Amir al-mu'minin's ranks and some people came with a few bodies before him and said, "O' Commander of the faithful you are not allowing us to fight while they are covering us with arrows. How long can we let them make our bosoms the victim of their arrows, and remain

hand folded at their excesses?" At this Amir al-mu'minin did show anger but acting with restraint and endurance, came to the enemy in that very form without wearing armour or any arm and shouted, "Where is az-Zubayr?" At first az-Zubayr hesitated to come forward but he noticed that Amir al-mu'minin had no arms he came out. Amir al-mu'minin said to him, "O' az-Zubayr, you must remember that one day the Prophet told you that you would fight with me and wrong and excess would be on your side." az-Zubayr replied that he had said so. Then Amir al-mu'minin enquired "Why have you come then? " He replied that his memory had missed it and if he had recollected it earlier he would not have come that way. Amir al-mu'minin said, "Well, now you have recollected it" and he replied, "Yes." Saying this he went straight to `A'ishah and told her that he was getting back. She asked him the reason and he replied, " `Ali has reminded me a forgot-ten matter. I had gone astray, but now I have come on the right path and would not fight `Ali ibn Abi Talib at any cost." `A'ishah said, "You have caught fear of the swords of the sons of `Abd al-Muttalib," He said, "No" and saying this he turned the reins of his horse. However, it is gratifying that some consideration was accorded to the Prophet's saying, for at Haw'ab even after recollection of the Prophet's words no more than transient effect was taken of it. On returning after this conversation Amir Almu'minin observed that they had attacked the right and left flanks of his army. Noticing this Amir al-mu'minin said, "Now the plea has been exhausted. Call my son Muhammad." When he came Amir al-mu'minin said, "My son, attack them now." Muhammad bowed his head and taking the standard proceeded to the battle-field. But arrows were falling in such exuberance that he had to stop. When Amir al-mu'minin saw this he called out at him, "Muhammad, why don't you advance?" He said, "Father, in this shower of arrows there is no way to proceed. Wait till the violence of arrows subsides." He said, "No, thrust yourself in the arrows and spears and attack." Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah advanced a little but the archers so surrounded him that he had to hold his steps. On seeing this a frown appeared on Amir al-mu'minin's forehead and getting forward he hit the sword's handle on the Muhammad's back and said, "This is the effect of your mother's veins." Saying this he took the standard from his hands and folding up his sleeves made such an attack that a tumult was created in the enemy's ranks from one end to the other. To whichever row he turned, it became clear and to whatever side he directed himself bodies were seen falling and heads rolling in the hoofs of horses. When after convulsing the rows he returned to his position he said to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah, "Look, my son, battle is fought like this." Saying this he gave the standard to him and ordered him to proceed. Muhammad advanced towards the enemy with a contingent of ansar. The enemy also came out moving and balancing

their spears. But the brave son of the valiant father convulsed rows over rows while the other warriors also made the battle-field glory and left heaps of dead bodies.

From the other side also there was full demonstration of spirit of sacrifice. Dead bodies were falling one over the other but they continued sacrificing their lives devotedly around the camel. Particularly the condition of Banu Dabbah was that although their hands were being severed from the elbows for holding the reins of the camel, and bosoms were being pierced yet they had the following battle-song on their tongues :

- a) *To us death is sweeter than honey. We are Bani Dabbah, camel rearers.*
- b) *We are sons of death when death comes. We announce the death of 'Uthman with the edges of spears.*
- c) *Give us back our chief and there is an end to it.*

The low character and ignorance from faith of these Bani Dabbah, can be well understood by that one incident which al-Madā'ini has narrated. He writes that in Basrah there was a man with mutilated ear. He asked him its reason when he said, "I was watching the sight of dead bodies in the battle-field of Jamal when I saw a wounded man who sometimes raised his head and sometimes dashed it back on the ground. I approached near. Then the following two verses were on his lips :

- a) *Our mother pushed us into the deep waters of death and did not get back till we had thoroughly drunk.*
- b) *By misfortune we obeyed Banu Taym who are none but slave men and slave girls.*

"I told him it was not the time to recite verses; he should rather recall Allah and recite the *kalimat ash-shahādah* (verse of testimony). On my saying this he saw me with angry looks and uttering a severe abuse and said, 'You are asking me to recite *kalimat ash-shahādah*, get frightened at the last moment and show impatience.' I was astonished to hear this and decided to return without saying anything further. When he saw me returning he said, 'Wait; for your sake I am prepared to recite, but teach me.' I drew close to teach him the *kalimah* when he asked me to get closer. When I got closer he caught my ear with his teeth and did not leave it till he tore it from the root. I did not think it proper to molest a dying man and was about to get back abusing and cursing him when he asked me to listen one more thing. I agreed to listen lest he had

an unsatisfied wish. He said that when I should get to my mother and she enquired who had bitten my ear I should say that it was done by `Umayr ibn al-Ahlab ad-Dabbi who had been deceived by a woman aspiring to become the commander of the faithful (head of the state)."

However, when the dazzling lightning of swords finished the lives of thousands of persons and hundreds of Banu Azd and Banu Dabbah were killed for holding the rein of the camel. Amir al-mu'minin ordered, "Kill the camel for it is Satan." Saying this he made such a severed attack that the cries of 'Peace' and 'Protection' rose from all round. When he reached near the camel he ordered Bujayr ibn Duljah to kill the camel at once. Consequently, Bujayr hit him with such full might that the camel fell in agony on the side of its bosom. No sooner than the camel fell the opposite army took to heels and the carrier holding `A'ishah was left lonely and unguarded. The companions of Amir al-mu'minin took control of the carrier and under orders of Amir al-mu'minin, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr escorted `A'ishah to the house of Safiyyah bint al-Harith.

This encounter commenced on the 10th of Jumada ath-thaniyah, 36 A.H., in the afternoon and came to an end the same evening. In it from Amir al-mu'minin's army of twenty two thousand, one thousand and seventy or according to another version five hundred persons were killed as martyrs while from `A'ishah's army of thirty thousand, seventeen thousand persons were killed, and the Prophet's saying, "That people who assigned their affairs (of state) to a woman would never prosper" was fully corroborated. (*al-Imāmah wa's-siyasah; Muruj adh-dhahab; al-Iqd al farid; at-Tārikh*, at-Tabari)

2. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that- as prophesied by Amir almu'minin, Basrah got under floods twice — once in the days of al-Qadir Billāh and once in the reign of al-Qāim bi Amri'llāh and the state of flooding was just this that while the whole city was under water but the top ends of the mosque were seen about the surface of the water and looked like a bird sitting on the side of its bosom.

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SERMON 14

This also is in condemnation of the people of Baṣrah

Your earth is close to the sea and away from the sky. Your wits have become light and your minds are full of folly. You are the aim of the archer, a morsel for the eater and an easy prey for the hunter.

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SERMON 15

After resuming the land grants made by `Uthmān ibn `Affān, he said :

By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids have been purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.

* * * * *

SERMON 16

Delivered when allegiance was sworn to him at Medina

The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed and I am answerable for it. He to whom experiences have clearly shown the past exemplary punishments

(given by Allah to peoples) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts. You should know that the same troubles have returned to you which existed when the Prophet was first sent.

By Allah who sent the Prophet with faith and truth you will be severely subverted, bitterly shaken as in sieving and fully mixed as by spooning in a cooking pot till your low persons become high and high ones become low, those who were behind would attain forward positions and those who were forward would become backward. By Allah, I have not concealed a single word or spoken any lie and I had been informed of this event and of this time.

Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their reins have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell. Beware that piety is like trained horses on whom the riders have been placed with the reins in their hands, so that they would take the riders to Heaven. There is right and wrong and there are followers for each. If wrong dominates, it has (always) in the past been so, and if truth goes down that too has often occurred. It seldom happens that a thing that lags behind comes forward.

ash-Sharif ar-Radi says: In this small speech there is more beauty than can be appreciated, and the quantity of amazement aroused by it is more than the appreciation accorded to it. Despite what we have stated it has so many aspects of eloquence that cannot be expressed nor can anyone reach its depth, and no one can understand what I am saying unless one has attained this art and known its details.

... No one appreciates it except those who know (Qur'an, 29:43)

From the same Sermon

He who has heaven and hell in his view has no other aim. He who attempts and acts quickly, succeeds, while the seeker who is slow may also entertain hope, and he who falls short of action faces destruction in Hell. On right and left there are misleading paths. Only the middle way is the (right) path which is the Everlasting Book and the traditions of the Prophet. From it the *sunnah* has spread out and towards it is the eventual return.

He who claims (otherwise) is ruined and he who concocts falsehood is disappointed. He who opposes¹ right with his face gets destruction. It is enough ignorance for a man not to know himself. He who is strong rooted² in piety does not get destruction, and the plantation of a people based on piety never remains without water. Hide yourselves in your houses and reform your-selves. Repentance is at your back. One should praise only Allah and condemn only his own self.

1. In some versions after the words "*man abdā ṣafḥatahu lilḥaqqi halaka*" the words "*inda jahalati'n-nās*" also occur. In that case the meaning of this sentence would be that he who stands in face of right dies in the estimation of the ignorant.

2. Piety is the name of heart and mind being affected and impressed by the Divine Greatness and Glory, as an effect of which the spirit of man becomes full of fear of Allāh, and its inevitable result is that engrossment in worship and prayer increases. It is impossible that heart may be full of Divine fear and there be no manifestation of it in actions and deeds. And since worship and submission reform the heart and nurture the spirit, purity of heart increases with the increase of worship. That is why in the Qur'an "*taqwā*" (piety) has been applied sometimes to fear, sometimes to worship and devotion and sometimes to purity of heart and spirit. Thus in the verse "*wa iyyāya fattaqūn*" (and Me you fear [16:2]) *taqwā* implies fear, in the verse, "*ittaqu'l-laha ḥaqqa tuqātihi*" (worship Allah as He ought to be worshipped [3:102]). *taqwā* implies worship and devotion and in the verse "*wa yakshā'l-laha wa yattaqehi fa-'ulāika humul fāzūn*" (24:52) *taqwā* implies purity of spirit and cleanliness of heart .

In the traditions *taqwā* has been assigned three degrees. The first degree is that a man should follow the injunctions and keep aloof from prohibitions. The second degree is that recommendatory matters should also be followed and disliked things should be avoided. The third degree is that for fear of falling into doubts one may abstain from the permissibles as well. The first degree is for the common men, the second for the nobles and the third for high dignitaries. Allah has referred to these three degrees in the following verse :

On those who believe and do good, is no blame for what they ate, (before) when they did guard themselves and did believe, and did good, still (furthermore) they guard themselves and do good; and Allah loveth the doers of good. (Qur'an, 5:93)

Amir al-mu'minin says that only action based on piety is lasting, and only that action will blossom and bear fruit which is watered by piety because worship is only that wherein the feeling of submissiveness exists. Thus, Allah says :

Is he therefore better who hath laid his foundation on fear of Allah and (His) goodwill or he who layeth his foundation on the brink of a crumbling down with into the fire of Hell; . . . (Qur'an, 9:109)

Consequently, every such belief as is not based on knowledge and conviction is like the edifice, erected without foundation, wherein there is no stability or firmness while every action that is without piety is like the plantation which withers for lack of watering.

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SERMON 17

About those who sit for dispensation of justice among people but are not fit for it.

Among ¹ all the people the most detested before Allah are two persons. One is he who is devoted to his self. So he is deviated from the true path and loves speaking about (foul)

innovations and inviting towards wrong path. He is therefore a nuisance for those who are enamoured of him, is himself misled from the guidance of those preceding him, misleads those who follow him in his life or after his death, carries the weight of others' sins and is entangled in his own misdeeds.

The other man is he who has picked up ignorance. He moves among the ignorant, is senseless in the thick of mischief and is blind to the advantages of peace. Those resembling like men have named him scholar but he is not so. He goes out early morning to collect things whose deficiency is better than plenty, till when he has quenched his thirst from polluted water and acquired meaningless things.

He sits among the people as a judge responsible for solving whatever is confusing to the others. If an ambiguous problem is presented before him he manages shabby argument about it of his own accord and passes judgement on its basis. In this way he is entangled in the confusion of doubts as in the spider's web, not knowing whether he was right or wrong. If he is right he fears lest he erred, while if he is wrong he hopes he is right. He is ignorant, wandering astray in ignorance and riding on carriages aimlessly moving in darkness. He did not try to find reality of knowledge. He scatters the traditions as the wind scatters the dry leaves.

By Allah, he is not capable of solving the problems that come to him nor is fit for the position assigned to him. Whatever he does not know he does not regard it worth knowing. He does not realise that what is beyond his reach is within the reach of others. If anything is not clear to him he keeps quiet over it because he knows his own ignorance. Lost lives are crying against his unjust verdicts, and properties (that have been wrongly disposed of) are grumbling against him.

I complain to Allah about persons who live ignorant and die misguided. For them nothing is more worthless than Qur'an

if it is recited as if should be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Qur'an if its verses are removed from their places, nor anything more vicious than virtue nor more virtuous than vice.

1. Amir al-mu'minin has held two categories of persons as the most detestable by Allah and the worst among people. Firstly, those who are misguided even in basic tenets and are busy in the spreading of evil. Secondly, those who abandon the Qur'an and *sunnah* and pronounce injunctions through their imagination. They create a circle of their devotees and popularize the religious code of law concocted by themselves. The misguidance and wrongfulness of such persons does not remain confined to their own selves but the seed of misguidance sown by them bears fruit and growing into the form of a big tree provides asylum to the misguided and this misguidance goes on multiplying. And since these very people are the real originators the weight of other's sins is also on their shoulders as the Qur'an says:

And certainly they shall bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens with their own burdens . . . (29:13)

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SERMON 18

Amir al-mu' minin said in disparagement of the differences of view among the theologians.

When¹ a problem is put before anyone of them he passes judgement on it from his imagination. When exactly the same problem is placed before another of them he passes an opposite verdict. Then these judges go to the chief who had appointed them and he confirms all the verdicts, although their Allah is One (and the same), their Prophet is one (and the same), their Book (the Qur'an) is one (and the same).

Is it that Allah ordered them to differ and they obeyed Him? Or He prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him?

Or He prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him? Or (is it that) Allah sent an incomplete Faith and sought their help to complete it? Or they are His partners in the affairs, so that it is their share of duty to pronounce and He has to agree? Or is it that Allah the Glorified sent a perfect faith but the Prophet fell short of conveying it and handing it over (to the people)? The fact is that Allah the Glorified says :

... We have not neglected anything in the Book (Qur'an) ... (Qur'an, 6:38)

And says that one part of the Qur'an verifies another part and that there is no divergence in it as He says :

... And if it had been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found in it much discrepancy. (Qur'an, 4:82)

Certainly the outside of the Qur'an is wonderful and its inside is deep (in meaning). Its wonders will never disappear, its amazements will never pass away and its intricacies cannot be cleared except through itself.

1. It is a disputed problem that where there is no clear argument about a matter in the religious law, whether there does in reality exist an order about it or not. The view adopted by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari and his master Abu `Ali al-Jubbā'i is that in such a case Allah has not ordained any particular course of action but He assigned the task of finding it out and passing a verdict to the jurists so that whatever they hold as prohibited would be deemed prohibited and whatever they regard permissible would be deemed permissible. And if one has one view and the other another then as many verdicts will exist as there are views and each of them would represent the final order. For example, if one scholar holds that barley malt is prohibited and another jurist's view is that it is permissible then it would really be both prohibited and permissible. That is, for one who holds it prohibited, its use would be prohibited while for the other its use would be permissible. About this (theory of) correctness Muhammad ibn Abdi'l-Karim ash-Shahrestani writes :

A group of theorists hold that in matters where *ijtihād* (research) is applied there is no settled view about permissibility or otherwise and lawfulness and prohibition thereof, but whatever the *mujtahid* (the researcher scholar) holds is the order of Allah, because the ascertainment of the view of Allah depends upon the verdict of the *mujtahid*. If it is not so there will be no verdict at all. And according to this view every *mujtahid* would be correct in his opinion. (*al-Milal wal-niḥal*, p.98)

In this case, the *mujtahid* is taken to be above mistake because a mistake can be deemed to occur where a step is taken against reality, but where there is no reality of verdict, mistake has no sense. Besides this, the *mujtahid* can be considered to be above mistake if it is held that Allah, being aware of all the views that were likely to be adopted has ordained as many final orders as a result of which every view corresponds to some such order, or that Allah has assured that the views adopted by the *mujtahids* should not go beyond what He has ordained, or that by chance the view of every one of them would, after all, correspond to some ordained order or other.

The Imāmiyyah sect, however, has different theory, namely that Allah has neither assigned to anyone the right to legislate nor subjected any matter to the view of the *mujtahid*, nor in case of difference of views has He ordained numerous real orders. Of course, if the *mujtahid* cannot arrive at a real order then whatever view he takes after research and probe, it is enough for him and his followers to act by it. Such an order is the apparent order which is a substitute for the real order. In this case, he is excused for missing the real order, because he did his best for diving in the deep ocean and to explore its bottom, but it is a pity that instead of pearls he got only the sea-shell. He does not say that observers should accept it as a pearl or it should sell as such. It is a different matter that Allah Who watches the endeavours may price it at half so that the endeavour does not go waste, nor his passion discouraged.

If the theory of correctness is adopted then every verdict on law and every opinion shall have to be accepted as correct as Maybudi has written in *Fawātih* :

In this matter the view adopted by al-Ash`ari is right. It follows that differing opinions should all be right. Beware, do not bear a bad idea about jurists and do not open your tongue to abuse them.

When contrary theories and divergent views are accepted as correct it is strange why the action of some conspicuous individuals are explained as mistakes of decision, since mistake of decision by the *mujtahid* cannot be imagined at all. If the theory of correctness is right the action of Mu`awiyah and `A`ishah should be deemed right; but if their actions can be deemed to be wrong then we should agree that *ijtihad* can also go wrong, and that the theory of correctness is wrong. It will then remain to be decided in its own context whether feminism did not impede the decision of `A`ishah or whether it was a (wrong) finding of Mu`awiyah or something else. However, this theory of correctness was propounded in order to cover mistakes and to give them the garb of Allah's orders so that there should be no impediment in achieving objectives or should anyone be able to speak against any misdeeds.

In this sermon Amir al-mu`minin has referred to those people who deviate from the path of Allah and, closing their eyes to light, grope in the darkness of imagination, make Faith the victim of their views and opinions, pronounce new findings, pass orders by their own imagination and produce divergent results. Then on the basis of the theory of correctness they regard all these divergent and contrary orders as from Allah, as though each of their order represents divine Revelation so that no order of theirs can be wrong nor can they stumble on any occasion. Thus, Amir al-mu`minin says in disproving this view that:

1) When Allah is One, Book (Qur'an) is one, and Prophet is one then the religion (that is followed) should also be one. And when the religion is one how can there be divergent orders about any matter, because there can be divergence in an order only in case he who passed the order has forgotten it, or is oblivious, or senselessness overtakes him, or he wilfully desires entanglement in these labyrinths, while Allah and the Prophet are above these things. These divergences cannot therefore be attributed to them. These divergences are rather the outcome of the thinking and opinions of people who are bent on twisting the delineations of religion by their own imaginative performances.

2) Allah must have either forbidden these divergences or ordered creating them. If He has ordered in their favour, where is that order and at what place? As for forbidding, the Qur'an says:

... *Say thou! 'Hath Allah permitted you or ye forge a lie against Allah?'*
(10:59)

That is, everything that is not in accordance with the Divine orders is a concoction, and concoction is forbidden and prohibited. For concocters, in the next world, there is neither success or achievement nor prosperity and good. Thus, Allah says:

And utter ye not whatever lie describe your tongues (saying): This is lawful and this is forbidden, to forge a lie against Allah; verily, those who forge a lie against Allah succeed not. (Qur'an, 16:116)

3) If Allah has left religion incomplete and the reason for leaving it halfway was that He desired that the people should assist Him in completing the religious code and share with Him in the task of legislating, then this belief is obviously polytheism. If He sent down the religion in complete form the Prophet must have failed in conveying it so that room was left for others to apply imagination and opinion. This, Allah forbid, would mean a weakness of the Prophet and a bad slur on the selection of Allah.

4) Allah has said in the Qur'an that He has not left out anything in the Book and has clarified each and every matter. Now, if an order is carved out in conflict with the Qur'an a would be outside the religious code and its basis would not be on knowledge and perception, or Qur'an and *sunnah*, but it would be personal opinion and one's personal judgement which cannot be deemed to have accord with religion and faith.

5) Qur'an is the basis and source of religion and the fountain head of the laws of *shari'ah*. If the laws of *shari'ah* were divergent there should have been divergence in it also, and if there were divergences in it, it could not be regarded as Divine word. When it is Divine word the laws of *shari'ah* cannot be divergent, so as to accept all divergent and contrary views as correct and imaginative verdicts taken as Qur'anic dictates.

SERMON 19

Amir al-mu'minin was delivering a lecture from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kufah when al-Ash'ath ibn Qays¹ objected and said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin this thing is not in your favour but against you."² Amir al-mu'minin looked at him with anger and said :

How do you know what is for me and what is against me?! Curse of Allah and others be on you. You are a weaver and son of a weaver. You are the son of an unbeliever and yourself a hypocrite. You were arrested once by the Unbelievers and once by the Muslims, but your wealth and birth could not save you from either. The man who contrives for his own people to be put to sword and invites death and destruction for them does deserve that the near ones should hate him and the remote ones should not trust him.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: This man was arrested once when an unbeliever and once in days of Islam. As for Amir al-mu'minin's words that the man contrived for his own people to be put to sword, the reference herein is to the incident which occurred to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays in confrontation with Khālid ibn Walid at Yamāmah, where he deceived his people and contrived a trick till Khālid attacked them. After this incident his people nicknamed him " `Urf an-Nār " which in the parlance stood for traitor.

AL-ASH'ATH IBN QAYS AL-KINDI

1. His original name was Ma`di Karib and surname Abu Muhammad but because of his dishevelled hair he is better known as al-Ash'ath (one having dishevelled hair). When after Proclamation (of Prophethood) he came to Mecca along with his tribe, the Prophet invited him and his tribe to accept Islam. But all of them turned back without anyone accepting Islam. When after *hijrah* (immigration of the Holy Prophet) Islam became established and in full swing and deputations began to come to Medina in large numbers he also came to the Prophet's audience with Banu Kindah and accepted Islam. The author of *al-Isti'āb* writes that after the Prophet this man again turned unbeliever but when during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr he was brought to Medina as prisoner he again accepted Islam, though this time too his Islam

was a show. Thus, ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh writes in his annotations on *Nahj al-balāghah*:

Just as `Abdullah ibn Ubay ibn Salul was a companion of the Prophet, al-Ash`ath was a companion of `Ali and both were high ranking hypocrites.

He lost one of his eyes in the battle of Yarmuk. Ibn Qutaybah has included him in the list of the one-eyed. Abu Bakr's sister Umm Farwah bint Abi Quḥafah, who was once the wife of an al-Azdi and then of Tamim ad-Dārimi, was on the third occasion married to this al-Ash`ath. Three sons were born of her *viz.* Muhammad, Ismail and Is'hāq. Books on biography show that she was blind. Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadid has quoted the following statement of Abu'l-Faraj wherefrom it appears that this man was equally involved in the assassination of `Ali (p.b.u.h.):

On the night of the assassination Ibn Muljam came to al-Ash`ath ibn Qays and both retired to a corner of the mosque and sat there when Ḥujr ibn `Adi passed by that side and he heard al-Ash`ath saying to Ibn Muljam, "Be quick now or else dawn's light would disgrace you." On hearing this Ḥujr said to al-Ash`ath, "O' one-eyed man, you are preparing to kill `Ali" and hastened towards `Ali ibn Abi Talib, but Ibn Muljam had preceded him and struck `Ali with sword when Ḥujr turned back people were crying, " `Ali has been killed. "

It was his daughter who killed Imam Hasan (p.b.u.h.) by poisoning him. Mas`udi has written that:

His (Hasan's) wife Ja`dah bint al-Ash`ath poisoned him while Mu`awiyah had conspired with her that if she could contrive to poison Hasan he would pay her one hundred thousand Dirhams and marry her to Yazid. (*Muruj adh-dhahab*, vol.2, p.650)

His son Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath was active in playing fraud with Hadrat Muslim ibn `Aqil in Kufah and in shedding Imam Husayn's blood in Karbala. But despite all these points he is among those from whom al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah have related traditions.

2. After the battle of Nahrawān, Amir al-mu'minin was delivering a sermon in the mosque of Kufah about ill effects of "Arbitration" when a man stood up and said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin, first you desisted us from this Arbitration but thereafter you allowed it. We cannot understand which of these two was more correct and proper." On hearing this Amir al-mu'minin

clapped his one hand over the other and said, "This is the reward of one who gives up firm view" that is, this is the outcome of your own actions as you had abandoned firmness and caution and insisted on "Arbitration," but al-Ash'ath mistook it to mean as though Amir al-mu'minin implied that "my worry was due to having accepted Arbitration," so he spoke out, "O' Amir al-mu'minin this brings blame on your own self" whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said harshly :

What do you know what I am saying, and what do you understand what is for me or against me. You are a weaver and the son of a weaver brought up by unbelievers and a hypocrite. Curse of Allah and all the world be upon you.

Commentators have written several reasons for Amir al-mu'minin calling al-Ash'ath a weaver. First reason is, because he and his father like most of the people of his native place pursued the industry of weaving cloth. So, in order to refer -to the lowliness of his occupation he has been called 'weaver'. Yamanese had other occupations also but mostly this profession was followed among them. Describing their occupations Khālid ibn Safwān has mentioned this one first of all.

What can I say about a people among whom there are only weavers, leather dyers, monkey keepers and donkey riders. The hoopoe found them out, the mouse flooded them and a woman ruled over them. (*al-Bayān wa't-tabyin*, vol.1, p.130)

The second reason is that "*ḥiyakah* " means walking by bending on either side, and since out of pride and conceit this man used to walk shrugging his shoulders and making bends in his body, he has been called "*ḥāyik* ".

The third reason is — and it is more conspicuous and clear — that he has been called a weaver to denote his foolishness and lowliness because every low person is proverbially known as a weaver. Their wisdom and sagacity can be well gauged by the fact that their follies had become proverbial, while nothing attains proverbial status without peculiar characteristics. Now, that Amir al-mu'minin has also confirmed it no further argument or reasoning is needed.

The fourth reason is that by this is meant the person who conspires against Allah and the Holy Prophet and prepares webs of which is the peculiarity of hypocrites. Thus, in *Wasā'il ash-Shi'ah* (vol. 12, p.101) it is stated:

It was mentioned before Imam Ja'far as-Sādiq (p.b.u.h.) that the weaver is accursed when he explained that the weaver implies the person who concocts against Allah and the Prophet.

After the word weaver Amir al-mu'minin has used the word hypocrite, and there is no conjunction in between them in order to emphasise the nearness of meaning thereof. Then, on the basis of this hypocrisy and concealment of truth he declared him deserving of the curse of Allah and all others, as Allah the Glorified says:

Verily, those that conceal what we have sent of (Our) manifest evidences and guidance, after what we have (so) clearly shown for man-kind in the Book (they are), those that Allah doth curse them and (also) curse them all those who curse (such ones). (Qur'an, 2:159)

After this Amir al-mu'minin says that "You could not avoid the de-gradation of being prisoner when you were unbeliever, nor did these ignominies spare you after acceptance of Islam, and you were taken prisoner." When an unbeliever the event of his being taken prisoner occurred in this way that when the tribe of Banu Murād killed his father Qays, he (al-Ash'ath) collected the warriors of Banu Kindah and divided them in three groups. Over one group he himself took the command, and on the others he placed Kabs ibn Hāni and al-Qash'am ibn Yazid al-Arḡam as chiefs, and set off to deal with Banu Murad. But as misfortune would have it instead of Banu Murad he attacked Banu al-Harith ibn Ka'b. The result was that Kabs ibn Hani' and al-Qash'am ibn Yazid al-Arḡam were killed and this man was taken prisoner alive. Eventually he got a release by paying three thousand camels as ransom. In Amir al-mu'minin's words, "Your wealth or birth could not save you from either," the reference is not to real *fiḍyah'* (release money) because he was actually released on payment of release money but the intention is that neither plenty of wealth nor his high position and prestige in his tribe could save him from this ignominy, and he could not protect himself from being a prisoner.

The event of his second imprisonment is that when the Holy Prophet of Islam passed away from this world a rebellion occurred in the region of Hadramawt for repelling which Caliph Abu Bakr wrote to the governor of the place Ziyad ibn Labid al-Bayadi al-Ansari that he should secure allegiance and collect *zakat* and charities from those people. When Ziyād ibn Labid went to the tribe of Banal `Amr ibn Mu`awiyah for collection of *zakāt* he took keen fancy for a she-camel of Shaytān ibn Ḥujr which was very hand-some and of huge body. He jumped over it and took possession of it. Shay-tan ibn Ḥujr did not agree to spare it and said to him to take over some

other she-camel in its place but Ziyad would not agree. Shaytān sent for his brother al-'Add's ibn Ḥujr for his support. On coming he too had a talk but Ziyad insisted on his point and did not, by any means, consent to keep off his hand from that she-camel. At last both these brothers appealed to Masruq ibn Ma'di Karib for help. Consequently, Masruq also used his influence so that Ziyad might leave the she-camel but he refused categorically, whereupon Masruq became enthusiastic and untying the she-camel handed it over to Shaytān. On this Ziyad was infuriated and collecting his men became ready to fight. On the other side Banu Wali`ah also assembled to face them, but could not defeat Ziyad and were badly beaten at his hands. Their women were taken away and property was looted. Eventually those who had survived were obliged to take refuge under the protection of al-Ash'ath. al-Ash'ath promised assistance on the condition that he should be acknowledged ruler of the area. Those people agreed to this condition and his coronation was also formally solemnised. After having his authority acknowledged he arranged an army and set out to fight Ziyad. On the other side Abu Bakr had written to the chief of Yemen, al-Muhajir ibn Abi Umayyah to go for the help of Ziyad with a contingent. Al-Muhajir was coming with his contingent when they came face to face. Seeing each other they drew swords and commenced fighting at az-Zurgan. In the end al-Ash`ath fled from the battle-field and taking his remaining men closed himself in the fort of an-Nujayr. The enemy was such as to let them alone. They laid siege around the fort. al-Ash`ath thought how long could he remain shut up in the fort with this lack of equipment and men, and that he should think out some way of escape. So one night he stealthily came out of the fort and met Ziyad and al-Muhajir and conspired with them that if they gave asylum to nine members of his family he would get the fort gate opened. They accepted this term and asked him to write for them the names of those nine persons. He wrote down the nine names and made them over to them, but acting on his traditional wisdom forgot to write his own name in that list. After settling this he told his people that he has secured protection for them and the gate of the fort should be opened. When the gate was opened Ziyad forces pounced upon them. They said they had been promised protection whereupon Ziyad's army said that this was wrong and that al-Ash'ath had asked protection only for nine members of his house, whose names were preserved with them. In short eight hundred persons were put to sword and hands of several women were chopped off, while according to the settlement nine men were let off, but the case of al-Ash'ath became complicated. Eventually it was decided he should be sent to Abu Bakr and he should decided about him. At last he was sent to Medina in chains along with a thousand women prisoners. On the way relations and others, men and women, all hurled curses at him and the women were calling him traitor and one who got his own people put to sword. Who

else can be a greater traitor? However, when he reached Medina Abu Bakr released him and on that occasion he was married to Umm Farwah.

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SERMON 20

Death and taking lessons from it

If you could see what has been seen by those of you who have died, you would be puzzled and troubled. Then you would have listened and obeyed; but what they have seen is yet curtained off from you. Shortly, the curtain would be thrown off. You have been shown, provided you see and you have been made to listen provided you listen, and you have been guided if you accept guidance. I spoke unto you with truth. You have been called aloud by (instructive) examples and warned through items full of warnings. After the heavenly messengers (angels), only man can convey message from Allah. (So what I am conveying is from Allah).

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SERMON 21

Advice to keep light in this world

Your aim (reward or punishment) is before you. Behind your back is the hour (of resurrection) which is driving you on. Keep (yourself) light and overtake (the forward ones). Your last ones are being awaited by the first ones (who have proceeded).

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: If this utterance of `Ali (p.b.u.h.) is weighed with any other utterance except the word of Allah or of the Holy Prophet, it would prove heavier and superior in every respect. For example, `Ali's saying "Keep light and over-take" is the shortest expression ever heard with the greatest sense conveyed by it. How wide is its meaning and how clear its spring of wisdom! We have pointed out the greatness and meaningfulness of this phrase in our book *al-Khaṣā'is*.

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SERMON 22

About those who accused him of 'Uthman's killing

Beware ! Satan has certainly started instigating his forces and has collected his army in order that oppression may reach its extreme ends and wrong may come back to its position. By Allah they have not put a correct blame on me, nor have they done justice between me and themselves.

They are demanding of me a right which they have abandoned, and a blood that they have themselves shed.¹ If I were a partner with them in it then they too have their share of it. But if they did it without me they alone have to face the con-sequences. Their biggest argument (against me) is (really) against themselves. They are suckling from a mother who is already dry, and bringing into life innovation that is already dead. How disappointing is this challenger (to battle)? Who is this challenger and for what is he being responded to? I am happy that the reasoning of Allah has been exhausted before them and He knows (all) about them. If they refuse (to obey) I will offer them the edge of the sword which is enough a curer of wrong and supporter of Right.

It is strange they send me word to proceed to them for spear-fighting and to keep ready for fighting with swords. May the mourning women mourn over them. I have ever been so that I was never frightened by fighting nor threatened by clashing. I enjoy full certainty of belief from my Allah and have no doubt in my faith.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin was accused of `Uthman's assassination he delivered this sermon to refute that allegation, wherein he says about those who blamed him that: "These seekers of vengeance cannot say that

I alone am the assassin and that no one else took part in it. Nor can they falsify witnessed events by saying that they were unconcerned with it. Why then have they put me foremost for this avenging? With me they should include themselves also. If I am free of this blame they cannot establish their freedom from it. How can they detach themselves from this punishment? The truth of the matter is that by accusing me of this charge their aim is that I should behave with them in the same manner to which they are accustomed. But they should not expect from me that I would revive the innovations of the previous regimes. As for fighting, neither was I ever afraid of it nor am I so now. Allah knows my intention and He also knows that those standing on the excuse of taking revenge are themselves his assassins." Thus, history corroborates that the people who managed his (`Uthman's) assassination by agitation and had even prevented his burial in Muslims' graveyard by hurling stones at his coffin were the same who rose for avenging his blood. In this connection, the names of Talhah ibn Ubaydillah, az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwām and `Ā'ishah are at the top of the list since on both occasions their efforts come to sight with conspicuousness. Thus Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadid writes that :

Those who have written the account of assassination of `Uthman state that on the day of his killing Talhah's condition was that in order to obscure himself from the eyes of the people he had a veil on his face and was shooting arrows at `Uthman's house.

And in this connection, about az-Zubayr's ideas he writes:

Historians have also state that az-Zubayr used to say "Kill `Uthman. He has altered your faith." People said, "Your son is standing at his door and guarding him," and he replied, "Even my son may be lost, but `Uthman must be killed. `Uthman will be lying like a carcass on Sirāt tomorrow." (*Sharh Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.9, pp. 35–36)

About `Ā'ishah, Ibn `Abd Rabbah writes :

al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah came to `Ā'ishah when she said, "O' Abu `Abdillah, I wish you had been with me on the day of Jamal; how arrows were piercing through my *hawdaj* (camel litter) till some of them stuck my body." al-Mughirah said, "I wish one of them should have killed you." She said, "Allah may have pity you; why so?" He replied, "So that it would have been some atonement for what you had done against `Uthman." (*al-`Iqd al-farid*, vol.4, p.294)

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SERMON 23

About keeping aloof from envy, and good behaviour towards kith and kin

Now then, verily Divine orders descend from heaven to earth like drops of rain, bringing to every one what is destined for him whether plenty or paucity. So if any one of you observes for his brother plenty of progeny or of wealth or of self, it should not be a worry for him. So long as a Muslim does not commit such an act that if it is disclosed he has to bend his eyes (in shame) and by which low people are emboldened, he is like the gambler who expects that the first draw of his arrow would secure him gain and also cover up the previous loss.

Similarly, the Muslim who is free from dishonesty expects one of the two good things: either call from Allah and in that case whatever is with Allah is the best for him, or the livelihood of Allah. He has already children and property while his faith and respect are with him. Certainly, wealth and children are the plantations of this world while virtuous deed is the plantation of the next world. Sometimes Allah joins all these in some groups.

Beware of Allah against what He has cautioned you and keep afraid of Him to the extent that no excuse is needed for it. Act without show or intention of being heard, for if a man acts for some one else then Allah makes him over to that one. We ask Allah (to grant us) the positions of the martyrs, company of the

virtuous and friendship of the prophets.

O' people! Surely no one (even though he may be rich) can do without his kinsmen, and their support by hands or tongues. They alone are his support from rear and can ward off from him his troubles, and they are the most kind to him when tribulations befall him. The good memory of a man that Allah retains among people is better than the property which others inherit from him.

In the same sermon

Behold ! If any one of you finds your near ones in want or starvation, he should not desist from helping them with that which will not increase if this help is not extended, nor decrease by thus spending it. Whoever holds up his hand from (helping) his kinsmen, he holds only one hand, but at the time of his need many hands remain held up from helping him. One who is sweet tempered can retain the love of his people for good.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In this sermon "*al-ghafirah*" means plenty or abundance, and this is derived from the Arab saying, "*al-jamm' l-ghafir*" or "*al-jamm' al-ghafir*" meaning thick crowd. In some versions for "*al ghafirah*" "*afwatan*" appears. "*afwah*" means the good and selected part of anything. It is said "*akaltu afwata t-ta`am*", to mean "I ate select meal." About "*wa man yaqbiḍ yadahu 'an 'asheeratihi*" appearing towards the end he points out how beautiful the meaning of this sentence is, Amir al-mu'minin implies that he who does not help his own kinsmen withholds only his hand but when he is in need of their assistance and would be looking for their sympathy and support then he would remain deprived of the sympathies and succour of so many of their extending hands and marching feet.

SERMON 24

Exhorting people for jihād

By my life there will be no regard for anyone or slackening from me in fighting against one who opposes right or gropes in misguidance. O' creatures of Allah, fear Allah and flee unto Allah from His wrath (seek protection in His Mercy). Tread on the path He has laid down for you and stand by what He has enjoined upon you. In that case `Ali would stand surety for your success (salvation) eventually even though you may not get it immediately (i.e. in this world).

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SERMON 25

When Amīr al-mu'minin received successive news that Mu'awiyah's men were occupying cities,¹ and his own officers in Yemen namely `Ubaydullāh ibn `Abbas and Said ibn Nimrān came to him retreating after being overpowered by Busr ibn Abi Arṭāt, he was much disturbed by the slackness of his own men in jihad and their difference with his opinion. Proceeding on to the pulpit he said :

Nothing (is left to me) but Kufah which I can hold and extend (which is in my hand to play with). (O' Kufah) if this is your condition that whirlwinds continue blowing through you then Allah may destroy you.

Then he illustrated with the verse of a poet :

O' 'Amr! By your good father's life. I have received only a small bit of fat from this pot (fat that remains sticking to it after it has been emptied).

Then he continued :

I have been informed that Busr has overpowered Yemen. By Allah, I have begun thinking about these people that they would shortly snatch away the whole country through their unity on their wrong and your disunity (from your own right), and separation, your disobedience of your Imam in matters of right and their obedience to their leader in matters of wrong, their fulfilment of the trust in favour of their master and your betrayal, their good work in their cities and your mischief. Even if I give you charge of a wooden bowl I fear you would run away with its handle.

O' my Allah they are disgusted of me and I am disgusted of them. They are weary of me and I am weary of them. Change them for me with better ones and change me for them with worse one. O' my Allah melt their hearts as salt melts in water. By Allah I wish I had only a thousand horsemen of Banu Firās ibn Ghanm (as the poet says) :

If you call them the horsemen would come to you like the summer cloud .

(Thereafter Amir al-mu'minin alighted from the pulpit):

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In this verse the word "*armiyah*" is plural of "*ramiyy*" which means cloud and "*hamim*" here means summer. The poet has particularised the cloud of summer because it moves swiftly. This is because it is devoid of water while a cloud moves slowly when it is laden with rain. Such clouds generally appear (in Arabia) in winter. By this verse the poet intends to convey that when they are called and referred to for help they approach with rapidity and this is borne by the first line "if you call them they will reach you."

1. When after arbitration Mu`awiyah's position was stabilised he began thinking of taking possession of Amir al-mu'minin's cities and extend his domain. He sent his armies to different areas in order that they might secure allegiance for Mu`awiyah by force. In this connection he sent Busr ibn Abi Arta to Hijāz and he shed blood of thousands of innocent persons from Hijaz up to Yemen, burnt alive tribes after tribes in fire and killed even children, so much so that he butchered two young boys of `Ubaydullāh ibn `Abbas the Governor of Yemen before their mother Juwayriyah bint Khalid ibn Qaraz al-Kināniyyah.

When Amir al-mu'minin came to know of his slaughtering and blood shed he thought of sending a contingent to crush him but due to continuous fighting people had become weary and showed heartlessness instead of zeal. When Amir al-mu'minin observed their shirking from war he delivered this sermon wherein he roused them to enthusiasm and self respect, and prompted them to *jihād* by describing before them the enemy's wrongfulness and their own short-comings. At last Jariyah ibn Qudāmah as-Sa'di responded to his call and taking an army of two thousand set off in pursuit of Busr and chased him out of Amir al-mu'minin's domain.

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SERMON 26

Arabia before proclamation of Prophethood

Allah sent Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as a warner (against vice) for all the worlds and a trustee of His revelation, while you people of Arabia were following the worst religion and you resided among rough stones and venomous serpents. You drank dirty water and ate filthy food. You shed blood of each other and cared not for relationship. Idols are fixed among you and sins are clinging to you.

Part of the same sermon on the attentiveness of the people after the death of the Holy Prophet

I looked and found that there is no supporter for me except my family, so I refrained from thrusting them unto death.

I kept my eyes closed despite motes in them. I drank despite choking of throat. I exercised patience despite trouble in breathing and despite having to take sour colocynth as food.

**Part of the same sermon on the settlement between
Mu'āwiyah and `Amr ibn al-As**

He did not swear allegiance till he got him agree that he would pay him its price. The hand of this purchaser (of allegiance) may not be successful and the contract of the seller may face disgrace. Now you should take up arms for war and arrange equipment for it. Its flames have grown high and its brightness has increased. Clothe yourself with patience for it is the best to victory.¹

1. Amir al-mu'minin had delivered a sermon before setting off for Nahrawān. These are three parts from it. In the first part he has described the condition of Arabia before Proclamation (of Prophethood); in the second he has referred to circumstances which forced him to keep quiet and in the third he has described the conversation and settlement between Mu'āwiyah and `Amr ibn al-`Ās. The position of this mutual settlement was that when Amir al-mu'minin sent Jarir ibn `Abdillah al-Bajali to Mu'āwiyah to secure his allegiance he detained Jarir under the excuse of giving a reply, and in the meantime he began exploring how far the people of Syria would support him. When he succeeded in making them his supporters by rousing them to avenge `Uthman's blood he consulted his brother `Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan. He suggested, "If in this matter `Amr ibn `As was associated he would solve most of the difficulties through his sagacity, but he would not be easily prepared to stabilise your authority unless he got the price he desired for it. If you are ready for this he would prove the best counsellor and helper." Mu'āwiyah liked this suggestion, sent for `Amr ibn `As and discussed with him, and eventually it was settled that he would avenge `Uthman's blood by holding Amir al-mu'minin liable for it in exchange for the governorship of Egypt, and by whatever means possible would not let Mu'āwiyah's authority in Syria suffer. Consequently, both of them fulfilled the agreement and kept their words fully.

SERMON 27

Exhorting people for jihād

Now then, surely *jihād* is one of the doors of Paradise, which Allah has opened for His chief friends. It is the dress of piety and the protective armour of Allah and His trustworthy shield. Whoever abandons it Allah covers him with the dress of disgrace and the clothes of distress. He is kicked with contempt and scorn, and his heart is veiled with screens (of neglect). Truth is taken away from him because of missing *jihad*. He has to suffer ignominy and justice is denied to him.

Beware ! I called you (insistingly) to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you, because by Allah, no people have been attacked in the hearts of their houses but they suffered disgrace; but you put it off to others and forsook it till destruction befell you and your cities were occupied. The horsemen of Banu Ghamid¹ have reached al-Anbār and killed Ḥassān ibn Ḥassān al-Bakri. They have removed your horsemen from the garrison.

I have come to know that every one of them entered upon Muslim women and other women under protection of Islam and took away their ornaments from legs, arms, necks and ears and no woman could resist it except by pronouncing the verse, "*We are for Allah and to Him we shall return.*" (Qur'an, 2:156) Then they got back laden with wealth without any wound or loss of life. If any Muslim dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before me.

How strange! how strange! By Allah my heart sinks to see the unity of these people on their wrong and your dispersion from your right. Woe and grief befall you. You have become the target at which arrows are shot. You are being killed and you do not kill. You are being attacked but you do not attack. Allah is being disobeyed and you remain agreeable to it. When I ask you to move against them in summer you say it is hot weather. Spare us till

heat subsides from us. When I order you to march in winter you say it is severely cold; give us time till cold clears from us. These are just excuses for evading heat or cold because if you run away from heat and cold; you would be, by Allah, running away (in a greater degree) from sword (war).

O' you semblances of men, not men, your intelligence is that of children and your wit is that of the occupants of the curtained canopies (women kept in seclusion from the outside world). I wish I had not seen you nor known you. By Allah, this acquaintance has brought about shame and resulted in repentance. May Allah fight you! you have filled my heart with puss and loaded my bosom with rage. You made me drink mouthful of grief one after the other. You shattered my counsel by disobeying and leaving me so much so that Quraysh started saying that the son of Abi Tālib is brave but does not know (tactics of) war. Allah bless them! Is any one of them more fierce in war and more older in it than I am? I rose for it although yet within twenties, and here I am, have cross-ed over sixty, but one who is not obeyed can have no opinion.

1. After the battle of Siffin, Mu`awiyah had spread killing and bloodshed all round, and started encroachments on cities within Amir almu'minin's domain. In this connection he duped Sufyan ibn `Awf al-Ghamidi with a force of six thousand to attack Hit, al-Anbār and al-Mada'in. First he reached al-Mada'in but finding it deserted proceeded to al-Anbar. Here a contingent of five hundred soldiers was posted as guard from Amir al-mu'minin's side, but it could not resist the fierce army of Mu`awiyah. Only a hundred men stuck to their position and they did face them stoutly as far as they could but collecting together the enemy's force made such severe attack that they too could no more resist and the chief of the contingent Hassān ibn Hassān al-Bakri was killed along with thirty others. When the battlefield was clear the enemy ransacked al-Anbār with full freedom and left the city completely destroyed.

When Amir al-mu'minin got the news of this attack he ascended the pulpit, and exhorted the people for crushing the enemy and called them to *jihād*, but from no quarter was there any voice or response. He alighted from the pulpit utterly disgusted and worried and in the same condition

set off for the enemy on foot. When people observed this their sense of self respect and shame was also awakened and they too followed him. Amir al-mu'minin stopped at an-Nukhaylah. People then surrounded and insisted upon him to get back as they were enough with the enemy, when their insistence increased beyond reckoning, Amir al-mu'minin consented to return and Said ibn Qays al-Hamdāni proceeded forward with a force of eight thousand. But Sufyan ibn `Awf al-Ghāmīdi had gone, so Said came back without any encounter. When Said reached Kufah then - according to the version of Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd - Amir al-mu'minin was so deeply grieved and indisposed during those days to an extent of not wishing to enter the mosque, but instead sat in the corridor of his residence (that connects the entrance of the mosque) and wrote this sermon and gave it to his slave Sa'd to read it over to the people. But al-Mubarrad (*al-Kamil*, vol.1, pp. 104-107) has related from `Ubaydullah ibn Hafṣ at-Taymī, Ibn `Ā'ishah, that Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon on a high pace in an-Nukhaylah. Ibn Maytham has held this view preferable.

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SERMON 28

About the transient nature of this world and importance of the next world

So now, surely this world has turned its back and announced its departure while the next world has appeared forward and pro-claimed its approach. Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Is there no one to offer repentance over his faults before his death? Or is there no one to per-form virtuous acts before the day of trial?

Beware, surely you are in the days of hopes behind which stands death. Whoever acts during the days of his hope before approach of his death, his action would benefit him and his death would not harm him. But he who fails to act during the period of hope before the approach of death his action is a loss and his

death is a harm to him. Beware, and act during a period of at-traction just as you act during a period of dread. Beware, surely I have not seen a coveter for Paradise asleep nor a deserter from hell to be asleep. Beware, he whom right does not benefit must suffer the harm of the wrong, and he whom guidance does not keep firm will be led away by misguidance towards destruction.

Beware, you have been ordered insistingly to march and been guided how to provide for the journey. Surely the most frightening thing which I am afraid of about you **is** to follow desires and to widen the hopes. Provide for yourself from this world what would save you tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: If there could be an utterance which would drag by neck towards renunciation in this world and force to action for the, next world, it is this sermon. It is enough to cut off from the entanglements of hopes and to ignite the flames of preaching (for virtue) and warning (against vice). His most wonderful words in this sermon are "Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell," because besides sublimity of words, greatness of meaning, true similes and factual illustrations, there are wonderful secrets and delicate implications therein.

It is his saying that the place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Here he has used two different words to convey two different meanings. For Paradise he has used the word "the place to proceed to " but for Hell this word has not been used. One proceeds to a place which he likes and desires, and this can be true for Paradise only. Hell does not have the attractiveness that it may be liked or proceeded to. We seek Allah's protection from it. Since for Hell it was not proper to say "to be proceeded to " Amir al-mu'minin employed the word "doom" implying the last place of stay where one reaches even though it may mean grief and worry or happiness and pleasure.

This word is capable of conveying both senses. However, it should be taken in the sense of "*al-maṣir*" or "*al-ma'āl* ", that is, last resort. Qur'anic verse is "*say thou Enjoy ye (your pleasures yet a while) for your last resort is unto the (hell) fire*" (14:30). Here to say "*sabgatakum*" that is, the place for you to proceed to' in place of the word "*maṣirakum* " that is, your doom or last resort would not be proper in any way. Think and ponder over it and see how wondrous is its inner implication and how far its depth goes with beauty. Amir al-mu'minin's utterance is generally on these lines. In some versions the word

"*sabgah* " is shown as "*subgah* " which is applied to reward fixed for the winner in race. However, both the meanings are near each other, because a reward is not for an undesirable action but for good and commendable performance.

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SERMON 29

About those who found pretexts at the time of jihād

O' people, your bodies are together but your desires are divergent. Your talk softens the hard stones and your action attracts your enemy towards you. You claim in your sittings that you would do this and that, but when fighting approaches, you say (to war), 'turn thou away' (i.e. flee away). If one calls you (for help) the call receives no heed. And he who deals hardly with you his heart has no solace. The excuses are amiss like that of debtor unwilling to pay. The ignoble cannot ward off oppression. Right cannot be achieved without effort. Which is the house besides this one to protect? And with which leader (Imam) would you go for fighting after me?

By Allah ! Deceived is one whom you have deceived while, by Allah ! he who is successful with you receives only useless arrows. You are like broken arrows thrown over the enemy. By Allah? I am now in the position that I neither confirm your views nor hope for your support, nor challenge the enemy through you. What is the matter with you? What is your ailment? What is your cure? The other party is also men of your shape (but they are so different in character). Will there be talk without action, carelessness without piety and greed in things not right?!¹

1. After the battle of Nahrawān, Mu`awiyah sent ad-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fihri with a force of four thousand towards Kufah with the purpose that he should create disorder in this area, kill whomever he finds and keep busy in bloodshed and destructing so that Amir al-mu'minin should find no rest or peace of mind. He set off for the achievement of this aim, and shedding innocent blood and spreading destruction all round reached upto the place of ath-Tha`labiyyah. Here he attacked a caravan of pilgrims (to Mecca) and looted all their wealth and belongings. Then at al-Qutqutanah he killed the nephew of `Abdullah ibn Masud, the Holy Prophet's companion, namely `Amr ibn `Uways ibn Masud together with his followers. In this manner he created havoc and bloodshed all round. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know of this wreck and ruin he called his men to battle in order to put a stop to this vandalism, but people seemed to avoid war. Being disgusted with their lethargy and lack of enthusiasm he ascended the pulpit and delivered this sermon, wherein he has roused the men to feel shame and not to try to avoid war but to rise for the protection of their country like brave men without employing wrong and lame excuses. At last Hujr ibn `Adi al-Kindi rose with a force of four thousand for crushing the enemy and overtook him at Tadmur. Only a small encounter has taken place between the parties when night came on and he fled away with only nineteen killed on his side. In Amir al-mu'minin's army also two persons fell as martyrs.

SERMON 30

Disclosing real facts about assassination of `Uthmān ibn 'Affān' Amir al-mu'minin said :

If I had ordered his assassination I should have been his killer, but if I had refrained others from killing him I would have been his helper. The position was that he who helped him cannot now say that he is better than the one who deserted him while he who deserted him cannot say that he is better than the one who helped him. I am putting before you his case. He appropriated (wealth) and did it badly. You protested against it and committed excess therein. With Allah lies the real verdict between the appropriator and the protester.

1. `Uthmān is the first Umayyad Caliph of Islam who ascended the Caliphate on the 1st Muharram, 24 A.H. at the age of seventy and after having wielded full control and authority over the affairs of the Muslims for twelve years was killed at their hands on the 18th Dhi'l-hijjah, 35 A.H. and buried at Hashsh Kawkab.

This fact cannot be denied that `Uthman's killing was the result of his weaknesses and the black deeds of his officers, otherwise, there is no reason that Muslims should have unanimously agreed on killing him while no one except a few persons of his house stood up to support and defend him. Muslims would have certainly given consideration to his age, seniority, prestige and distinction of companionship of the Prophet but his ways and deeds had so marred the atmosphere that no one seemed prepared to sympathize and side with him. The oppression and excesses perpetrated on high ranking companions of the Prophet had roused a wave of grief and anger among the Arab tribes. Everyone was infuriated and looked at his haughtiness and wrong doings with disdainful eyes. Thus, due to Abu Dharr's disgrace, dishonour and extermination of Banu Ghifar and their associate tribes; due to `Abdullāh ibn Mas'ud's merciless beating Banu Hudhayl and their associates; due to breaking of the ribs of `Ammār ibn Yāsir, Banu Makhzum and their associates Banu Zuhrah; and due to the plot for the killing of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, Banu Taym all had a storm of rage in their hearts. The Muslims of other cities were also brimful of complaints at the hands of his officers who under intoxication of wealth and the effects of luxury did whatever

they wished and crushed whomever they wanted. They had no fear of punishment from the centre nor apprehension of any enquiry. People were fluttering to get out of their talons of oppression but no one was ready to listen to their cries of pain and restlessness; feelings of hatred were rising but no care was taken to put them down. The companions of the Prophet were also sick of him as they saw that peace was destroyed, administration was topsy-turvy and Islam's features were being metamorphosed. The poor and the starving were craving for dried crusts while Banu Umayyah were rolling in wealth. The Caliphate had become a handle for belly-filling and a means of amassing wealth. Consequently, they too did not lag behind in preparing the ground for killing him. Rather, it was at their letters and messages that people from Kufah, Basrah and Egypt had collected in Medina. Observing this behaviour of the people of Medina, `Uthman wrote to Mu`awiyah:

So now, certainly the people of Medina have turned heretics, have turned faith against obedience and broken the (Oath of) allegiance. So you send to me the warriors of Syria on brisk and sturdy horses.

The policy of action adopted by Mu`awiyah on receipt of this letter also throws light on the condition of the companions. Historian aṭ-Ṭabari writes after this :

When the letter reached Mu`awiyah he pondered over it and considered it bad to openly oppose the companions of the Prophet since he was aware of their unanimity.

In view of these circumstances to regard the killing of `Uthman as a consequence of timely enthusiasm and temporary feelings and to hurl it at some insurgents is to veil the fact, since all the factors of his opposition existed within Medina itself, while those coming from without had collected for seeking redress of their grievances at their call. Their aim was only improvement of the position, not killing or bloodshed. If their complaints had been heard then occasion for this bloodshed would not have arisen. What happened was that when, having been disgusted with the oppression and excesses of `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Sarḥ who was foster brother of `Uthman the people of Egypt proceeded towards Medina and camped in the valley of Dhākhushub near the city. They sent a man with a letter to `Uthman and demanded that oppression should be stopped, the existing ways should be changed and repentance should be offered for the future. But instead of giving a reply `Uthman got this man turned out of the house and did not regard their demands worth attention. On this these people entered the city to raise their voice against this pride and haughtiness, and

complained to the people of this behaviour besides other excesses. On the other side many people from Kufah and Basrah had also arrived with their complaints and they, after joining these ones, proceeded forward with the backing of the people of Medina and confined `Uthmān within his house, although there was no restriction on his going and coming to the mosque. But in his sermon on the very first Friday he severely rebuked these people and even held them accursed, whereupon people got infuriated and threw pebbles at him as a result of which he lost control and fell from the pulpit. After a few days his coming and going to the Mosque was also banned.

When `Uthmān saw matters deteriorating to this extent he implored Amir al-mu'minin very submissively to find some way for his rescue and to disperse the people in whatever way he could. Amir al-mu'minin said, "On what terms can I ask them to leave when their demands are justified?" `Uthmān said, "I authorise you in this matter. Whatever terms you would settle with them I would be bound by them." So Amir al-mu'minin went and met the Egyptians and talked to them. They consented to get back on the condition that all the tyrannies should be wiped off and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr made governor by removing Ibn Abi Sarh. Amir al-mu'minin came back and put their demand before `Uthmān who accepted it without any hesitation and said that to get over these excesses time was required. Amir al-mu'minin pointed out that for matters concerning Medina delay had no sense. However, for other places so much time could be allowed that the Caliph's message could reach them. `Uthmān insisted that for Medina also three days were needed. After discussion with the Egyptians Amir al-mu'minin agreed to it also and took all the responsibility thereof upon himself. Then they dispersed at his suggestion. Some of them went to Egypt with Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr while some went to the valley of Dhākhushub and stayed there and this whole matter ended. On the second day of this event Marwān ibn al-Hakam said to `Uthmān. "It is good, these people have gone, but to stop people coming from other cities you should issue a statement so that they should not come this way and sit quiet at their places and that statement should be that some people collected in Medina on hearing some irresponsible talk but when they came to know that whatever they heard was wrong they were satisfied and have gone back." `Uthmān did not want to speak such a clear lie but Marwān canvassed him that he agreed, and speaking in the Holy Prophet's Mosque, he said :

These Egyptians had received some news about their Caliph and when satisfied that they were all baseless and wrong they went back to their cities.

No sooner he said this than there was great hue and cry in the Mosque, and people began to shout to `Uthman, "Offer repentance, fear Allah; what is this lie you are uttering?" `Uthmān was confused in this commotion and had to offer repentance. Consequently, he turned to the Ka `bah, moaned in the audience of Allah and returned to his house.

Probably after this very event Amir al-mu'minin advised `Uthman that, "You should openly offer repentance about your past misdeeds so that these uprisings should subside for good otherwise if tomorrow people of some other place come you will again cling to my neck to rid you of them." Consequently, he delivered a speech in the Prophet's Mosque wherein admitting his mistakes he offered repentance and swore to remain careful in future. He told the people that when he alighted from the pulpit their representatives should meet him, and he would remove their grievances and meet their demands. On this people acclaimed this action of his and washed away their ill-feelings with tears to a great extent. When he reached his house after finishing from here Marwān sought permission to say something but `Uthmān's wife Nā'ilah bint Farāfiṣah intervened. Turning to Marwān she said, "For Allah's sake you keep quiet. You would say only such a thing as would bring but death to him." Marwān took it ill and retorted, "You have no right to interfere in these matters. You are the daughter of that very person who did not know till his death how to perform ablution." Nā'ilah replied with fury, "You are wrong, and are laying a false blame. Before uttering anything about my father you should have cast a glance on the features of your father. But for the consideration of that old man I would have spoken things at which people would have shuddered but would have confirmed every such word." When `Uthmān saw the conversation getting prolonged he stopped them and asked Marwān to tell him what he wished. Marwān said, "What is it you have said in the Mosque, and what repentance you have offered? In my view sticking to the sin was a thousand times better than this repentance because however much the sins may multiply there is always scope for repentance, but repentance by force is no repentance. You have said what you have but now see the consequences of this open announcement, that crowds of people are at your door. Now go forward and fulfil their demands." Uthmān then said, "Well, I have said what I have said; now you deal with these people. It is not in my power to deal with them." Consequently, finding out his implied consent Marwan came out and addressing the people spoke out, "Why have you assembled here? Do you intend to attack on to ransack? Remember, you cannot easily snatch away power from our hands, take out the idea from your hearts that you would subdue us. We are not to be subdued by anyone. Take away your black faces from here. Allah may disgrace and dishonour you.

When people noticed this changed countenance and altered picture they rose from there full of anger and rage and went straight to Amir Almu'minin and related to him the whole story. On hearing it Amir al-mu'minin was infuriated and immediately went to `Uthman and said to him. "Good Heavens. How badly you have behaved with the Muslims. You have forsaken faith for the sake of a faithless and characterless man and have lost all wit. At least you should have regard and consideration for your own promise. What is this that at Marwān's betokening you have set off with folded eyes? Remember he will throw you in such a dark well that you will never be able to come out of it. You have become the carrier animal of Marwan so that he can ride on you howsoever he desires and put you on whatever wrong way he wishes. In future I shall never intervene in your affair nor tell people anything. Now you should manage your own affairs."

Saying all this Amir al-mu'minin got back and Nā'ilah got the chance, she said to `Uthman, "Did I not tell you to get rid of Marwān otherwise he would put such a stain on you that it would not be removed despite all effort. Well, what is the good in following the words of one who is without any respect among the people and low before their eyes. Make `Ali agree otherwise remember that restoring the disturbed state of affairs is neither within your power nor in that of Marwan." `Uthman was impressed by this and sent man after Amir al-mu'minin but he refused to meet him. There was no siege around `Uthman but shame deterred him. With what face could he come out of the house? But there was no way without coming out. Consequently, he came out quietly in the gloom of night and reaching Amir al-mu'minin's place, he moaned his helplessness and loneliness, offered excuses, and also assured him of keeping promises but Amir al-mu'minin said, "You make a promise in the Prophet's Mosque standing before all the people but it is fulfilled in this way that when people go to you they are rebuked and even abuses are hurled at them. When this is the state of your undertakings which the world has seen, then how and on what ground can I trust any word of yours in future. Do not have any expectation from me now. I am not prepared to accept any responsibility on your behalf. The tracks are open before you. Adopt whichever way you like and tread what-ever track you choose." After this talk `Uthman came back and began blaming Amir al-mu'minin in retort to the effect that all the disturbances were rising at his instance and that he was not doing anything despite being able to do everything.

On this side the result of repentance was as it was. Now let us see the other side. When after crossing the border of Hijāz, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr reached the place Aylah on the coast of the Red Sea people caught

sight of a camel rider who was making his camel run so fast as though the enemy was chasing him. These people had some misgivings about him and therefore called him and enquired who he was. He said he was the slave of `Uthman. They enquired wherefor he was bound. He said Egypt. They enquired to whom he was going. He replied to the Governor of Egypt. People said that the Governor of Egypt was with them. To whom was he going then? He said he was to go to Ibn Abi Sarh. People asked him if any letter was with him. He denied. They asked for what purpose he was going. He said he did not know that. One of these people thought that his clothes should be searched. So the search was made, but nothing was found on him. Kinānah ibn Bishr at-Tujibi said, "See his water-skin." People said, "Leave him, how can there be a letter in water! Kinanah said, "You do not know what cunning these people play." Consequently, the water-skin was opened and seen. There was a lead pipe in it wherein was a letter. When it was opened and read the Caliph's order in it was that "When Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and his party reaches you then from among them kill so and so, arrest so and so, and put so and so in jail, but you remain on your post." On reading this all were stunned and thus began to look at one another in astonishment.

A Persian hemistich says :

Mind was just burst in astonishment as to what wonder it was!

Now proceeding forward was riding into the mouth of death, consequently they returned to Medina taking the slave with them. Reaching there they placed that letter before all the companions of the Prophet. Whoever heard this incident remained stunned with astonishment, and there was no -one who was not abusing `Uthman. Afterwards a few companions went to `Uthman along with these people, and asked whose seal was there on this letter. He replied that it was his own. They enquired whose writing it was. He said it was his secretary's. They enquired whose slave was that man. He replied that it was his. They enquired whose riding beast it was. He replied that it was that of the Government. They enquired who had sent it. He said he had no knowledge of it. People then said, "Good Heavens. Everything is yours but you do not know who had sent it. If you are so helpless, you leave this Caliphate and get off from it so that such a man comes who can administer the affairs of the Muslims." He replied, "It is not possible that I should put off the dress of Caliphate which Allah has put on me. Of course, I would offer repentance." The people said, "Why should you speak of repentance which has already been flouted on the day when Marwan was representing you on your door, and whatever wanted has been made up by this letter. Now we are not going to be duped into these bluffs. Leave the Caliphate and if our brethren stand in our way

we will hold them up; but if they prepare for fighting we too will fight. Neither our hands are stiff nor our swords blunt. If you regard all Muslims equally and uphold justice hand over Marwan to us to enable us to enquire from him on whose strength and support he wanted to play with the precious lives of Muslims by writing this letter." But he rejected this demand and refused to hand over Marwan to them, whereupon people said that the letter had been written at his behest.

However, improving conditions again deteriorated and they ought to have deteriorated because despite lapse of the required time every thing was just as it had been and not a jot of difference had occurred. Consequently, the people who had stayed behind in the valley of Dhākbushub to watch the result of repentance again advanced like flood and spread over the streets of Medina, and closing the borders from every side surrounded his house.

During these days of siege a companion of the Prophet, Niyār ibn `Iyād desired to talk to `Uthman, went to his house and called him. When he peeped out from the above he said, "O' `Uthman, for Allah's sake give up this Caliphate and save Muslims from this bloodshed." While he was just conversing, one of `Uthman's men aimed at him with an arrow and killed him, whereupon people were infuriated and shouted that Niyār's killer should be handed over to them. `Uthman said it was not possible that he would band over his own support to them. This stubbornness worked like fan on fire and in the height of fury people set fire to his door and began advancing for entering, when Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Said ibn al-`As and Mughirah ibn al-Akhnas together with their contingents pounced upon the besiegers and killing and bloodshed started at his door. People wanted to enter the house but they were being pushed back. In the meanwhile, `Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Ansāri whose house was adjacent to that of `Uthman opened his door and shouted for advancing from that side. Thus through this house the besiegers climbed on the roof of `Uthman's house and descending down from there drew their swords. Only a few scuffles had taken place when all except people of `Uthman's house, his well-wishers and Banu Umayyah ran away in the streets of Medina and a few hid themselves in the house of Umm Ḥabibah bint Abi Sufyan (Mu'awiyah's sister) the rest were killed with `Uthman defending him to the last. (*at-Tabaqāt*, Ibn Sa'd, vol.3, Part 1, pp.50-58; aṭ-Ṭabari, vol.1, pp.2998—3025; *al-Kāmil*, Ibn al-Athir, vol.3, pp.167—180; Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadid, vol.2, pp.144—161).

At his killing several poets wrote elegies. That a couplet from the elegy by Abu Hurayrah is presented :

Today people have only one grief but I have two griefs — the loss of my money bag and the killing of `Uthman.

After observing these events the stand of Amir al-mu'minin becomes clear, namely that he was neither supporting the group that was instigating at `Uthmān's killing nor can be included in those who stood for his support and defence but when he saw that what was said was not acted upon he kept himself aloof.

When both the parties are looked at then among the people who had raised their hands off from `Uthmān's support are seen `Ā'ishah, and according to the popular versions (which is not right) the then living persons out of the ten Pre-informed ones (who had been pre-informed in this world by the Prophet for their being admitted in Paradise), out of those who took part in the consultative committee (formed for `Uthmān's selection for caliphate) *anṣār*, original *muhajirūn*, people who took part in the battle of Badr and other conspicuous and dignified individuals, while on the side (of `Uthmān) are seen only a few slaves of the Caliph and a few individuals from Banu Umayyah. If people like Marwān and Said ibn al-`As cannot be given precedence over the original *muhājirūn* their actions too cannot be given precedence over the actions of the latter. Again, if *ijmā`* (consensus of opinion) is not meant for particular occasions only then it would be difficult to question this overwhelming unanimity of the companions.

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SERMON 31

When before the commencement of the Battle of Jamal Amir al-mu'minin. sent 'Abdullāh ibn `Abbās to az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwām with the purpose that he should advise him backto obedience, he said to him on that occasion;

Do not meet Talhah (ibn `Ubaydillah). If you meet him you will find him like an unruly bull whose horns ire turned towards its ears. He rides a ferocious riding beast and says it has been tamed. But you meet az-Zubayr because he is soft-tempered.

Tell him that your maternal cousin says that, "(It looks as if) in the Hijaz you knew me (accepted me), but (on coming here to) Iraq you do not know me (do not accept me). So, what has dissuaded (you) from what was shown (by you previously)?"

As-Sayyid ar-Radi says: The last sentence of this sermon "*famā `adā mimmā badā*" has been heard only from Amir al-mu'minin.

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SERMON 32

About the disparagement of the world and categories of its people

O' people! We have been borne in such a wrongful and thank-less period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excesses. We do not make use of what we know and do not discover what we do not know. We do not fear calamity till it befalls.

People are of four categories. Among them is one who is prevented from mischief only by his low position, lack of means and paucity of wealth.

Then there is he who has drawn his sword, openly commits mischief, has collected his horsemen and foot-man and has devoted himself to securing wealth, leading troops, rising on the pulpit and has allowed his faith to perish. How bad is the transaction that you allow, (enjoyment of) this world to be a price for yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allah for you.

And among them is he who seeks (benefits of) this world through actions meant for the next world, but does not seek (good of) next world through actions of this world. He keeps his body calm (in dignity), raises small steps, holds up his clothes, embellishes his body for appearance of trust-worthiness and uses

the position of Allah's connivance as a means of committing sins.

Then there is one whose weakness and lack of means have held him back from conquest of lands. This keeps down his position and he has named it contentment and he clothes him-self with the robe of renunciation although he has never had any connexion with these qualities.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to Allah on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of resurrection moves their tears. Some of them are scared away (from the world) and dispersed; some are frightened and subdued; some are quiet as if muzzled; some are praying sincerely, some are grief-stricken and pain-ridden whom fear has confined to namelessness and disgrace has shrouded them, so they are in (the sea of) bitter water, their mouths are closed and their hearts are bruised. They preached till they were tired, they were oppressed till they were disgraced and they were killed till they remained few in number.

The world in your eyes should be smaller than the bark of acacia and the clippings of wool. Seek instruction from those who preceded you before those who follow you take instruction from you, and keep aloof from it realising its evil because it cuts off even from those who were more attached to it than you.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Some ignorant persons attributed this sermon to Mu`awiyah but it is the speech of Amir al-mu'minin. There should be no doubt about it. What comparison is there between gold and clay or sweet and bitter water. This has been pointed out by the skilful guide and the expert critic `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz as he has mentioned this sermon in his book, *al-Bayān wa't-tabyīn* (vo1.2, pp.59-61). He has also mentioned who attributed it to Mu`awiyah and then states that it is most akin to be the speech of `Ali and most in accord with his way of categorising people and information about their oppression, disgrace, apprehension and fear. (On the other hand) we never found Mu`awiyah in his speech, to behave the behaviour of the ascetics and to adopt the beliefs of the servants (of Allāh).

SERMON 33

Abdullah ibn 'Abbas says that when Amir al-mu'minin set out for war with the people of Basrah he came to his audience at Dhiqār and saw that he was stitching his shoe. Then Amir Almu'minin said to me, "What is the price of this shoe?" I said: "It has no value now." He then said, "By Allah, it should have been more dear to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I have establish right and ward off wrong." Then he came out and spoke :

Verily, Allah sent Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) when none among the Arabs read a book or claimed prophethood. He guided the people till he took them to their (correct) position and their salvation. So their spears (i.e. officers) became straight and their conditions settled down.

By Allah, surely I was in their lead till it took shape with its walls. I did not show weakness or cowardice. My existing march is also like that. I shall certainly pierce the wrong till right comes out of its side.

What (cause of conflict) is there between me and the Quraysh? By Allah, I have fought them when they were unbelievers and I shall fight them when they have been misled. I shall be the same for them today as I was for them yesterday.

By Allah, the Quraysh only take revenge against us because Allah has given us (i.e. the Holy Prophet and his progeny) preference over them. So, we have allowed them into our domain, whereupon they have become as the former poet says;

*By my life, you continued drinking fresh milk every morning, And
(continued) eating fine stoned dates with butter;
We have given you the nobility which you did not possess
before;
And surrounded (protected) you with thoroughbred horses and tawny-
coloured spears (strong spears)¹.*

1. In fact, the aim of the poet here is to say that the condition of the addressee's life, from the moral and material point of view, had been worse in the past, and that the poet and his tribe have given him the best means of leading their lives. But as the result of this improved condition the addressee has completely lost himself and forgotten his past condition and thinks that he had had this kind of life previously.

Now, Amir al-mu'minin wants to convey the same idea here to the Quraysh as Fatima (p.b.u.h.) the holy daughter of the Holy Prophet said in her speech on Fadak:

(O' People) . . . *You were on the brink of the pit of Hell Fire* (Qur'ān, 3:103). You were as worthless as the mouthful of water. You were minority like the handful greedy and a spark of the hasty. You were as down-trodden as the dust under feet. You drank dirty water. You ate untanned skin. You were abased and condemned. But Allah has rescued you through my father Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) . . .

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SERMON 34

**To prepare the people for fighting with the people of Syria
(ash-Shām)¹ Amir al-mu'minin said :**

Woe to you. I am tired of rebuking you. Do you accept this worldly life in place of the next life? Or disgrace in place of dignity? When I invite you to fight your enemy your eyes revolve as though you are in the clutches of death, and in the senselessness of last moments. My pleadings are not understood by you and you remain stunned. It is as though your hearts are affected with madness so that you do not under-

stand. You have lost my confidence for good. Neither are you a support for me to lean upon, nor a means to honour and victory. Your example is that of the camels whose protector has disappeared, so that if they are collected from one side they disperse away from the other side.

By Allah, how bad are you for igniting flames of war. You are intrigued against but do not intrigue (against the enemy). Your boundaries are decreasing but you do not get enraged over it. Those against you do not sleep but you are unmindful. By Allah, those who leave matters one for the other are subdued. By Allah, I believed about you that if battle rages and death hovers around you, you will cut away from son of Abi Talib like the severing of head from the trunk. z

By Allah, he who makes it possible for his adversary to so overpower him as to remove the flesh (from his bones), crush his bones and cut his skin into pieces, then it means that his helplessness is great and his heart surrounded within the sides of his chest is weak. You may become like this if you wish. But for me, before I allow it I shall use my sharp edged swords of al-Mashrafiyyah which would cut as under the bones of the head and fly away arms and feet. Thereafter, Allah will do whatever He wills.

O' people, I have a right over you and you have a right over me. As for your right over me, that is to counsel you, to pay you your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant and instruct you in behaviourism that you may act upon. As for my right over you, it is fulfilment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.

1. present-day Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Its capital was Damascus. Wherever the word Syria is mentioned (in this book) it should be understood in its larger meaning.

2. This sentence is employed for such severance after which there is no occasion or possibility of joining. The author of *Durrah Najafiyyah* has quoted several views in its explanation:

- i) Ibn Durayd's view is that it means that, "Just as when the head is severed its joining again is impossible in the same way as you will not join me after once deserting me."
- ii) al-Mufaddal says *ar-ra's* (head) was the name of a man, and a village of Syria, Bayt ar-ra's is named after him. This man left his home and went away somewhere and never again returned to his village after which the proverb sprang up "you went as *ar-ra's* had gone."
- iii) One meaning of it is that "Just as if the joints of the bones of the head are opened they cannot be restored, in the same way as you will not join me after cutting from me."
- iv) It has also been said that this sentence is in the sense of separating completely. After copying this meaning from the *Sharh* of ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Din ar-Rāwandi, the commentator Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadid has written that this meaning is not correct because when the word "*ar-ra's*" is used in the sense of whole it is not preceded by "*alif*" and "*lam*".
- v) It is also taken to mean that "You will so run away from me as one (fleeing for life) to save his head." Besides this, one or two other meanings have also been stated but being remote they are disregarded.

First of all it was used by the philosopher of Arabia Aktham ibn Ṣayfi while teaching unity and concord to his children. He says:

O' my children do not cut away (from each other) at the time of calamities like the cutting of head, because after that you will never get together.

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SERMON 35

Amir al-mu'minin said after Arbitration.¹

All praise is due to Allah even though time has brought (for us) crushing calamity and great occurrence. And I stand witness that there is no god but Allah the One, there is no partner for Him nor is there with Him any god other than Himself, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet (May Allah's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

So now, certainly the disobedience of sympathetic counsellor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and result in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view, if Qasir's² orders were fulfilled but you rejected it (my orders) like rough opponents and disobedient insurgents till the counsellor himself fell in doubt about his counsel and the flint (of his wit) ceased to give flame. Consequently, mine and your position became as the poet of Hawāzin says:

I gave you my orders at Mun`araji'l-liwā but you did not see the good of my counsel till the noon of next day (when it was too late).³

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1. When the Syrians' spirit was broken by the bloody swords of the Iraqis, and the incessant attacks of the night of al-Ḥarir lowered their morale and ended their aspirations `Amr ibn al-`As suggested to Mu`awiyah the trick that the Qur'an should be raised on spears and shouts urged forth to treat it as the arbitrator. Its effect would be that some people would try to stop the war and others would like to continue it. We would thus divide them and be able to get the war postponed for another occasion. Consequently, copies of the Qur'an were raised on spears. The result was that some brainless persons raised hue and cry and created division and disturbance in the army and the efforts of simple Muslims turned slow after having been near victory. Without understanding anything they began to shout that they should prefer the verdict of the Qur'an over war.

When Amir al-mu'minin saw the Qur'an being the instrument of their activities, he said :

"O' people do not fall in this trap of deceit and trickery. They are putting up this device only to escape the ignominy of defeat. I know the character of each one of them. They are neither adherents of the Qur'an nor have they any connexion with the faith or religion. The very purpose of our fighting has been that they should follow the Qur'an and act on its injunctions. For Allah's sake do not fall in their deceitful device. Go ahead with determination and courage and stop only after vanquishing the dying foe." Nevertheless, the deceitful instrument of wrong had worked. The people took to disobedience and rebellion. Mis'ar ibn Fadaki at-Tamimi and Zayd ibn Husayn at-Tā'i each with twenty thousand men came forward and said to Amir al-mu'minin, 'O' `Ali, if you do not respond to the call of the Qur'an we will deal with you in the same manner as we did with `Uthmān. You end the battle at once and bow before the verdict of the Qur'an. Amir al-mu'minin tried his best to make them understand but Satan was standing before them in the garb of the Qur'an. He did not allow them to do so, and they compelled Amir al-mu'minin that he should send someone to call Malik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar from the battlefield. Being obliged, Amir al-mu'minin sent Yazid ibn Hāni to call Malik back. When Malik heard this order he was bewildered and said, "Please tell him this is not the occasion to leave the position. He may wait a bit then I will come to his audience with the tidings of victory." Hāni conveyed this message on return but people shouted that Amir al-mu'minin must have sent word to him secretly to continue. Amir al-mu'minin said he never got any occasion to send any secret message to him. Whatever he said was said before them. People said he should be sent again and that if Malik delayed his return Amir al-mu'minin should forsake his life. Amir al-mu'minin again sent Yazid ibn Hāni and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So Hāni went and told Malik "You hold victory dear or the life of Amir al-mu'minin. If his life is dear you should raise hands off the battle and go to him." Leaving the chances of victory Malik stood up and came to the audience of Amir al-mu'minin with grief and disappointment. Chaos raged there. He rebuked the people very much but matters had taken such a turn that could not be corrected.

It was then settled that either party should nominate an arbitrator so that they should settle the (matter of) Caliphate according to the Qur'an. From Mu'awiyah's side `Amr ibn al-'As was decided upon and from Amir al-mu'minin's side people proposed the name of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. Seeing this wrong selection Amir al-mu'minin said, "Since you have not accepted my order about arbitration at least now agree that do not make Abu Musa the arbitrator. He is not a man of trust. Here is `Abdullah ibn

‘Abbas and here is Malik al-Ashtar. Select one of them." But they did not at all listen to him and struck to his name. Amir al-mu'minin said, "All right, do whatever you want. The day is not far when you will cut your own hands through your misdeeds."

After the nomination of arbitrators when the deed of agreement was being written, then with ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (p.b.u.h.) the word Amir al-mu'minin was also written. ‘Amr ibn al-‘As said, "This should be rubbed off. If we regarded him Amir al-mu'minin, why should this battle have been fought? " At first Amir al-mu'minin refused to rub it off but when they did not in any way agree, he rubbed it off and said, "This incident is just similar to the one at al-Hudaybiyah when the unbelievers stuck on the point that the words ‘Prophet of Allah’ with the name of the Prophet should be removed and the Prophet did remove it." On this ‘Amr ibn al-‘As got angry and said, "Do you treat us as unbelievers." Amir al-mu'minin said, "On what day have you had anything to do with believers and when have you been their supporters." However, after this settlement, the people dispersed, and after mutual consultation these two arbitrators decided that by removing both ‘Ali and Mu‘awiyah from the Caliphate the people should be accorded the power to choose whomever they desired. When time came to its announcement there was a meeting at Dumatu’l-Jandal, a place between Iraq and Syria, and then two arbitrators also reached there to announce the judgement on the fate of the Muslims. Acting cunningly ‘Amr ibn al-‘As said to Abu Musa, "I regard it ill manner to precede you. You are older in years and age so first you make the announcement." Abu Musa succumbed to his flattery and came out proudly and stood before the gathering. Addressing them he said, "O’ Muslims we have jointly settled that ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and Mu‘awiyah should be removed and the right to choose a Caliph be accorded to the Muslims. They should choose whomever they like." Saying this he sat down. Now the turn was for ‘Amr ibn al-‘As and he said, "O’ Muslims you have heard that Abu Musi has removed ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. I also agree with it. As for Mu‘awiyah, there is no question of removing him. Therefore I place him in his position." No sooner that he said this there were cries all round. Abu Musa cried hoarse that it was a trick, a deceit and told ‘Amr ibn al-‘As that, "You have played a trick, and your example is that of a dog on which if you load something he would gasp, or leave him he would gasp." ‘Amr ibn al-‘As said, "Your example is like the ass on whom books are loaded." However, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As’s trick was effective and Mu‘awiyah’s shaking feet were again stabilised.

This was the short sketch of the Arbitration whose basis was laid in the Qur’an and *sunnah*. But was it a verdict of the Qur’an or the result of those deceitful contrivances which people of this world always employ to retain their authority? Could these pages of history be made a torch-guide for the

future and the Qur'an and *sunnah* be not used as a means of securing authority or as an instrument of worldly benefits.

When Amir al-mu'minin got the news of this lamentable result of arbitration, he climbed on the pulpit and delivered this sermon every word of which savours of his grief and sorrow and at the same time it throws light on soundness of his thinking, correctness of his opinion and fore-sighted sagacity.

2. This is a proverb which is used on an occasion where the advice of a counsellor is rejected and afterwards it is repented. The fact of it was that the ruler of al-Ḥīrah namely Jadhimah al-Abrash killed the ruler of al-Jazirah named `Amr ibn Zārib whereafter his daughter az-Zabbā' was made the ruler of al-Jazirah. Soon after accession to the throne she thought out this plan to avenge her father's blood, that she sent a message to Jadhimah that she could not alone carry on the affairs of the state and that if he could become her patron by accepting her as his wife she would be grateful. Jadhimah was more than puffed up at this proposal, and prepared himself to set off for al-Jazirah with a thousand horsemen. His slave Qasir advised him much that this was just a deceit and trick and that he should not place himself in this danger; but his wit had been so blinded that he could not think over why az-Zabba' should select the Murderer of her father for her life companionship. Anyhow, he set off and when he reached the border of al-Jazirah although az-Zabba's army was present for his reception but she neither gave any special reception nor offered any warm welcome. Seeing this state Qasir was again suspicious and he advised Jadhimah to get back, but nearness to the goal had further fanned his passion. He paid no heed and stepping further entered the city. Soon on arrival there he was killed. When Qasir saw this he said, "Had the advice of Qasir been followed." From that time this proverb gained currency.

3. The poet of Hawazin implies Durayd ibn aṣ-Ṣimmah. He wrote this couplet after the death of his brother `Abdullah ibn aṣ-Ṣimmah. Its facts are that `Abdullah along with his brother led an attack of two groups of Banu Jusham and Baru Nasr who were both from Hawazin, and drove away many camels. On return when they intended to rest at Mun `arajī'l-Liwā, Durayd said it was not advisable to stay there lest the enemy attacks from behind, but `Abdullah did not agree and stayed there. The result was that as soon as dawn appeared the enemy attacked and killed `Abdullah on the spot. Durayd also received wounds but he slipped away alive, and after this he wrote a few couplets out of which one couplet is this wherein he has referred to the destruction resulting from his advice having been rejected.

SERMON 36

Warning the people of Nahrawān¹ of their fate

I am warning you that you will be killed on the bend of this canal and on the levee of this low area while you will have no clear excuse before Allah or any open authority with you. You have come out of your houses and then divine decree en-tangled you. I had advised you against this arbitration but you rejected my advice like adversaries and opponents till I turned my ideas in the direction of your wishes. You are a group whose heads are devoid of wit and intelligence. May you have no father! (Allah's woe be to you!) I have not put you in any calamity nor wished you harm.

1. The cause of the battle of Nahrawān was that when after Arbitration Amir al-mu'minin was returning to Kūfah, the people who were foremost in pleading acceptance of Arbitration began to say that appointment of anyone other than Allah as arbitrator is heresy, and that, Allah forbid, by accepting the Arbitration Amir al-mu'minin turned heretic. Consequently, by distorting the meaning of "There is no authority save with Allah" they made simple Muslims share their views and separating from Amir al-mu'minin encamped at Haniri' near Kufah. When Amir al-mu'minin learned of these plottings he sent Sa'sa'ah ibn Şuḥān al-'Abdi and Ziyad ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithi in the company of Ibn 'Abbas towards them and afterwards himself went to the place of their stay and dispersed them after discussion.

When these people reached Kufah they began to spread the news that Amir al-mu'minin had broken the agreement of Arbitration and that he is again ready to fight against the Syrians. When Amir al-mu'minin learned this he contradicted it whereupon these people stood up in rebellion and encamped twelve miles from Baghdad in the low area of the canal called Nahrawān.

On the other side, after hearing the verdict of Arbitration Amir al-mu'minin rose for fighting the army of Syria and wrote to the Khārijites that the verdict passed by the two arbitrators in pursuance of their heart's

wishes instead of the Qur'an and *sunnah* was not acceptable to him, that he had therefore decided to fight with them and they should support him for crushing the enemy. But the Kharijites gave him this reply, "When you had agreed to Arbitration in our view you had turned heretic. Now if you admit your heresy and offer repentance we will think over this matter and decide what we should do." Amir al-mu'minin understood from their reply that their disobedience and misguidance had become very serious. To entertain any kind of hope from them now was futile. Consequently, ignoring them he encamped in the valley of an-Nukhaylah with a view to marching towards Syria. When the army had been arrayed he came to know that the men desired to deal with the people of Nahrawān first, and to move towards Syria afterwards. Amir al-mu'minin, however, said that they should be left as they were, that they themselves should first move towards Syria while the people of Nahrawān could be dealt with afterwards. People said that they were prepared to obey every order of his with all their might whether he moved this way or that way. The army had not moved when news about the rebellion of Kharijites began to reach, and it was learnt that they had butchered the governor of Nahrawān namely `Abdullah ibn Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt and his slave maid with the child in her womb, and have killed three women of Banu Tayy' and Umm Sinān aṣ-Ṣaydawayyah. Amir al-mu'minin sent al-Harith ibn Murrah al-'Abdi for investigation but he too was killed by them. When their rebellion reached this stage it was necessary to deal with them. Consequently, the army turned towards Nahrawān. On reaching there Amir al-mu'minin sent them word that those who had killed `Abdullah ibn Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt and innocent women should be handed over to him for avenging blood. Those people replied that they had killed these persons jointly and that they considered it lawful to shed the blood of all the people on his side. Even at this Amir al-mu'minin did not take the initiative for the battle, but sent Abu Ayyub al-Ansari with a message of peace. So he spoke to them aloud, "Whoever comes under this banner or separates from that party and goes to Kufah or al-Madā'in would get amnesty and he would not be questioned. As a result of this Farwah ibn Nawfal al-Ashja'i said that he did not know why they were at war with Amir al-mu'minin. Saying this he separated along with five hundred men. Similarly group after group began to separate and some of them joined Amir al-mu'minin. Those who remained numbered four thousand, and according to at-Ṭabari's account they numbered two thousand eight hundred. These people were not in any way prepared to listen to the voice of truth, and were ready to kill or be killed. Amir al-mu'minin had stopped his men to take the initiative but the Kharijites put arrows in their bows and broke and threw away the sheathes of their swords. Even at this juncture Amir al-mu'minin warned them of the dire consequences of war and this sermon is about that warning and admonition.

But they were so brimming with enthusiasm that they leapt on Amir al-mu'minin's force all of a sudden. This onslaught was so severe that the foot men lost ground but they soon fixed themselves firmly that the attack of arrows and spears could not dislodge them from their position and they soon so cleared away the Kharijites that except for nine persons who fled away to save their lives not a single person was left alive. From Amir al-mu'minin's army only eight persons fell as martyrs. The battle took place on the 9th Safar, 38 A.H.

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SERMON 37

Amir al-mu'minin's utterance which runs like a Sermon about his own steadfastness in religion and precedence in (acceptance of) belief.

I discharged duties when others lost courage (to do so), and I came forward when others hid themselves. I spoke when others remained mum. I strove with Divine light when others remained standing. I was the quietest of them in voice but the highest in going forward. I cleaved to its rein and applied myself solely to its pledge, like the mountain which neither sweeping wind could move nor storm could shake. No one could find fault with me nor could any speaker speak ill of me.

The low is in my view worthy of honour till I secure (his) right for him while the strong is in my view weak till I take (other's) right from him. We are happy with the destiny ordained by Allah and have submitted to the command of Allah. Do you think I would speak lie about the Prophet of Allah? By Allah, I am surely the first to testify him, so I will not be the first to falsify him. I looked at my affairs and found that my obedience should have precedence over my allegiance while my pledge with him is a burden on my neck.

SERMON 38

About naming of doubt as such and disparagement of those in doubt

Doubt is named doubt because it resembles truth. As for lovers of Allah, their conviction serves them as light and the direction of the right path (itself) serves as their guide; while the enemies of Allah, in time of doubt call to misguidance in the darkness of doubt and their guide is blindness (of intelligence). One who fears death cannot escape it nor can one who fears for eternal life secure it.

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SERMON 39

In disparagement of those who shrink from fighting

I am faced with men who do not obey when I order and do not respond when I call them. May you have no father! (Woe to you!) What are you waiting for to rise for the cause of Allah? Does not faith join you together, or sense of shame rouse you? I stand among you shouting and I am calling you for help, but you do not listen to my word, and do not obey my orders, till circumstance show out their bad consequences. No blood can be avenged through you and no purpose can be achieved with you. I called you for help of your brethren but made noises like the camel having pain in stomach, and became loose like the camel of thin back. Then a wavering weak contingent came to me from amongst you: "*as if they are being led to death and they are only watching.*"¹ (Qur'an, 8 : 6)

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Amir al-mu'minin's word "*mutadhā'ib*" means "*muḍṭarib*" (i.e. moved or troubled), as they say "*tadhā'abat ar-rīḥ*" (i.e. the winds blow in troubled manner). Similarly the wolf is called "*dhi'b*" because of its trouble movement.

1. Mu'awiyah sent a contingent of two thousand soldiers under an-Nu mān ibn Bashir to assault Aynu't-Tamr. This place was a defence base of Amir al-mu'minin near Kufah whose incharge was Malik ibn Ka'b al-Arḥabi. Although there were a thousand combatants under him, but at the moment only hundred men were present there. When Malik noticed the offensive force advancing he wrote to Amir al-mu'minin for help. When Amir al-mu'minin received the message he asked the people for his help but only three hundred men got ready as a result of which Amir al-mu'minin was much disgusted and delivered this sermon in their admonition. When Amir al-mu'minin reached his house after delivering the sermon `Adi ibn Ḥātim at-Tā'i came and said, "O Amir al-mu'minin a thousand men of Banu Tayyi' are under me. If you say I shall send them off." Amir al-mu'minin said, "It does not look nice that people of one tribe only should meet the enemy. You prepare your force in the Valley of an-Nukhaylah." Accordingly he went there and called people to *jihād*, when besides Banu Tayyi' one thousand other combatants also assembled. They were still preparing to set off when word reached from Malik ibn Ka'b that there was no need for help as he had repulsed the enemy.

The reason of this was that Malik had sent off `Abdullah ibn Ḥawālah al-Azdi hastily to Qarazah ibn Ka'b al-Ansāri and Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym al-Azdi so that if there was delay in the arrival of support from Kufah he could get help from here in time. `Abdullah went to both, but got no help from Qarazah. However, Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym got read fifty persons under `Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mikhnaf and they reached there near evening. Upto that time the two thousand men (of the enemy) had not been able to subdue the hundred men of Malik. When an-Nu mān saw these fifty men he thought that their forces had started coming in so he fled away from the battlefield. Even in their retreat Malik attacked them from rear and killed three of their men.

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SERMON 40

**When Amir al-mu'minin heard the cry of Khārijites
that "Verdict is only that of Allah" he said:**

The sentence is right but what (they think) it means, is wrong. It is true that verdict lies but with Allah, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for Allah. The fact is that there is

no escape for men from ruler good or bad. The faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful enjoys (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, Allah would carry everything to end. Through the ruler tax is collected, enemy is fought, roadways are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoys peace and allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.

Another version :

When Amir al-mu'minin heard the cry of the Khārijites on the said verdict he said :

I am expecting the verdict (destiny) of Allah on you.
Then he continued:

As for good government the pious man performs good acts in it, while in a bad government the wicked person enjoys till his time is over and death overtakes him.

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SERMON 41

In condemnation of treason

O' people! Surely fulfilment of pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realises the reality of return (to the next world) never betrays. We are in a period when most of the people regard betrayal as wisdom. In these days the ignorant call it excellence of cunning. What is the matter with them? Allah may destroy them. One who has been through thick and thin of life finds the excuses to be preventing him from orders and prohibitions of Allah but he disregards them despite capability

(to succumb to them and follows the commands of Allah), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of Allah).

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SERMON 42

About heart's desires and extended hopes

O' people what I fear most about you are two things — acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents from truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world. You should know this world is moving rapidly and nothing has remained out of it except last particles like the dregs of a vessel which has been emptied by some one. Beware, the next world is advancing, and either of them has sons i.e. followers. You should become sons of the next world and not become sons of this world because on the Day of Judgement every son would cling to his mother. Today is the Day of action and there is no reckoning while tomorrow is the Day of reckoning but there would be no (opportunity for) action.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: "*al-ḥadhdhā'* " means rapid but some people have read it *'jadhdhā'* ". According to this version the meaning would be that the cycle of worldly enjoyments would end soon.

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SERMON 43

After Amir al-mu'minin had sent Jarir ibn `Abdillah al-Bajali to Mu'awiyah (for securing his allegiance) some of his companions suggested preparation to fight with him then he said :

My preparation for war with the people of Syria (ash-Sham) while Jarir ibn `Abdullah al-Bajali is still there would be closing the door for Syria and prevention of its people from good action (i.e. allegiance) if they intend doing it. However, I have fixed a time limit for Jarir after which he would not stay without either deception or in disobedience. My opinion is in favour of patience, so wait a while. (In the meantime) I do not dislike your getting ready.

I have observed this matter thoroughly from all sides but I do find any way except war or heresy. Certainly, there was over the people a ruler (before me) who brought about new (un-Islamic) things and compelled the people to speak out. So they did speak, then rose up and thereafter changed the whole system.

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SERMON 44

When Maşqalah' ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybāni fled to Mu'awiyah because he had purchased some prisoners of Banū Najiyah from an executive of Amir al-mu'minin, but when he demanded the price latter avoided and ran to Syria, Amir al-mu'minin said:

Allah may be bad to Maşqalah. He acted like the noble but fled away like a slave. Before his admirer could speak (about him) he silenced him and before his eulogist could testify to his good deeds he closed his mouth. If he had stayed behind we would have taken

from him what he could easily pay and waited for the balance till his money increased.

1. When after Arbitration the Khārijites rose, a man of Bani Nājiyah from them named al-Khirrīt ibn Rāshid an-Nāji stood up for instigating people and set off towards al-Madā'in with a group killing and marauding. Amir al-mu'minin sent Ziyad ibn Khaṣafah with three hundred men to check him. When the two forces met at al-Madā'in they attacked each other with swords. Only one encounter or so had taken place when the gloom of evening prevailed and the battle had to be stopped. When morning appeared Ziyad's men noticed that five dead bodies of the Khārijites were lying and they themselves had cleared off the battlefield. Seeing this Ziyad set off for Basrah along with his men. There he came to know that the Khārijites had gone to Ahwaz. Ziyad did not move onwards for paucity of force and informed Amir al-mu'minin of it. Amir al-mu'minin called back Ziyad and sent Ma'qil ibn Qays ar-Riyāḥi with two thousand experienced combatants towards Ahwaz and wrote to the governor of Basrah `Abdullah ibn `Abbas to send two thousand swordsmen of Basrah for the help of Ma'qil. Consequently, the contingent from Basrah also joined them at Ahwaz and after proper organization they got ready for attacking the enemy. But al-Khirrīt marched on along with his men to the hills of Rāmhumuz. These people also followed him and overtook him near these hills. Both arrayed their forces and started attacking each other. The result of this encounter was also that three hundred and seventy Khārijites were killed in the battlefield while the rest ran away. Ma'qil informed Amir al-mu'minin of his performance and of the enemy's running away when Amir al-mu'minin directed him to chase them and so to shatter their power that they should not be able to raise heads again. On receipt of this order he moved on and overtook him on the coast of the Persian Gulf, where al-Khirrīt had by persuasion secured the cooperation of the people and enlisting men from here and there, had collected a considerable force. When Ma'qil reached there, he raised the flag of peace and announced that those who had collected from here and there should get away. They would not be molested. The effect of this announcement was that save for his own community all others deserted him. He organized those very men and commenced the battle but valourous combatants of Basrah and Kufah displayed such excellent use of swords that in a short time one hundred and seventy men of the insurgents were killed while an-Nu'mān ibn Ṣuhbān ar-Rasibi encountered al-Khirrīt (ibn Rashid an-Nāji) and eventually felled him and killed him. Soon upon his fall the enemy lost ground and they fled away from the battlefield. Thereafter Ma'qil collected all the men, women and children from their camps at one place.

From among them those who were Muslims were released after swearing of allegiance. Those who had turned heretics were called upon to resume Islam. Consequently except one old Christian all others secured release by accepting Islam and this old man was killed. Then he took with him those Christians of Bani Nājiyah who had taken part in this revolt together with their families. When Ma'qil reached Ardashir Khurrah (a city in Iran) these prisoners wailed and cried before its governor Maşqalah ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybani and beseeched humiliatively to do something for their release. Maşqalah sent word to Ma'qil through Dhuhl ibn al-Harith to sell these prisoners to him. Ma'qil agreed and sold those prisoners to him for five hundred thousand Dirhams and told him to dispatch the price immediately to Amir al-mu'minin. He said that he was sending the first instalment at once and the remaining instalments would also be sent soon. When Ma'qil met Amir al-mu'minin he related the whole event before him. Amir al-mu'minin ratified this action and waited for the price for some time, but Maşqalah observed such deep silence as if nothing was due from him. At last Amir al-mu'minin sent a messenger to him and sent him word to either send the price or to come himself. On Amir al-mu'minin's order he came to Kufah and on demand of the price paid two hundred thousand Dirhams but to evade the balance went away to Mu'awiyah, who made him the governor of Tabarastan. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know all this he spoke these words (as in this sermon). Its sum total is that, "If he had stayed we would have been considerate to him in demanding the price and would have waited for improvement of his financial condition, but he fled away like slaves after displaying a showy act. Talk about his high perseverance had just started when people began to discuss his baseless and lowliness."

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SERMON 45

About Allah's greatness and lowliness of this world

Praise is due to Allah from Whose mercy no one loses hope, from Whose bounty no one is deprived, from Whose forgiveness no one is disappointed and for Whose worship no one is too high. His mercy never ceases and His bounty is never missed.

This world is a place for which destruction is ordained and for its inhabitants departure from here is destined. It is sweet and green. It hastens towards its seeker and attaches to the heart of the viewer. So depart from here with the best of provision available with you and do not ask herein more than what is enough and do not demand from it more than subsistence.

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SERMON 46

When Amir al-mu'minin decided to march towards Syria (ash-Shām) he spoke these word :

My Allah, I seek Thy protection from the hardships of journey, from the grief of returning and from the scene of devastation of property and men. O' Allah, Thou art the companion in journey and Thou art one who is left behind for (protection of the) family. None except Thee can join these two because one who is left behind cannot be a companion in journey nor one who is in company on a journey can at the same time be left behind.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: The earlier part of this sermon is related from the Prophet but Amir al-mu'minin has completed it very aptly by adding most eloquent sentences at the end. This addition is from "None except Thee can join" upto the end.

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SERMON 47

About calamities befalling Kufah

O' Kufah, as though I see you being drawn like the tanned leather of `Ukazi¹ in the market, you are being scraped by calamities and being ridden by severe troubles. I certainly² know that if any tyrant intends evil for you Allah will afflict him with worry and fling him with a killer (set someone on him to kill him).

1. During pre-Islamic days a market used to be organized every year near Mecca. Its name was `Ukaz where mostly hides were traded as a result of which leather was attributed to it. Besides sale and purchase literary meetings were also arranged and Arabs used to attract admiration by reciting their works. After Islam, because of the better congregation in the shape of *hajj* this market went down.

2. This prophecy of Amir al-mu'minin was fulfilled word by word and the world saw how the people who had committed tyranny and oppression on the strength of their masterly power had to face tragic end and what ways of their destruction were engendered by their blood-shedding and homicidal activities. Consequently, the end of Ziyad ibn Abih (son of unknown father) was that when he intended to deliver a speech for vilification of Amir al-mu'minin suddenly paralysis overtook him and he could not get out of his bed thereafter. The end of the blood-shed perpetrated by `Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad was that he fell a prey to leprosy and eventually blood thirsty swords put him to death. The ferocity of al-Hajjāj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi drove him to the fate that snakes cropped up in his stomach as a result of which he died after severe pain. `Umar ibn Hubayrah al-Fazari died of leucoderma. Khalid ibn `Abdillah al-Qasri suffered the hardships of prison and was killed in a very bad way. Muṣ`ab ibn az-Zubayr and Yazid ibn al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufrah were also killed by swords.

SERMON 48

Delivered at the time of marching towards Syria.

Praise is due to Allah when night spreads and darkens, and praise be to Allah whenever the star shines and sets. And praise be to Allah whose bounty never misses and whose favours cannot be repaid.

Well, I have sent forward my vanguard' and have ordered them to remain in camp on this bank of the River till my order reaches them. My intention is that I should cross this water over to the small habitation of people residing on the sides of the Tigris and rouse them to march with you towards the enemy and keep them as auxiliary force for you.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Here by "*miṭāṭ*" Amir al-mu'minin has meant the direction where he had ordered the men to camp and that was the bank of the Euphrates, and "*miṭāṭ*" is used for the bank of a river although its literal meaning is level ground whereas by "*nutfah*" he means the water of the Euphrates, and these are amazing expressions.

1. Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon when he camped at the Valley of an-Nukhaylah on Wednesday the 5th Shawwal 37 A.H. on his way to Siffin. The Vanguard mentioned herein means the twelve thousand persons whom he had sent towards Siffin under the command of Ziyad ibn an-Naḍr and Shurayh ibn Hāni, while the small force of al-Madā'in mentioned by him was a contingent of twelve hundred men who had come up in response to Amir al-mu'minin's call.

SERMON 49

About Allah's greatness and sublimity

Praise be to Allah Who lies inside all hidden things, and towards Whom all open things guide. He cannot be seen by the eye of an onlooker, but the eye which does not see Him can-not deny Him while the mind that proves His existence cannot perceive Him. He is so high in sublimity that nothing can be more sublime than He, while in nearness, He is so near that no one can be nearer than He. But his sublimity does not put Him at a distance from anything of His creation, nor does His nearness bring them on equal level to Him. He has not informed (human) wit about the limits of His qualities. Nevertheless, He has not prevented it from securing essential knowledge of Him. So He is such that all signs of existence stand witness for Him till the denying mind also believes in Him. Allah is sublime beyond what is described by those who liken Him to things or those who deny Him.

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SERMON 50

Admixture of right and wrong

The basis of the occurrence of evils are those desires which are acted upon and the orders that are innovated. They are against the Book of Allah. People cooperate with each other about them even though it is against the Religion of Allah. If wrong had been pure and unmixed it would not be hidden from those who are in search of it. And if right had been pure without ad-mixture of wrong those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. What is, however, done is that something is taken from here and something from there and the two are mixed! At this stage Satan overpowers his friends and they alone escape for whom virtue has been apportioned by Allah from before.

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SERMON 51

When in Şiffin the men of Mu`awiyah overpowered the men of Amir al-mu'minin and occupied the bank of River Euphrates and prevented them from taking its water, Amir al-mu'minin said :

They' are asking you morsels of battle. So either you re-main in ignominy and the lowest position or drench your swords with blood and quench your thirst with water. Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying as subjugators. Beware, Mu`awiyah is leading a small group of insurgents and has kept them in dark about the true facts with the result that they have made their bosoms the targets of death.

1. Amir al-mu'minin had not reached Şiffin when Mu`awiyah posted forty thousand men on the bank of the River to close the way to the watering place, so that none except the Syrians could take the water. When Amir al-mu'minin's force alighted there they found that there was no watering place except this one for them to take water. If there was one it was difficult to reach there by crossing high hillocks. Amir al-mu'minin sent Şa'sa'ah ibn Şuĥān al-'Abdi to Mu`awiyah with the request to raise the control over water. Mu`awiyah refused. On this side Amir al-mu'minin's army was much troubled by thirst. When Amir al-mu'minin noticed this position he said, "Get up and secure water by dint of sword." Consequently, these thirsty persons drew their swords out of sheaths, put arrows in their bows and dispersing Mu`awiyah's men went down right into the River and then hit these guards away and occupied the watering place themselves.

Now, Amir al-mu'minin's men also desired that just as Mu`awiyah had put restriction on water by occupation of the watering place, the same treatment should be accorded to him and his men and no Syrian should be allowed water and everyone of them should be made to die of thirst. But Amir al-mu'minin said, "Do you want to take the same brutal step which these Syrians had taken? Never prevent anyone from water. Whoever wants to drink, may drink and whoever wants to take away may take away." Consequently, despite occupation of the River by Amir al-mu'minin's army no one was prevented from the water and everyone was given full liberty to take water.

SERMON 52

(This sermon has already appeared earlier but due to the difference between the two versions we have quoted it again here). Its subject is the downfall of the world and reward and punishment in the next world.

Beware, the world is wrapping itself up and has announced its departure. Its known things have become strangers and it is speedily moving backward. It is advancing its inhabitants towards destruction and driving its neighbours towards death. Its sweet things (enjoyments) have become sour, and its clear things have become polluted. Consequently, what has remained of it is just like the remaining water in a vessel or a mouthful of water in the measure. If a thirsty person drinks it his thirst is not quenched.

O' creatures of Allah get ready to go out of this world for whose inhabitants decay is ordained, and (beware) heart's wishes should overpower you, nor should you take your stay (in life) to be long. By Allah, if you cry like the she-camel that has lost its young one, call out like the cooing of pigeons, make noise like devoted recluses and turn to Allah leaving your wealth and children as a means to secure His nearness and high position with Him or the forgiveness of sins which have been covered by His books and recorded by His angels it would be less than His reward that I expect for you or His retribution that I fear about you.

By Allah, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world all the time that it lasts even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith.

A part of the same sermon on the description of the Day of Sacrifice (Id al-Aḏḥa) and the qualities of the animal for sacrifice

For an animal to be fully fit for sacrifice it is necessary that both its ears should be raised upwards and its eyes should be healthy.

If the ears and the eyes are sound the animal of sacrifice is sound and perfect, even though its horn be broken or it drags its feet to the place of sacrifice.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Here place of sacrifice means place of slaughter.

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SERMON 53

On the swear of allegiance

They leapt upon me as the camels leap upon each other on their arrival for drinking water, having been let loose after unfastening of their four legs till I thought they would either kill me or kill one another in front of me. I thought over this matter in and out to the extent that it prevented me from sleeping. But I found no way except to fight them or else to reject what-ever has been brought by Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.), I found that to face war was easier for me than to face the retribution, and the hardships of this world were easier than the hardships of the next world.

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SERMON 54

When Amir al-mu'minin's men showed impatience on his delay in giving them permission to fight in Şiffīn, he said:

Well, as for your idea whether this (delay) is due to my unwillingness for death, then by Allah I do not care whether I proceed towards

death or death advances towards me. As for your impression that it may be due to my misgivings about the people of Syria (ash-Shām), well, by Allah, I did not put off war even for a day except in the hope that some group may join me, find guidance through me and see my light with their weak eyes. This is dearer to me than to kill them in the state of their misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins.

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SERMON 55

About steadiness in the battle-field

In the company of the Prophet of Allah we used to fight our parents, sons, brothers and uncles, and this continued us in our faith, in submission, in our following the right path, in en-durance over the pangs of pain and in our fight against the enemy. A man from our side and one from the enemy would pounce upon each other like energetic men contesting as to who would kill the other; sometime our man got over his adversary and some-time the enemy's man got over ours.

When Allah had observed our truth He sent ignominy to our foe and sent His succour to us till Islam got established (like the camel) with neck on the ground and resting in its place. By my life, if we had also behaved like you, no pillar of (our) religion could have been raised, nor the tree of faith could have borne leaves. By Allah, certainly you will now milk our blood (instead of milk) and eventually you will face shame.¹

1. When Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr had been killed, Mu'awiyah sent `Abdullah ibn `Amir al-Haḍrami to Basrah to exhort the people of Basrah for avenging `Uthman's blood because the natural inclination of most of the inhabitants of Basrah and particularly of Banū Tamim was towards `Uthman.

Consequently, he stayed with Banu Tamim. This was the time when `Abdullah ibn `Abbas, the governor of Basrah had gone to Kufah for condolence about Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, leaving Ziyad ibn `Ubayd (Abih) as his substitute. When the atmosphere in Basrah began to deteriorate Ziyad informed Amir al-mu'minin of all the facts. Amir al-mu'minin tried to get Banū Tamim of Kufah ready but they kept complete silence and gave no reply. When Amir al-mu'minin saw this weakness and shamelessness on their part he gave this speech namely that "During the days of the Prophet we did not see whether those killed at our hands were our kith and kin, but whoever collided with Right, we were prepared to collide with him. If we too had acted carelessly or been guilty of inaction like you then neither religion could have taken root nor could Islam prosper." The result of this shaking was that A'yan ibn Ḍabī'ah al-Mujashi'i prepared himself but on reaching Basrah he was killed by the swords of the enemy. Thereafter, Amir al-mu'minin sent off Jāriyah ibn Qudamah as-Sa'di with fifty men of Bani Tamim. First he tried his best to canvass his own tribe but instead of following the right path they stooped down to abusing and fighting. Then Jāriyah called Ziyad and the tribe of Azd for his help. Soon on their arrival (`Abdullah) Ibn al-Hadrami also came out with his men. Swords were used from both sides for some time but eventually Ibn al-Hadrami fled away with seventy persons and took refuge in the house of Sabil as-Sa'di. When Jāriyah saw no other way he got this house set on fire. When fire rose into flames they came out in search of safety but could not succeed in running away. Some of them were crushed to death under the wall while others were killed.

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SERMON 56

Amir al-mu'minin said to his companions about Mu'āwiyah

Soon after me there would be put on you a man with a broad mouth and a big belly. He would swallow whatever he gets and would crave for what he does not get. You should kill him but (I know) you would not kill him. He would command you to abuse me and to renounce me. As for abusing, you

do abuse me because that would mean purification for me and salvation for you. As regards renunciation, you should not renounce me because I have been born on the natural religion (Islam) and was foremost in (accepting) it as well as in Hijrah (migrating from Mecca to Medina).¹

1. About the person to whom Amir al-mu'minin has alluded in this sermon some people hold that he is Ziyad ibn Abih; some hold that he is al-Hajjāj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi and some hold that he is Mughirah ibn Shu`bah. But most of the commentators have held him to mean Mu`awiyah and this is correct because the qualities that Amir al-mu'minin has described prove true fully on him alone. Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written about the gluttonous quality of Mu`awiyah that once the Prophet sent for him and he was informed that Mu`awiyah was busy eating. Then the second and the third time a man was sent to call him but he brought the same news. Thereupon the Prophet- said, "May Allah never satisfy his belly." The effect of this curse was that when he felt tired of eating he would say "Take away, for, by Allah I am not satiated but I am tired and disgusted." Similarly, his abusing Amir al-mu'minin and ordering his officers for it are such accepted facts of history about which there is no scope of denying. In this connection such words were used on the pulpit that even Allah and the Prophet were hit by them. Thus, Umm al-mu'minin Umm Salamah wrote to Mu`awiyah, "Certainly you people abuse Allah and the Prophet, and this is like this that you hurl abuses on `Ali and those who love him, while I do stand witness that Allah and Prophet did love him." (*al-Iqd al farid*, vol.3, p.131)

Thanks to `Umar ibn `Abdil-`Aziz who put a stop to it, and introduced the following verse in place of the abuse in the sermons :

Verily Allah enjoineeth justice and benevolence (to others) and giving unto the kindred, and forbidden lewdness, and evil, and rebellion; He exhortheth you that ye may take heed. (Qur'an, 16:90)

In this sermon Amir al-mu'minin has ordered his killing on the basis of the Prophet's order that "When you (O' Muslims) see Mu`awiyah on my pulpit kill him." (*Kitab Şifftin*, pp.243,248; *Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.1, p.348; *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol.12, p.181; *Mizan al-i`tidāl*, vol.2, p.128; *Tahdhib at-tahdhib*, vol.2, p.428; vol.5, p.110; vol.7, p.324)

SERMON 57

Addressing the Khārijites Amir al-mu'minin said:

Storm may overtake you while there may be none to prick you (for reforms). Shall I be witness to my becoming heretic after acceptance of Faith and fighting in the company of the Prophet?! *"In that case I shall be misguided and I shall not be on the right path."* (Qur'an, 6:56). So you should return to your evil places, and get back on the traces of your heels. Beware! Certainly you will meet, after me, overwhelming disgrace and sharp sword and tradition that will be adopted by the oppressors as a norm towards you.'

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In the words *"wala baqiyah minkum abirun "* used by Amir al-mu'minin the *"ābir "* has been related with *"bā' "* and *"rā' "* and it has been taken from the Arab saying *"rajulun ābirun "* which means the man who prunes the date-palm trees and improves them. In one version the word is *"āthir"* and its meaning is "relator of news." In my view this is more appropriate, as though Amir al-mu'minin intends to say that there should remain none to carry news. In one version the word appears as *"ābiz "* with *"zā' "* which means one who leaps. One who dies is also called *"ābiz "*.

1. History corroborates that after Amir al-mu'minin, the Khārijites had to face all sorts of ignominy and disgrace and wherever they raised their heads for creating trouble they were met with swords and spears. Thus Ziyad ibn Abih, `Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Ynsuf, Mus'ab ibn az-Zubayr and al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufrah left no stone unturned in annihilating them from the surface of the globe, particularly al-Muhallab chased them for nineteen years, routed them thoroughly and rested only after completing their destruction.

at-Tabari writes that when ten thousand Khārijites collected in Sillā wa sillibrā (the name of a mountain in Ahwaz) then al-Muhallab faced them so steadfastly that he killed seven thousand Khārijites, while the remaining three thousand fled towards

Kirman for life. But when the Governor of Persia noticed their rebellious activities he surrounded them in Sābur and killed a good number of them then and there. Those remained again fled to Isfahan and Kirman. From there they again formed a contingent and advanced towards Kufah via Basrah. al-Harith ibn Abi Rabi'ah al-Makhzumi and 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mikhnaf al-Azdi stood up with six thousand combatants to stop their advance, and turned them out of Iraq's boundaries. In this way successive encounters completely trampled their military power and turning them out of cities compelled them to roam about in the deserts. Afterwards also, when they rose in the form of groups they were crushed. (*at-Tārikh*, vol.2, pp.580—591; Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, pp.196—206).

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SERMON 58

When Amir al-muminin showed his intention to fight the Khārijites he was told that they had crossed the bridge of Nahrawan and gone over to the other side.

Amir al-muminin said :

Their falling place is on this side of the river. By Allah, not even ten of them will survive while from your side not even ten will be killed.¹

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In this sermon "*nutfah*" implies the River Euphrates, and for water this is the nicest expression even though water may be much.

1. This prophecy cannot be attributed to wit and far sightedness, because far sighted eyes may forecast victory or defeat and preconceive the outcome of war but to tell about the correct figures of the killed on either side is beyond their capacity. This can be done only by one who can unveil the unknown future and see the coming scene with his eyes and who sees the sketches yet to appear on the page of the future with the help of the light of knowledge possessed by him as Imam. Consequently,

events occurred just according to what this inheritor of Prophet's know-ledge had said, and from among the Khārijites all except nine persons were killed. Two of them fled away to `Uman, two to Sajistan, two to Kirman and two to al-Jazirah while one escaped to Tall Mawzan. Of Amir al-mu'minin's party only eight men fell as martyrs.

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SERMON 59

When Amir al-mu'minin was told that the Khārijites had been totally killed, he said :

By Allah, no, not yet. They still exist in the loins of men and wombs of women. Whenever a chief would appear from among them he would be cut down till the last of them would turn thieves and robbers.¹

1. This prophesy of Amir al-mu'minin also proved true word by word. Every chief of Khārijites who rose was put to sword. A few of their chiefs who were badly put to death are mentioned here:

- 1) Nāfi` ibn Azraq al-Ḥanafī: the largest group of the Khārijites namely al-Azāriqah is named after him. He was killed by Salamah al-Bāhili during encounter with the army of Muslim ibn `Ubays.
- 2) Najdah ibn `Amir: the an-Najadāt al-`Ādhiriyyah sect of Khārijites is named after him. Abu Fudayk al-Khārijī got him killed.
- 3) `Abdullah ibn Ibad at-Tamimi: the sect Ibadite (*Ibadiyyah*) is named after him. He was killed during encounter with `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Aṭīyah.
- 4) Abu Bayhas Ḥayṣam ibn Jābir aḍ-Ḍuba'i: the sect of al-Bayhasiyyah is named after him. `Uthman ibn Ḥayyan al-Murri the governor of Medina got his hands and

feet severed and then killed him.

5) `Urwah ibn Udayyah at-Tamimi : Ziyid ibn Abih killed him during the reign of Mu`āwiyah.

6) Qatari ibn al-Fujā'h al-Māzini at-Tamimi : when he encountered the army of Sufyin ibn al-Abrad al-Kalbi in Tabarastān then Sawrah ibn al-Hurr ad-Dārimi killed him.

7) Abu Bilal Mirdas ibn Udayyah at-Tamimi : was killed in encounter with `Abbas ibn Akhḍar al-Māzini.

8) Shawdhab al-Khārījī al-Yashkuri: was killed during encounter with Sa'id ibn `Amr al-Ḥarashi.

9) Ḥawtharah ibn Wadā' al-Asadi: was killed at the hands of a man of Banu Ṭayyi'

10) al-Mustawrid ibn `Ullafah at-Taymi: was killed by Ma'qil ibn Qays ar-Riyahi in the reign of Mu`āwiyah.

11) Shabib ibn Yazid ash-Shaybāni: died by being drowned in river.

12) `Imrān ibn al-Ḥarīth ar-Rāsibi : was killed in the battle of Dulāb.

13, 14) Zaḥḥāf aṭ-Ṭā'i and Qurayb ibn Murrah al-Azdi : were killed in encounter with Banu Ṭāḥiyah.

15) az-Zubayr ibn `Ali as-Saliṭi at-Tamimi: was killed in encounter with `Attāb ibn Warqā' ar-Riyāhi.

16) `Ali ibn Bashir ibn al-Māhuz al-Yarbu'i : al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi got him killed.

17) `Ubaydullah ibn Bashir: was killed in encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufrah in the battle of Dūlāb.

18) Abu'l-Wāzi' ar-Rāsibi : a man in the graveyard of Banū Yashkur felled a wall on him and killed him.

19) `Abdu Rabbah aṣ-Ṣaghīr: was killed in encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufrah.

20) al-Walid ibn Tarif ash-Shaybāni : was killed in encounter with Yazid ibn Mazyad ash-Shaybāni.

21-24) `Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Kindi, al-Mukhtar ibn `Awf al-Azdi (Abu Ḥamzah ash-Shāri), Abrahah ibn aṣ-Ṣabbah and Balj ibn 'Uqbah al-Asadi: were killed by `Abd al-Malik ibn `Aṭiyyah as-Sa'di in the reign of Marwan ibn Muhammad (the last of Umayyads caliph).

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SERMON 60

Amir al-mu'minin also said :

Do not fight¹ the Khārijites after me, because one who seeks right but does not find it, is not like one who seeks wrong and finds it.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Amir al-mu'minin means Mu'awiyah and his men.

1. The reason for stopping people from fighting the Khārijites was that Amir al-mu'minin was clearly perceiving that after him authority and power would devolve on people who would be ignorant of the proper occasion of *jihād*, and who will make use of sword only to maintain their sway. And there were those who excelled even Khārijites in holding and calling Amir al-mu'minin bad. So those who are themselves in the wrong have no right to fight others in the wrong. Again, those who are wilfully in the wrong can be allowed to fight those who are in the wrong by mistake. Thus, Amir al-mu'minin's words make this fact clear that the misguidance of Khārijites was not wilfull but under Satan's influence.. They mistook wrong as right and stuck to it. On the other hand, the position of misguidance of Mu'awiyah and his party was that they rejected right realizing it as right and appropriated wrong as the code of their conduct fully knowing that it was wrong. Their audacity in the matter of religion reached the stage that it can neither be regarded as a result of misunderstanding nor can it be covered under the garb

of error of judgement, because they openly transgressed the limits of religion and paid no heed to the Prophet's injunctions in comparison with their own view. Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written (vol.5, p.130) that when the Prophet's companion Abu 'd-Dardā' saw utensils of gold and silver being used by Mu'awiyah he said he had heard the Prophet saying, "One who drinks in vessels of gold and silver will feel flames of the fire of Hell in his stomach" whereupon Mu'awiyah said, "As for me, I do not find any harm in it." Similarly, creating Ziyad ibn Abih's blood relationship with himself by his own opinion in total disregard of the Prophet's injunction, abusing the descendants of the Prophet over the pulpit, transgressing the limits of *shari'ah*, shedding blood of innocent persons and placing over Muslims (as so called Khalifah) a vicious individual and thus opening the way to misbelief and atheism are events that to attribute them to any misunderstanding is like wilfully closing eyes to facts.

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SERMON 61

When Amir al-mu'minin was warned of being killed by deceit, he said:

Surely, there is a strong shield of Allah over me. When my day would come it would get away from me and hand me over to death. At that time neither an arrow would go amiss nor a wound would heal up.

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SERMON 62

About the transience of the world

Beware ! surely this world is a place from which protection cannot be sought except while one is in it. The action which is performed only for this world cannot secure salvation. People are tested in it through calamities. Those who have taken worldly pleasures here will be taken out from them (by death) and will be questioned about them. And whatever (good actions) they have achieved for the other world, they will get them there and stay in them. For the intelligent this world is like the shade- one moment it is spread out and extended but soon it shrinks and contracts.

SERMON 63

About decline and destruction of the world

O' creatures of Allah! Fear Allah and anticipate your death by good actions. Purchase everlasting joy by paying transitory things — pleasures of this world. Get ready for the journey, for you are being driven, and prepare yourself for death, since it is hovering over you. Be a people who wake up when called, and who know that this world is not their abode, and so have it changed (with the next).

Certainly, Allah has not created you aimlessly nor left you as useless. There is nothing between anyone of you and Paradise or Hell except death that must befall him. The life that is being shortened every moment and being dismantled every hour must be regarded very short. The hidden thing namely death which is being driven (to you) by two over new phenomena, the day and the night, is certainly quick of approach. The traveller which is approaching with success or failure (namely death) deserves the best of provision. So acquire such provision from this world while you are here with which you may shield yourself tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

So everyone should fear Allah, should admonish himself, should send forward his repentance and should overpower his desire, because his death is hidden from him, his desires deceive him and Satan is posted on him and he beautifies for him sin so that he may commit it and prompts him to delay repentance till his desires make him the most negligent. Piety is for the negligent person whose life itself would be a proof against him and his own days (passed in sin) would lead him to punishment.

We ask Allah, the Glorified, that He may make us and you like one whom bounty does not mislead, whom nothing can stop from obedience of Allah and whom shame and grief do not befall after death.

SERMON 64

About Allah's attributes

Praise be to Allah for Whom one condition does not proceed another so that He may be the First before being the Last or He may be Manifest before being Hidden. Everyone called one (alone) save Him is by virtue of being small (in number); and everyone enjoying honour other than Him is humble. Every powerful person other than Him is weak. Every master (owner) other than Him is slave (owned).

Every knower other than Him is seeker of knowledge. Every controller other than Him is sometimes imbued with control and sometimes with disability. Every listener other than Him is deaf to light voices while loud voices make him deaf and distant voices also get away from him. Every on-looker other than Him is blind to hidden colours and delicate bodies. Every manifest thing other than Him is hidden, but every hidden thing other than Him is incapable of becoming manifest.

He did not create what He created to fortify His authority nor for fear of the consequences of time, nor to seek help against the attack of an equal or a boastful partner or a hateful opponent. On the other hand all the creatures are reared by him and are His humbled slaves. He is not conditioned in anything so that it be said that He exists therein, nor is He separated from anything so as to be said that He is away from it. The creation of what He initiated or the administration of what He controls did not fatigue Him. No disability overtook Him against what He created. No misgiving ever occurred to Him in what He ordained and resolved. But His verdict is certain, His knowledge is definite, His governance is overwhelming. He is wished for at time of distress and He is feared even in bounty.

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SERMON 65

In some of the days of Šiffīn Amir al-mu'minin said to his followers about ways of fighting

O' crowd of Muslims ! Make fear of Allah the routine of your life. Cover yourselves with peace of mind and clinch your teeth because this makes the sword slip off from the skull. Complete your armour and shake your swords in their sheathes before showing them out. Have your eyes on the enemy. Use your spears on both sides and strike (the enemy) with swords. Keep in mind that you are before Allah and in the company of the Prophet's cousin. Repeat your attacks and feel ashamed of running away, because it is a shame for posterity and (cause of awarding you) fire on the Day of Judgement. Give your lives (to Allah) willingly and walk towards death with ease. Beware of this great majority, and the pitched tent and aim at its centre because Satan is hiding in its corner. He has extended his hand for assault and has kept back his foot for running away. Keep one enduring till the light of Truth dawns upon you.

While ye have the upper hand, and Allah is with you, and never will He depreciate your deeds. (Qur'an, 47:35)

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SERMON 66

When after the death of the Prophet news reached Amir al-mu'minin about the happening in Saqifah of Bani Šā'idah,¹ he enquired what the ansār said. People said that they were asking for one chief from among them and one from the others, Amir al-muminin said:

Why did you not argue against them (*ansār*) that the Prophet had left his will that whoever is good among *ansār* should be treated well and whoever is bad he should be forgiven.

People said : "What is there against them in it?"

Amir al-mu' minin said :

"If the Government was for them there should have been no will in their favour."

Then he said :

"What did the Quraysh plead?"

People said : "They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet.

Then Amir al-mu'minin said :

"They argued with the tree but spoiled the fruits."

1. From what happened in the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah it appears that the greatest argument of *muhajirun* against *ansār* and the basis of the former's success was this very point that since they were the kith and kin of the Prophet no one else could deserve the Caliphate. On this very ground the big crowd of *ansār* became ready to lay down their weapons before three *muhajirun*, and the latter succeeded in winning the Caliphate by presenting their distinction of descent. Thus in connection with the events of Saqifah at-Tabari writes that when the *ansār* assembled in Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah to swear allegiance on the hand of Sa'd ibn `Ubadah, somehow Abu Bakr, `Umar and Abu `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāh also got the hint and reached there. `Umar had thought out something for this occasion and he rose to speak but Abu Bakr stopped him, and he himself stood up. After praise of Allah and the immigration of the *muhajirun* and their precedence in Islam he said:

They are those who worshipped Allah first of all and accepted belief in Allah and his Prophet's friends and his Kith and Kin. These alone

therefore most deserve the Caliphate. Whoever clashes with them commits excess.

When Abu Bakr finished his speech al-Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir stood up and, turning to the *ansār*, he said : "O' group of *ansār* ! Do not give your reins in the hands of others. The populace is under your care. You are men of honour, wealth and tribe and gathering. If the *muhajirun* have precedence over you in some matters you too have precedence over them in other matters. You gave them refuge in your houses. You are the fighting arm of Islam. With your help Islam stood on its own feet. In your cities prayer of Allah was established with freedom. Save yourselves from division and dispersion and stick to your right unitedly. If the *muhajirun* do not concede to your right tell them there should be one chief from us and one from them."

No sooner al-Ḥubāb sat down after saying this then `Umar rose and spoke thus :

This can't be that there be two rulers at one time. By Allah, the Arabs will never agree to have you as the head of the state since the Prophet was not from amongst you. Certainly, the Arabs will not care the least objection in that the Caliphate is allowed to one in whose house Prophethood rests so that the ruler should also be from the same house. For those who dissent clear arguments can be put forth. Whoever comes in conflict with us in the matter of the authority and rulership of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) he is leaning towards wrong, is a sinner and is falling into destruction.

After `Umar, al-Ḥubāb again stood up and said to the *ansār*, "Look, stick to your point and do not pay heed to the views of this man or his supporters. They want to trample your right, if they do not consent turn him and them out of your cities and appropriate the Caliphate. Who else than you can deserve it more?"

When al-Ḥubāb finished, `Umar scolded him. There was use of bad words from that side also, and the position began to worsen. On seeing this Abu `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāh spoke with the intention of cooling down *ansār* and to win them over to his side and said :

"O' *ansār*! You are the people who supported us and helped us in every manner. Do not now change your ways and do not give up your behaviour." But the *ansār* refused to change their mind. They were prepared to swear allegiance to Sa'd and people just wanted to approach him when a man of Sa'd's tribe Bashir ibn `Amr al-Khazraji stood up and said:

"No doubt we came forward for *jihād*, and gave support to the religion, but our aim in doing thus was to please Allah and to obey His Prophet. It does not behoove us to claim superiority and create trouble in the matter of the caliphate. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was from Quraysh and they have a greater right for it, and are more appropriate for it." As soon as Bashir uttered these words division occurred among the *ansār*, and this was his aim, because he could not see a man of his own tribe rising so high. The *muhajirun* took the best advantage of this division among the *ansār*, and 'Umar and Abu 'Ubaydah decided to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. They had just got forward for the act when Bashir first of all put his hand on that of Abu Bakr and after that 'Umar and Abu 'Ubaydah swore the allegiance. Then the people of Bashir's tribe came and swore allegiance, and trampled Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah under their feet.

During this time Amir al-mu'minin was occupied in the funeral bath and burial of the Prophet. When afterwards he heard about the assemblage at the Saqifah and he came to know that the *muhajirun* had won the score over *ansār* by pleading themselves to be from the tribe of the Prophet he uttered the fine sentence that they argued on the lineal tree being one but spoiled its fruits, who are the members of his family. That is, if *muhajirun's* claim was acceded for being from the lineal tree of the Prophet, how can those who are the fruits of this tree be ignored? It is strange that Abu Bakr who connects with the Prophet in the seventh generation above and 'Umar who connects with him in the ninth generation above may be held of the tribe and family of the Prophet and he who was his first cousin, he is re-fused the status of a brother.

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SERMON 67

**When Amir al-mu minin appointed Muhammad ibn
Abi Bakr ¹ Governor of Egypt and he was overpowered and
killed, Amir al-mu minin said :**

I had intended to send Hashim ibn 'Utbah to Egypt and had I done so he would have made way for the opponents nor given them time (to get hold of him). This is without reproach to Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr as I loved

him and had brought him up.

1. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr's mother was Asma' bint `Umays whom Amir al-mu'minin married after Abu Bakr's death. Consequently, Muhammad lived and was brought up under the care of Amir al-mu'minin and he imbibed his ways and manners. Amir al-mu'minin too loved him much and regarded him as his son, and used to say "Muhammad is my son from Abu Bakr." He was born in the journey for the last *hajj* (of the Prophet) and died as martyr in 38 A.H. at the age of twenty eight years.

On accession to the Caliphate Amir at-mu'minin had selected Qays ibn Sa'd ibn `Ubadah as the Governor of Egypt but circumstances so developed that he had to be removed and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr had to be sent there as Governor. The policy of Qays there was that he did not want to take any serious step against the `Uthmani group but Muhammad's view was different. After the lapse of a month he sent them word that in case they did not obey him their existence there would be impossible. Upon this these people organized a front against him, and engaged themselves in secret wirepullings, but became conspicuous soon. After arbitration they started creating trouble with the slogan of vengeance. This polluted the atmosphere of Egypt. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know these deteriorated conditions he gave the governorship of Egypt to Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar and sent him off there in order that he might suppress insurgent elements and save the administration from getting worse, but he could not escape the evil designs of the Umayyads and was killed by poison while on his way. Thus, the governorship of Egypt remained with Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr.

On this side, the performance of `Amr ibn al-`As in connection with the Arbitration made Mu`awiyah recall his own promise. Consequently, he gave him six thousand combatants and set him off to attack Egypt. When Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr knew of the advancing force of the enemy he wrote to Amir al-mu'minin for help. Amir al-mu'minin replied that he would be soon collecting help for him but in the meantime he should mobilise his own forces. Muhammad mobilised four thousand men under his Banner and divided them into two parts. He kept one part with himself and on the other he placed Kinānah ibn Bishr at-Tujibi in command and ordered him to go forward to check the enemy's advance. When they settled down in camp before the enemy various parties of the enemy began attacking them but they faced them with courage and valour. At last Mu`awiyah ibn Ḥudayj as-Sakūni al-Kindi made an assault with full force. These people

did not turn away from the enemy's swords but faced them steadfastly and fell as martyrs in action. The effect of this defeat was that Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr's men got frightened and deserted him. Finding himself alone Muhammad fled away and sought refuge in a deserted place. The enemy how-ever got news about him through someone and traced him out when he was dying with thirst. Muhammad asked for water but these cruel men refused and butchered him thirsty. Then they put his body in the belly of a dead ass and burnt it.

Malik ibn Ka`b al-Arḥabi had already left Kufah with two thousand men but before he could reach Egypt it had been occupied by the enemy.

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SERMON 68

Admonishing his companions about careless behaviour Amir al-mu'minin said :

How long shall I accord you consideration that is accorded to camels with hollow hump, or to worn clothes which when stitched on one side give way on the other. Whenever a vanguard force of Syria (ash-Shām) hovers over you, everyone of you shuts his door and hides himself like the lizard in its hole or a badger in its den. By Allah, he whom people like you support must suffer disgrace and he who throws arrows with your support is as if he throws arrows that are broken both at head and tail. By Allah, within the courtyard you are quite numerous but under the Banner you are only a few. Certainly, I know what can improve you and how your crookedness can be straightened. But I shall not improve your condition by marring myself. Allah may disgrace your faces and destroy you. You do not understand the right as you understand the wrong and do not crush the wrong as you crush the right.

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SERMON 69

Spoken on the morning of the day when Amir al-mu'minin was fatally struck with sword.

I was sitting when sleep overtook me. I saw the Prophet of Allah appear before me, and I said : "O' Prophet of Allah ! what crookedness and enmity I had to face from the people." The Prophet of Allah said : "Invoke (Allah) evil upon them," but I said, "Allah may change them for me with better ones and change me for them with a worse one.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: *`al-awad''* means crookedness and *`al-ladad''* means enmity, and this is the most eloquent expression.

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SERMON 70

In condemnation of the people of Iraq

Now then. O' people¹ of Iraq! You are like the pregnant woman who, on completion of the period of pregnancy delivers a dead child and her husband is also dead and her period of widowhood is long while only remote relation inherits her. By Allah, I did not come to you of my own accord. I came to you by force of circumstances. I have come to know that you say `Ali speaks lie? May Allah fight you! Against whom do I speak lie? Whether against Allah? But I am the first to have believed in him. Whether against His Prophet? But I am the first who testified to him. Certainly not. By Allah it was a way of expression which failed to appreciate, and you were not capable of it. Woe to you. I am giving out these measures of nice expression free of any cost. I wish there were vessels good enough to hold them.

Certainly, you will understand it after some time. (Qur'an, 38:88)

1. When after Arbitration the Iraqis displayed lethargy and heartlessness in retaliating the continuous attacks of Mu'awiyah, Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon abusing and admonishing them. Herein he has referred to their being deceived at Siffin and has likened them to a woman who has five qualities :

- i) Firstly, she is pregnant. This implies that these people had full capability to fight, and were not like a barren woman from whom nothing is expected.
- ii) Secondly, she has completed the period of pregnancy. That is they had passed over all difficult stages and had approached near the final goal of Victory.
- iii) Thirdly, she wilfully miscarries her child. That is after coming close to victory they came down to settlement and instead of achieving the coveted goal faced disappointment.
- iv) Fourthly, her period of widowhood is long. That is they fell in such a state as though they had no protector or patron and they were roaming about without any ruler.
- v) Fifthly, her successors would be distant persons. That is the people of Syria who had no relationship with them would occupy their properties.

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SERMON 71

Herein Amir al-mu'minin tells people how to pronounce "aṣ-ṣalāt" (to invoke Divine blessing) on the Prophet.

My Allah, the Spreader of the surfaces (of earth) and Keeper (intact) of all skies, Creator of hearts on good and evil nature, send Thy choicest

blessings and growing favours on Muhammad Thy servant and Thy Prophet who is the last of those who preceded (him) and an opener for what is closed, proclaimer of truth with truth, repulser of the forces of wrong and crusher of the onslaughts of misguidance. As he was burdened (with responsibility of prophethood) so he bore it standing by Thy commands, advancing towards Thy will, without shrinking of steps or weakness of determination, listening to Thy revelation, preserving Thy testament, proceeding forward in the spreading of Thy commands till he lit fire for its seeker and lighted the path for the groper in the dark.

Hearts achieved guidance through him after being ridden with troubles. He introduced clearly guiding signs and shining injunctions. He is Thy trusted trustee, the treasurer of Thy treasured knowledge, Thy witness on the Day of Judgement, Thy envoy of truth and Thy Messenger towards the people. My Allah prepare large place for him under Thy shade and award him multiplying good by Thy bounty.

My Allah give height to his construction above all other constructions, heighten his position with Thee, grant perfection to his effulgence and perfect for him his light. In reward for his discharging Thy prophetship, grant him that his testimony be admitted and his speech be liked for his speech is just, and his judgements are clear-cut. My Allah put us and him together in the pleasures of life, continuance of bounty, satisfaction of desires, enjoyment of pleasures, ease of living, peace of mind and gifts of honour.

SERMON 72

Amir al-mu'minin said about Marwan ibn al-Hakam at Basrah. When Marwan was taken prisoner on the day of Jamal, he asked Hasan and Husayn (p.b.u.t.) to intercede on his behalf before Amir al-mu'minin. So they spoke to Amir al-mu'minin about him and he released him. Then they said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin he desires to swear you allegiance" Whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said :

Did he not swear me allegiance after the killing of `Uthman? Now I do not need his allegiance, because his is the hand of a Jew. If he swears me allegiance with his hand he would violate it after a short while. Well, he is to get power for so long as a dog licks his nose. He is the father of four rams (who will also rule). The people will face hard days through him and his sons.¹

1. Marwan ibn al-Hakam was the nephew (brother's son) and son-in-law of `Uthman. Due to thin body and tall stature he was known with the nickname "Khayṭ Bāṭil" (the thread of wrong). When `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan killed `Amr ibn Sa'id al-Ashdaq, his brother Yahya ibn Sa'id said :

O' sons of Khayṭ Bāṭil (the thread of the wrong) you have played deceit on `Amr and people like you build their houses (of authority) on deceit and treachery.

Although his father al-Hakam ibn Abi al-`As had accepted Islam at the time of the fall of Mecca but his behaviour and activities were very painful to the Prophet. Consequently, the Prophet cursed him and his descendants and said, "Woe will befall my people from the progeny of this man." At last in view of his increasing intrigues the Prophet dismissed him from Medina towards the valley of Wajj (in Ṭa'if) and Marwān also went with him. Prophet did not thereafter allow them entry in Medina all his life. Abu Bakr and `Umar did likewise, but `Uthman sent for both of them during his reign, and raised Marwān to such height as though the reins of caliphate rested in his hands. Thereafter his circumstances became so favourable that on the death of Mu`awiyah

ibn Yazid he became the Caliph of the Muslims. But he had just ruled only for nine months and eighteen days that death overtook him in such a way that his wife sat with the pillow on his face and did not get away till he breathed his, last.

The four sons to whom Amir al-mu'minin has referred were the four sons of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan namely al-Walid, Sulayman, Yazid and Hishām, who ascended the Caliphate one after the other and coloured the pages of history with their stories. Some commentators have regarded this reference to Marwan's own sons whose names are `Abd al-Malik, `Abd al-'Aziz, Bishr and Muhammad. Out of these `Abd al-Malik did become Caliph of Islam but 'AM al-'Aziz became governor of Egypt, Bishr of Iraq and Muhammad of al-Jazirah.

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SERMON 73

When the Consultative Committee (or Shūrā) decided to swear allegiance to `Uthmān, Amir al-mu'minin said:

You have certainly known that I am the most rightful of all others for the Caliphate. By Allah, so long as the affairs of Muslims remain intact and there is no oppression in it save on myself I shall keep quiet seeking reward for it (from Allah) and keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements for which you aspire.

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SERMON 74

When Amir al-mu'minin learnt that the Umayyads blamed him for killing Uthman, he said:

Umayyads's knowledge about me did not desist them from accusing me, nor did my precedence (in accepting Islam) kept off these ignorant people from blaming me. Allah's admonitions are more eloquent than my tongue. I am the contester against those who break away from Faith and the opponent of those who entertain doubts. Uncertainties should be placed before Qur'an, the Book of Allah (for clarification). Certainly, people will be recompensed according to what they have in their hearts.

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SERMON 75

About preaching and counseling

Allah may bless him who listens to a point of wisdom and retains it, when he is invited to the right path he approaches it, he follows a leader (by catching his waist band) and finds salvation, keeps Allah before his eyes and fears his sins, performs actions sincerely and acts virtuously, earns treasure of heavenly rewards, avoids vice, aims at (good) objective and reaps recompense, faces his desires and rejects (fake) hopes, makes endurance the means to his salvation and piety the provision for his death, rides on the path of honour and sticks to the highway of truth, makes good use of his time and hastens towards end and takes with him the provision of (good) actions.

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SERMON 76

About Umayyads

The Banu Umayyah (Umayyads) are allowing me the inheritance of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) bit. By Allah, if I live I would throw them away as the butcher removes the dust from the dust-covered piece of flesh.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In one version for "*al-widhamu 'ttaribah* " (dust covered piece of flesh) the words "*at-turābu 'lwadhimah* " (the soil sticking on a piece of flesh) have been shown. That is, for the adjective the qualified noun and for the qualified noun the adjective has been placed. And by word "*layufawwiqunani*" Amir al-mu'minin implies that they allow him bit by bit just a she-camel may be milked a little and then its young one may be made to suck milk so that it may be ready to be milked. And "*al-widhām*" is the plural of "*wadhamah*" which means the piece of stomach or of liver which falls on the ground and then the dust is removed from it.

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SERMON 77

Supplications of Amir al-mu'minin.

O' my Allah! Forgive me what Thou knowest about me more than I do. If I return (to the sins) Thou return to forgiveness. My Allah forgive me what I had promised to myself but Thou didst not find its fulfilment with me. My Allah forgive me that with what I sought nearness to Thee with my tongue but my heart opposed and did not perform it. My Allah forgive me winking of the eye, vile utterances, desires of the heart and errors of speech.

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SERMON 78

When Amir al-mu'minin decided to set out for the battle with the Khārijites someone said, "If you set out at this moment then according to astrology I fear you will not be successful in your aim," whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said:

Do you think you can tell the hour when a man goes out and no evil befall him or can warn of the time at which if one goes out harm will accrue? Whoever testifies to this falsifies the Qur'an and becomes unmindful of Allah in achieving his desired objective and in warding off the undesirable. You cherish saying this so that he who acts on what you say should praise you rather than Allah because according to your misconception you have guided him about the hour in which he would secure benefit and avoid harm.

Then Amir al-mu'minin advanced towards the people and said:

O' people ! Beware of learning the science of stars except that with which guidance is sought on land or sea, because it leads to divining and an astrologer is a diviner, while the diviner is like the sorcerer, the sorcerer is like the unbeliever and the unbeliever would be in Hell. Get forward in the name of Allah.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin decided to march towards Nahrawan to suppress the risings of the Khārijites, 'Afif ibn Qays al-Kindi said to him, "This hour is not good. If you set out at this time, then instead of victory and success you will face defeat." But Amir al-mu'minin paid no heed to his view and ordered the army to march that very moment. In the result the Khārijites suffered such a clear defeat that out of their nine thousand combatants only nine individuals saved their lives by running away while the rest were killed.

Amir al-mu'minin has argued about astrology being wrong or incorrect in three ways, firstly, that if the view of an astrologer is accepted as correct it would mean falsification of the Qur'an, because an astrologer claims to ascertain hidden things of the future by seeing the stars while the Qur'an says:

Say: "None (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Allah . . ." (27:65)

Secondly, that under his misconception the astrologer believes that he can know his benefit or harm through knowing the future. In that case he would be regardless of turning to Allah and seeking His help, while this indifference towards Allah and self-reliance is a sort of heresy and atheism, which puts an end to his hope in Allah. Thirdly, that if he succeeds in any objective, he would regard of this success to be the result of his knowledge of astrology, as a result of which he would praise himself rather than Allah, and will expect that whomever he guides in this manner he too should be grateful to him rather than to Allah. These points do not apply to astrology to the extent it may be believed that the astrological findings are in the nature of effect of medicines which are subject to alteration at will of Allah. The competence achieved by most of our religious scholars in astrology is correct on this very ground that they did not regard its findings as final.

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SERMON 79

After the Battle of Jamal,¹ Amir al-mu'minin said about physical defects of women

O' ye peoples ! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.

1. Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon after the devastation created by the Battle of Jamal. Since the devastation resulting from this battle was the outcome of blindly following a woman's command, in this sermon he has described women's physical defects and their causes and effects. Thus their first weakness is that for a few days in every month they have to abstain from prayer and fasting, and this abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in Faith. Although the real meaning of *imān* (belief) is heart-felt testimony and inner conviction yet metaphorically it also applies to action and character. Since actions are the reflection of Belief they are also regarded as part of Belief. Thus, it is related from Imam `Ali ibn Mūsā ar-Riḍā (p.b.u.t.) that:

imān (belief) is testimony at heart, admission by the tongue and action by the limbs.

The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit of full performance of their intelligence. Therefore, nature has given them the power of intelligence only in accordance with the scope of their activities which can guide them in pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, child care and house-hold affairs. On the basis of this weakness of mind and intelligence their evidence has not been accorded the status of man's evidence, as Allah says:

... then call to witness two witnesses from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) a man and two women, of those ye approve of the witnesses, so that should one of the two (women) forget the (second) one of the two may remind the other... (Qur'an, 2:282)

The third weakness is that their share in inheritance is half of man's share in inheritance as the Qur'an says:

Allah enjoineth you about your children. The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females... (4:11)

This shows woman's weakness because the reason for her share in inheritance being half is that the liability of her maintenance rests on man. When man's position is that of a maintainer and care taker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.

After describing their natural weakness as Amir al-mu'minin points out the mischiefs of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say in regard to some good things it should not be done in a way that these should feel as if it is

being done in pursuance of their wish, but rather in a way that they should realize that the good act has been performed because of its being good and that their pleasure or wish has nothing to do with it. If they have even the doubt that their pleasures has been kept in view in it they would slowly increase in their demands and would wish that they should be obeyed in all matters however evil, the inevitable consequence whereof will be destruction and ruin. ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh writes about this view of Amir al-mu'minin as under :

Amir al-mu'minin has said a thing which is corroborated by experiences of centuries.

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SERMON 80

About the way of preaching and counselling

O' people ! abstinence is to shorten desires, to thank for bounties and to keep off prohibitions. If this is possible then (at least) the prohibitions should not overpower your patience. Allah has exhausted the excuses before you through clear, shining arguments and open, bright books.

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SERMON 81

About the world and its people

In what way shall I describe this world whose beginning is grief and whose end is destruction? ¹ The lawful actions performed here have to be accounted for, while for the forbidden ones there is punishment. Whoever is rich here faces mischief and whoever is poor gets grief. One who hankers after it does not get it. If one keeps away from it then it advances towards

him. If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight, but if one has his eye on it then it would blind him.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: If a thinker thinks over this phrase of Amir al-mu'minin "*waman abşara bihã başşarat-hu*" ("If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight") he would find there-under very amazing meaning and far-reaching sense whose purpose cannot be appreciated and whose aim cannot be understood particularly when he joins it with Amir al-mu'minin's phrase "*waman abşara ilayhã a'mat-hu*" ("If one has his eye on it, then it would blind him") he would find the difference between "*abşara bihã* " and "*abşara lahã* ", clear, bright, wonderful and shining.

1. "The beginning of the world is grief and its end is destruction." This sentence contains the same truth which the Qur'an has presented in the verse:

Indeed We have created man (to dwell) amidst hardship. (90:4)

It is true that right from the narrow womb of the mother upto the vastness of the firmament the changes of human life do not come to an end. When man first tastes life he finds himself closed in such a dark prison where he can neither move the limbs nor change the sides. When he gets rid of this confinement and steps in this world he has to pass through in-numerable troubles. In the beginning he can neither speak with the tongue so as to describe his difficulty or pain nor possesses energy in the limbs so as to accomplish his needs himself. Only his suppressed sobs and flowing tears express his needs and translate his grief and sorrow. When after the lapse of this period he enters the stage of learning and instruction, then on every step voices of admonition and abuse welcome him. All the time he seems frightened and terrified. When he is relieved of this period of subjugation he finds himself surrounded by the worries of family life and livelihood, where sometime, there is clash with comrades in profession, some-times collision with enemies, sometimes confrontation with vicissitudes of time, sometimes attack of ailments and sometimes shock of children, till old age approaches him with the tidings of helplessness and weakness, and eventually he bids farewell to this world with mortification and grief in the heart.

Thereafter Amir al-mu'minin says about this world, that in its lawful actions there is the question of reckoning and in its forbidden acts there are hardships of punishment, as a result of which even pleasant joys also produce bitterness in his palate. If there is plenty of wealth and money in this world then man finds himself in such a whirlpool (of worries) that he loses his joy and peace of mind. But if there is want and poverty, he is ever crying for wealth. He who hankers after this world there is no limit for his desires. If one wish is fulfilled the desire for fulfilment of another wish crops up. This world is like the reflection. If you run after it then it will itself run forward but if you leave it and run away from it then it follows you. In the same way, if a person does not run after the world, the world runs after him. The implication is that if a person breaks the clutches of greed and avarice and keeps aloof from undesirable hankering after the world, he too gets (pleasures of) the world and he does not remain deprived of it. Therefore, he who surveys this world from above its surface and takes lesson from its chances and happenings, and through its variation, and alterations gains knowledge about Allah's Might, Wisdom and Sagacity, Mercy, Clemency and Sustaining power, his eyes will gain real brightness and sight. On the other hand the person who is lost only in the colourfulness of the world and its decorations, he loses himself in the darkness of the world that is why Allah has forbidden to view the world thus:

And strain not thine eyes unto that which We have provided (different) parties of them, (of) the splendour of the life of this world, so that We may try them in it; for the provision of thy Lord is better and more abiding. (Qur'an, 20:131)

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SERMON 82

This sermon is called the al-Gharrā' and it is one of the most wonderful sermons of Amir al-mu'minin.

Praise be to Allah who is High above all else, and is Near (the creation) through His bounty. He is the Giver of all reward and distinction, and Dispeller of all calamities and hardships.

I praise Him for His continuous mercy and His copious bounties.

I believe in Him as He is the First of all and He is Manifest. I seek guidance from Him as He is Near and is the Guide. I seek His succour as He is Mighty and Subduer. I depend upon Him as He is Sufficer and Supporter. And I stand witness that Muhammad (blessing of Allah be on him and his progeny) is His slave and His Prophet. He sent him for enforcement of His commands, for exhausting His pleas and for presenting warnings (against eternal punishment).

Enjoining people to Piety

O' creatures of Allah I advise you to have fear of Allah Who has furnished illustrations and Who has timed for you your lives. He has given you covering of dress' and He has scattered for you your livelihood. He has surrounded you with His knowledge. He has ordained rewards. He has bestowed upon you vast bounties and extensive gifts. He has warned you through far reaching arguments, and He has counted you by numbers. He has fixed for you ages (to live) in this place of test and house of instruction.

Caution against this world

You are on test in this world and have to render account about it. Certainly this world is a dirty watering place and a muddy source of drinking.

Its appearance is attractive and its inside is destructive. It is a changeable deception, a vanishing reflection and a bent pillar. When its despiser begins to like it and he who is not acquainted with it feels satisfied with it, then it raises and puts down its feet (in joy), entraps him in its trap, makes him the target of its arrows and puts round his neck the rope of death taking him to the narrow grave and fearful abode in order to show him his place of stay and the recompense of his acts. This goes on from generation to generation. Neither death stops from cutting them asunder nor do the survivors keep aloof from committing of sins.

Death and Resurrection

They are emulating each other and proceeding in groups towards the final objective and the rendezvous of death, till when matters come to a close, the world dies and resurrection draws near. Allah' would take them out from the corners of the graves, the nests of birds, the dens of beasts and the centres of death. They hasten towards His command and run towards the place fixed for their final return group by group, quiet, standing and arrayed in rows. They will be within Allah's sight and will hear every one who would call them.

They would be having the dress of helplessness and covering of submission and indignity. (At this time) contrivances would disappear, desires would be cut, hearts would sink quietly, voices would be curbed down, sweat would choke the throat, fear would increase and ears would resound with the thundering voice of the announcer calling towards the final judgement, award of recompense, striking of punishment and paying of reward.

The limitation of Life

People have been created as a proof of (His) power, have been brought up with authority, they are made to die through pangs, and placed in graves where they turn into crumbs. Then they would be resurrected one by one, awarded their recompense and would have to account for their actions, each one separately. They had been allowed time to seek deliverance, had been shown the right path and had been allowed to live and seek favours, the darkness of doubts had been removed, and they had been let free in this period of life as a training place in order to make preparation for the race on the Day of Judgement, to search for the objective with thoughtfulness, to get time necessary to secure benefits and provide for the next place of stay.

No happiness without Piety

How appropriate are these illustrations and effective ad-

monitions provided they are received by pure hearts, open ears, firm views and sharp wits. Fear Allah like him who listened (good advice) and bowed before it, when he committed sin he admitted it, when he felt fear he acted virtuously, when he apprehended he hastened (towards good acts), when he believed he performed virtuous acts, when he was asked to take lesson (from the happenings of this world) he did take the lesson, when he was asked to desist he abstained (from evil), when he responded to the call (of Allah) he leaned (towards him), when he turned back (to evil) he repented, when he followed he almost imitated and when he was shown (the right path) he saw it.

Such a man was busy in search of truth and got rid (of the worldly evils) by running away. He collected provision (of good acts) for himself, purified his inner self, built for the next world, and took with himself provision for the day of his departure, keeping in view his journey, his requirement and the position of his need. He sent ahead of him for the abode of his stay (in the next world). O' creatures of Allah, fear Allah keeping in view the reason why He created you and be afraid of Him to the extent He has advised you to do. Make yourself deserve what He has promised you, by having confidence in the truth of His promise and entertaining fear for the Day of Judgement.

**A part of the same sermon
Reminding people of Allah's bounties**

He has made for you ears to preserve what is important, eyes to have sight in place of blindness and limbs which consist of many (smaller) parts, whose curves are in proportion with the moulding of their shapes and lengths of their ages, and also bodies that are sustaining themselves and hearts that are busy in search of their food, besides other big bounties, obliging bestowings and fortresses of safety. He has fixed for you ages that are not known to you. He has retained for you remains of the past people for your instruction. Those people enjoyed themselves fully and were completely unhampered.

Death overtook them before (satisfaction of) their desires, from which the hands of death separated them. They did not provide for themselves during health of their bodies, and did not take lesson during pendency of youth.

Are these people who are in youth waiting for the back-bending old age, and those enjoying fresh health waiting for ailments, and these living persons looking for the hour of death? When the hour of departure would be close and the journey at hand, with pangs of grief and trouble, suffering of sorrows and suffocation of saliva, and the time would arrive for calling relations and friends for help and changing sides on the bed. Could then the near ones stop death, or the mourning women do any good? He would rather be left alone in the graveyard confined to the narrow corner of his grave.

His skin has been pierced all over by reptiles, and his freshness has been destroyed by these tribulation. Storms have removed his traces and calamities have obliterated even his signs. Fresh bodies have turned thin and withered and bones have become rotten. The spirits are burdened with the weight of sins and have become conscious of the unknown things. But now neither the good acts can be added to nor evil acts can be atoned for by repentance. Are you not sons, fathers, brothers and relations of these dead and are not to follow their footsteps and pass by their paths? But hearts are still unmoved, heedless of guidance and moving on wrong lines, as though the addressee is someone else, and as though the correct way is to amass worldly gains.

Preparation for the Day of Judgement

And know that you have to pass over the path way (of *ṣirāt*) where steps waver, feet slip away and there are fearful dangers at every step. O' creatures of Allah, fear Allah, like the fearing of wise man whom the thought (of next world) has turned away from other matters, fear (of Allah)

has afflicted his body with trouble and pain, his engagement in the night prayer has turned even his short sleep into awakening, hope (of eternal recompense) keeps him thirsty in the day, abstention has curbed his desires, and remembrance of Allah is ever moving his tongue. He entertains fear before dangers. He avoids uneven ways in favour of clear ones. He follows the shortest route to secure his purpose, wishfulness does not twist his thinking and ambiguities do not blind his eyes. He enjoys deep sleep and passes his day happily because of the happiness of good tidings and pleasure of (eternal bounties).

He passes the pathway of this world in praiseworthy manner. He reaches the next world with virtues. He hastens (towards virtue) out of fear (for vice). He removes briskly during the short time (of life in this world). He devotes himself in seeking (eternal good), he runs away from evil. During today he is mindful of tomorrow, and keeps the future in his view. Certainly Paradise is the best reward and achievement, which hell is appropriate punishment and suffering. Allah is the best Avenger and Helper and the Qur'an is the best argument and confronter.

Warning against Satan

I enjoin upon you fear of Allah Who has left no excuse against what He has warned, has exhausted argument (of guidance) about the (right) path He has shown. He has warned you of the enemy that steals into hearts and stealthily speaks into ears, and thereby misguides and brings about destruction, makes (false) promises and keeps under wrong impression; He represents evil sins in attractive shape, and shows as light even serious crimes. When he has deceived his comrades and exhausted the pledge he begins to find fault with what he presented as good, and considers serious what he had shown as light, and threatens from what he had shown as safe.

Part of the same sermon dealing with creation of man

Or look at man whom Allah has created in the dark wombs and layers of curtains from what was overflowing semen, then shapeless clot, then embryo, then suckling infant, then child and then fully grown up young man. Then He gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson (from whatever is around him) and understand it and follow the admonition and abstain from evil.

When he attained the normal growth and his structure gained its average development he fell in self-conceit and got perplexed. He drew bucketfuls of his desires, got immersed in fulfilling his wishes for pleasures of the world and his (sordid) aims. He did not fear any evil nor got frightened of any apprehension. He died infatuated with his vices. He spent his short life in rubbish pursuits. He earned no reward nor did he fulfil any obligation. Fatal illness overtook him while he was still in his enjoyments and perplexed him. He passed the night in wakefulness in the hardships of griefs and prickings of pains and ailments in the presence of real brother, loving father, wailing mother, crying sister, while he himself was under maddening uneasiness, serious senselessness, fearful cries, suffocating pains, anguish of suffocating sufferings and the pangs of death.

Thereafter he was clad in the shroud while he remained quiet and thoroughly submissive to others. Then he was placed on planks in such a state that he had been down-trodden by hardships and thinned by ailments. The crowd of youngmen and helping brothers carried him to his house of loneliness where all connections of visitors are severed. Thereafter those who accompanied him went away and those who were wailing for him returned and then he was made to sit in his grave for terrifying questioning and slippery examination. The great calamity of that place is the hot water and entry into Hell, flames of eternal Fire and intensity of blazes. There is no resting period, no gap for ease, no power to intervene, no death to bring about solace and no sleep to make

him forget pain. He rather lies under several kinds of deaths and moment-to-moment punishments. We seek refuge with Allah.

The lesson to be learnt from those who have passed away

O' creatures of Allah ! where are those who were allowed (long) ages to live and they enjoyed bounty. They were taught and they learnt; they were given time and they passed it in vain; they were kept healthy and they forgot (their duty). They were allowed long period (of life), were handsomely provided, were warned of grievous punishment and were promised big rewards. You should avoid sins that lead to destruction and vices that attract wrath (of Allah).

O' people who possess eyes and ears and health and wealth! Is there any place of protection, any shelter of safety, or asylum or haven, or occasion to run away or to come back (to this world)? If not, "*how are you then turned away*" (Qur'an, 6:95; 10:34; 35:3; 40:62) and wither are you averting? By what things have you been deceived? Certainly, the share of every one of you from this earth is just a piece of land equal to his own stature and size where he would lie on his cheeks covered with dust. The present is an opportune moment for acting.

O' creatures of Allah, since the neck is free from the loop, and spirit is also unfettered, now you have time for seeking guidance; you are in ease of body; you can assemble in crowds, the rest of life is before you; you have opportunity of acting by will; there is opportunity for repentance, and peaceful circumstances. (But you should act) before you are overtaken by narrow circumstances and distress, or fear and weakness, before the approach of the awaited death and before seizure by the Almighty, the Powerful.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: It is related that when Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon people began to tremble, tears flowed from their eyes and their hearts were frightened. Some people call this sermon the Brilliant Sermon (*al-Khuṭbatu'l-Gharrā'*)

1. Allah has furnished every creature with natural dress, which is the means of protecting it from cold and heat. Thus, some animals are covered in feathers and some carry apparels of wool on their bodies. But high degree of intelligence of man and the quality of shame and modesty in him demands distinction from other creatures. Consequently, to maintain this distinction he has been taught the ways of covering his body. It was this natural impulse that when Adam was made to give up his dress he began to cover his body with leaves. The Qur'an says :

So when they tested (of) the tree their shameful things got displayed unto them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the Garden . . . (Qur'an, 7:22)

This was the punishment awarded for his committing what was better for him to omit. When removal of dress is punishment its putting on would be a favour, and since this is peculiar to man it has been particularly mentioned.

2. The intention is that Allah would resurrect all the dead, even though they had been eaten by beasts and been merged in their bodies. Its aim is to refute the view of the philosophers who hold that the resurrection of the non-existent is impossible and who do not therefore believe in the physical resurrection. Their argument briefly is that a thing which has lost existence by death cannot return to life. Consequently, after the destruction of this world the return of any of its beings to life is out of question. But this belief is not correct because dispersal of the parts does not mean its non-existence, so as to say that putting these parts together again would involve resurrection of the non-existent. On the other hand separated and dispersed parts continue to exist in some form or the other. Of course, in this connection this objection has some force that when every person is to be resurrected in his own form, then in case one person has eaten the other, then in such a case it would be impossible to resurrect either of them with his own constituent parts, since this would involve creating deficiency of parts in that who had eaten the other.

To this metaphysicians have replied that in everybody there are some

constituents which are essential and others which are non-essential. The essential constituents remain constant from the beginning till end of life and suffer no change or alteration, and resurrection with regard to such constituents would not create any deficiency in the man who ate the other.

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SERMON 83

About `Amr ibn al-`Ās

I am surprised at the son of an-Nābighah that he says about me among the people of Syria (ash-Shām) that I am a jester and that I am engaged in frolics and fun. He said wrong and spoke sinfully. Beware, the worst speech is what is untrue. He speaks and lies. He promises and breaks the promise. He begs and sticks, but when someone begs from him he withholds miserly. He betrays the pledge and ignores kinship.

When in a battle, he commands and admonishes but only until the swords do not come into action. When such a moment arrives his great trick is to turn naked' before his adversary. By Allah, surely the remembrance of death has kept me away from fun and play while obliviousness about the next world has prevented him from speaking truth. He has not sworn allegiance to Mu`awiyah without purpose; but has beforehand got him agree that he will have to pay its price, and gave him an award for forsaking religion.

1. Amir al-mu'minin here refers to the incident when the 'Conqueror of Egypt' `Amr ibn al-`Ās exhibited the feat of his courage by displaying his private parts. What happened was that when in the battlefield of Şiffin he and Amir al-mu'minin had an

encounter, he rendered himself naked in order to ward off the blow of the sword. At this Amir al-mu'minin turned his face away and spared him his life. The famous Arab poet al-Farazdaq said about it:

There is no good in warding off trouble by ignominy as was done one day by `Amr ibn al-'As by display of his private parts.

Even in this ignoble act `Amr ibn al-'As had not the credit of doing it himself, but had rather followed another one who had preceded him, because the man who first adopted this device was Talhah ibn Abi Talhah who had saved his life in the battle of Uhud by becoming naked before Amir al-mu'minin, and so he showed this way to the others. Thus, besides `Amr ibn al-'As this trick was played by Busr ibn Abi Artat also to save himself from the sword of Amir al-mu'minin. When after the performance of this notable deed Busr went to Mu'awiyah the latter recalled `Amr ibn al-'As's act as precedent in order to remove this man's shamefulfulness and said, "O' Busr, no matter. There is nothing to feel shameful about it in view of `Amr ibn al-'As's precedent before you."

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SERMON 84

About the perfection of Allah and counseling

I stand witness that there is no god but Allah, He is One and there is no partner with Him. He is the First, such that nothing was before Him. He is the Last, such that there is not limit for Him. Imagination cannot catch any of His qualities. Hearts cannot entertain belief about His nature. Analysis and division cannot be applied to Him. Eyes and hearts cannot compared Him.

A part of the same sermon

O' creatures of Allah ! take lesson from useful items of instruction and shining indications. Be cautioned by effective items of warning. Get benefit from preaching and admonition. It is as though the claws of death are pressed in you, the connection of hope and desires has been cut asunder, hard affairs

have befallen you and your march is towards the place where everyone has to go, namely death. Hence, *"with every person there is a driver and a witness"* (Qur'an, 50:21). The driver drives him towards resurrection while the witness furnishes evidence about his deeds.

A part of the same sermon (about Paradise)

In Paradise there are high classes and different places of stay. Its boundary never ends. He who stays in it will never depart from it. He who is endowed with everlasting abode in it will not get old, and its resident will not face want.

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SERMON 85

About getting ready for the next world and following Allah's commandments

Allah knows hidden matters and is aware of inner feelings. He encompasses everything. He has control over everything and power over everything. Everyone of you should do whatever he has to do during his days of life before approach of death, in his leisure before his occupation, and during the breathing of his breath before it is overtaken by suffocation, should provide for himself and his journey and should collect provision from his place of halt for his place of stay.

So remember Allah, O' people, about what He has asked you in His Book to take care of, and about His rights that He has entrusted to you. Verily, Allah has not created you in vain nor left you unbridled nor let you alone in ignorance and gloom. He has defined what you should leave behind, taught you your acts, ordained your death, sent down to you, *"the Book (Qur'an) explaining everything"* (Qur'an, 16:89) and made His Prophet live among you for long time till He completed for him and for you the message sent through

the Qur'an namely the religion liked by Him, and clarified through him His good acts and evil acts. His prohibitions and His commands.

He placed before you His arguments and exhausted his excuses upon you. He put forth to you His promises and warned you of severe retribution. You should therefore make full atonement during your remaining days and let yourselves practice endurance in these days. These days are fewer as against the many days during which you have shown obliviousness and heedlessness towards admonition. Do not allow time to your-selves because it will put you on the path of wrong-doers and do not be easy-going because this will push you towards sinfulness.

O' creatures of Allah ! the best adviser for himself is he who is the most obedient to Allah, and the most deceiving for himself is he who is the most disobedient to Allah. Deceived is he who deceived his own self. Envious is he whose Faith is safe. Fortunate is he who takes lesson from others, while unfortunate is he who fell victim to his desires. You should know that even the smallest hypocrisy is like believing in more than one God, and keeping company of people who follow their desires is the key to obliviousness from religion, and is the seat of Satan.

Be on your guard against falsehood because it is contrary to Faith. A truthful person is on the height of salvation and dignity, while the liar is on the edge of ignominy and degradation. Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away Faith just as fire eats away dried wood. Do not bear malice because, it is scraper (of virtues). And know that desires make wit forgetful and make memory oblivious. You should falsify desire because it is a deception, and he who has desires is in deceit.

SERMON 86

The Qualities of a faithful believer

O' creatures of Allah! the most beloved of Allah is he whom Allah has given power (to act) against his passions, so that his inner side is (submerged in) grief and the outer side is covered with fear. The lamp of guidance is burning in his heart. He has provided entertainment for the day that is to befall him. He regards what is distant to be near himself and takes the hard to be light. He looks at and perceives; he remembers (Allah) and enhances (the tempo of his) actions. He drinks sweet water to whose source his way has been made easy. So he drinks to satisfaction and takes the level path. He has put off the clothes of desires and got rid of worries except one worry peculiar to him. He is safe from misguidance and company of people who follow their passions. He has become the key to the doors of guidance, and the lock for the doors of destruction.

He has seen his way and is walking on it. He knows his pillar (of guidance) and has crossed over his deep water. He has caught hold of the most reliable supports and the strongest ropes. He is on that level of conviction which is like the brightness of the sun. He has set himself for Allah, the Glorified, for performance of the most sublime acts by facing all that befalls him and taking every step needed for it. He is the lamp in darkness. He is the dispeller of all blindness, key to the obscure, remover of complexities, and a guide in vast deserts. When he speaks he makes understand whereas when he remains silent then it is safe to do so. He did everything only for Allah and so Allah also made him His own. Consequently, he is like the mines of His faith, and as stump in His earth. He has enjoined upon himself (to follow) justice.

The first step of his justice is the rejection of desires from his heart. He describes right and acts according to it. There is no good which he has not aimed at nor any likely place (of virtue) of the Qur'an. Therefore the Qur'an

is his guide and leader. He gets down when the Qur'an puts down his weight and he settles where the Qur'an settles him down.

The Characteristics of an unfaithful believer

While the other (kind of) man is he who calls himself learned but he is not so. He has gleaned ignorance from the ignorant and misguidance from the misguided. He has set for the people a trap (made) of the ropes of deceit and untrue speech. He takes the Qur'an according to his own views and right after his passions. He makes people feel safe from big sins and takes light the serious crimes. He says that he is waiting for (clarification) doubts but he remains plunged therein, and that he keeps aloof from innovations but actually he is immersed in them. His shape is that of a man, but his heart is that of a beast. He does not know the door of guidance to follow nor the door of misguidance to keep aloof therefrom. These are living dead bodies.

About the Descendants (‘Itrah) of the Holy Prophet

"So wither are you going to" (Qur'an, 81:26) and *"how are you then turned away?"* (Qur'an, 6:95; 10:34; 35:3; 40:62) Ensigns (of guidance) are standing, indications (of virtue) are clear, and the minarets (of light) have been fixed. Where are you being taken astray and how are you groping while you have among you the descendants of the Prophet? They are the reins of Right, ensigns of Faith and tongues of truth. According to them the same good position as you accord to the Qur'an, and come to them (for quenching the thirst of guidance) as the thirsty camels approach the water spring.

O' people take this saying¹ of the last of the Prophet that he who dies from among us is not dead, and he who decays (after dying) from among us does not really decay. Do not say what you do not understand,

because most of the Right is in what you deny. Accept the argument of one against whom you have no argument. It is I. Did I not act before you on the greater *thaqal* (*ath-thaqal al-akbar*, i.e. the Qur'an) and did I not retain among you smaller *thaqal* (*ath-thaqal al-asghar*, i.e. the descendents of the Prophet).² I fixed among you the standard of faith, and I taught you the limits of lawful and unlawful. I clothed you with the garments of safety with my justice and spread for you (the carpet of) virtue by my word and deed.

I showed you high manners through myself. Do not exercise your imagination about what the eye cannot see or the mind cannot conceive.

A part of the same sermon, about Banu Umayyah.

Till people begin thinking that the world is attached to the Umayyads, would be showering its benefits on them, and lead them to its clear spring for watering, and that their whip and sword will not be removed from the people. Whoever thinks so is wrong. There are rather a few drops from the joys of life which they would suck for a while and then vomit out the whole of it.

1. This saying of the Prophet is a definite proof of the view that the life of any one from among the Ahlu'l-bayt (Household of the Holy Prophet) does not come to an end and that apparent death makes no difference in their sense of living, although human intelligence is unable to comprehend the conditions and happenings of that life. There are many truths beyond this world of senses which human mind cannot yet understand. Who can say how in the narrow corner of the grave where it is not possible even to breathe replies will be given to the questions of the angels Munkar and Nakir? Similarly, what is the meaning of life of the martyrs in the cause of Allah, who have neither sense nor motion, can neither see nor hear? Al-though to us they appear to be dead, yet the Qur'an testifies to their life.

And say not of those who are slain in the path of Allah that they are dead; Nay, (they are) living, but ye perceive not. (2:154)

At another place it says about their life :

Reckon not those who are slain in the way of Allah, to be dead; Nay! alive they are with their Lord being sustained. (3:169)

When restriction has been placed on mind and tongue even in respect of the common martyrs that they should not be called dead nor considered dead, how would not those individuals whose necks were reserved for sword and palate for poison be living for all times to come.

About their bodies Amir al-mu'minin has said that by passage of time no signs of oldness or decay occur in them, but they remain in the same state in which they fell as martyrs. There should be nothing strange in it because dead bodies preserved through material means still exist. When it is possible to do so through material means will it be out of the Power of the Omnipotent Creator to preserve against change and decay the bodies of those upon whom he has bestowed the sense of everlasting life? Thus about the martyrs of Badr, the Holy Prophet said :

Shroud them even with their wounds and flowing blood because when they would rise on the Day of Judgement blood would be pushing out of their throats.

2. "*athaqal al-akbar*" implies the Qur'an and "*ath-thaqal al-aṣghar*" means Ahlu'l-bayt (the Household of the Holy Prophet) as in the Prophet's saying: "Verily, I am leaving among you (the) two precious things (of high estimation and of care)," the reference is to Qur'an and Ahlu'l-bayt. There are several reasons for using this word. Firstly, "*thaqal*" means the kit of a traveller, and since the kit is much in need, it is protected carefully. Secondly, it means a precious thing; and since this is of great importance, one is bound to follow the injunctions of the Qur'an and the actions of Ahlu'l-bayt. So they have been called 'precious things.' Since Allah has made arrangements for the protection of the Qur'an and Ahlu'l-bayt till dooms day so they have been called "*thaqalayn*." So the Prophet before leaving this world for the next, declared them to be his valuable possessions and ordered people to preserve them. Thirdly, they have been called "*thaqalayn*" (precious things) in view of their purity and high value. Thus Ibn Hajar al-Haytami writes :

The Prophet has called the Qur'an and his Descendants as "*thaqalayn*" (two precious things) because "*thaqal*" means a pure, chaste and preserved thing, and either of these two were really so, each of them is the treasure of Divine knowledge and a source of scholarly secrets and religious commandments. For that reason the Prophet desired the people to follow them and to stick to them and to secure knowledge from them. Among them the most deserving of attachment is the Imam and Scholar of the family of the Prophet namely `Ali ibn Abi Talib (Allah may honour his face) because of his great insight and copiousness of knowledge which we have already described. (*aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-muḥriqah*, p.90)

Since the Prophet has with regard to apparent implication attributed the Qur'an to Allah and the descendants to himself, therefore in keeping with the natural status the Qur'an has been called the bigger weight while the descendants, the smaller weight. Otherwise from the point of view of being followed both are equal and from the point of view of utility in the development of character there can be no question in the status of the speaking party (the Ahlu'l-bayt) being higher than the silent one (the Qur'an).

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SERMON 87

About the division of the community into factions

So now, certainly, Allah did not break the neck of any unruly tyrant in this world except after allowing him time and opportunity and did not join the broken bone of any people (*ummah*) until He did not inflict calamity and distress upon them. Even less than what sufferings and misfortunes have yet to fall upon you or have already befallen you are enough for giving lessons. Every man with a heart is not intelligent, every ear does not listen and every eye does not see.

I wonder, and there is no reason why I should not wonder, about the faults of these groups who have introduced alterations in their religious pleas, who do not move on the footsteps of their Prophet nor follow the actions of the vicegerent. They do not believe in the unknown and do not avoid

the evil. They act on the doubts and tread in (the way of) their passions. For them good is whatever they consider good and evil is whatever they consider evil. Their reliance for resolving distresses is on them-selves. Their confidence in regard to dubious matters is on their own opinions as if every one of them is the Leader (Imam) of himself. Whatever he has decided himself he considers it to have been taken through reliable sources and strong factors.

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SERMON 88

About the Holy Prophet.

Allah sent the Prophet when the mission of other Prophets had stopped and the peoples were in slumber for a long time. Evils were raising heads, all matters were under disruption and in flames of wars, while the world was devoid of brightness, and full of open deceitfulness. Its leaves had turned yellow and there was absence of hope about its fruits. While water had gone under-ground. The minarets of guidance had disappeared and signs of destruction had appeared. It was stern to its people and frowned in the face of its seeker. Its fruit was vice and its food was carcass. Its inner dress was fear and outer cover was sword.

So take lesson O' creatures of Allah, and recall that (evil doing) with which your fathers and brothers are entangled, and for which they have to account. By my life, your time is not much behind theirs, nor have long periods or centuries lapsed between you and them, nor are you much distant from when you were in their loins.

By Allah, whatever the Prophet told them, I am here telling you the same and whatever you hear today is not different from what they heard yesterday. The eyes that were opened for them and the hearts that were made for them at that time, just the same have been given to you at this time. By Allah, you have not been told anything that they did not know and you have not been given anything which they were deprived of. Certainly you have been afflicted by a calamity (which is like a she-camel) whose nose-string is moving about and whose strap is loose. So in whatever condition these deceitful people are should not deceive you, because it is just a long shadow whose term is fixed.

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SERMON 89

Allah's attributes and some advice

Praise be to Allah who is well-known without being seen, Who creates without pondering over, Who has ever been existent when there was no sky with domes, nor curtains with lofty doors, nor gloomy night, nor peaceful ocean, nor mountains with broad pathways, nor curved mountain roads, nor earth of spread floors, nor self-reliant creatures. He is the Originator of creation and their Master. He is the God of the creation and its feeder. The sun and the moon are steadily moving in pursuit of His will. They make every fresh thing old and every distant thing near.

He distributed their sustenance and has counted their deeds and acts, the number of their breaths, their concealed looks, and whatever is hidden in their bosoms. He knows their places of stay and places of last resort in the loins and wombs till they reach their end.

His punishment on enemies is harsh despite the extent of His Mercy, and His compassion of His friends is vast despite His harsh punishment. He overpowers one who wants to overcome Him, and destroys one who clashes with Him. He disgraces one who opposes Him and gains sway over one who bears Him hostility. He is sufficient for one who relies on Him. He gives one who asks Him. He repays one who lends to Him. He rewards one who thanks Him.

O' creatures of Allah, weigh yourselves before you are weighed and assess yourselves before you are assessed. Breathe before suffocation of the throat. Be submissive before you are harshly driven. Know that if one does not help himself in acting as his own adviser and warner then no one else can (effectively) be his adviser or warner.

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SERMON 90

This sermon is known as the Sermon of Skeletons¹ (Khuṭbatu 'l-Ashbāḥ) and it holds one of the highest positions among the sermons of Amir al-mu'minin. Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah has related from al-Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad aṣ-Ṣādiq (p.b.u.t.) saying: "Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kufah when someone asked him, 'O' Amir al-mu'minin! describe Allah for us in such a way that we may imagine that we see Him with eyes so that our love and knowledge may increase about Him.' Amir al-mu'minin became angry at this (request of the questioner) and ordered the Muslims to gather in the mosque. So many Muslims gathered in the mosque that the place was over-crowded. Then Amir al-mu'minin ascended the pulpit while he was still in a state of anger and his colour was changed. After he had praised Allah and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Prophet he said :

Description of Allah

Praise be to Allah whom refusal to give away and stinginess do not make rich and Whom munificence and generosity do not make poor, although everyone who gives away loses (to that extent) except He, and every miser is blamed for his niggardliness. He obliges through beneficial bounties and plentiful gifts and grants. The whole creation is His dependents (in sustenance)². He has guaranteed their livelihood and ordained their sustenance. He has prepared the way for those who turn to Him and those who seek what is with Him. He is as generous about what He is asked as He is about that for which He is not asked. He is the First for whom there was no 'before' so that there could be anything before Him. He is the Last for whom there is no 'after' so that there could be anything after Him. He prevents the pupils of the eyes from seeing Him or perceiving Him. Time does not change over Him, so as to admit of any change of condition about Him. He is not in any place so as to allow Him movement (from one place to another).

If He gives away all that the mines of the mountains emit out or the gold, silver, pearls and cuttings of coral which the shells of the ocean vomit out, it would not affect his munificence, nor diminish the extent of what He has. (In fact) He would still have such treasures of bounty as would not decrease by the demands of the creatures, because He is that generous Being Whom the begging of beggars cannot make poor nor the pertinacity of beseechers make miser.

Attributes of Allah as described in the Holy Qur'an

Then look on questioner, be confined to those of His attributes which the Qur'an has described and seek light from the effulgence of its guidance. Leave to Allah that knowledge which Satan has prompted you to seek and which neither the Qur'an enjoins you to seek nor is there any trace of it in the actions

or sayings of the Prophet and other leaders (*A'immah*) of guidance. This is the extreme limit of Allah's claim upon you. Know that firm in knowledge are those who refrain from opening the curtains that lie against the unknown, and their acknowledgement of ignorance about the details of the hidden unknown prevents them from further probe. Allah praises them for their admission that they are unable to get knowledge not allowed to them. They do not go deep into the discussion of what is not enjoined upon them about knowing Him and they call it firmness. Be content with this and do not limit the Greatness of Allah after the measure of your own intelligence, or else you would be among the destroyed ones.

He is Powerful, such that when imagination shoots its arrows to comprehend the extremity of His power, and mind, making itself free of the dangers of evil thoughts, tries to find Him in the depth of His realm, and hearts long to grasp realities of His attributes and openings of intelligence penetrate beyond description in order to secure knowledge about His Being, crossing the dark pitfalls of the unknown and concentrating towards Him He would turn them back. They would return defeated admitting that the reality of His Knowledge cannot be comprehended by such random efforts, nor can an iota of the Sublimity of His Honour enter the understanding of thinkers.

About Allah's creation

He originated the creation without any example which He could follow and without any specimen prepared by any known creator that was before Him. He showed us the realm of His Might, and such wonders which speak of His Wisdom. The confession of the created things that their existence owes itself to Him made us realise that argument has been furnished about knowing Him (so that there is no excuse against it). The signs of His creative power and standard of His wisdom are fixed in the wonderful things He has created. Whatever He has created is

an argument in His favour and a guide towards Him. Even a silent thing is a guide towards Him as though it speaks, and its guidance towards the Creator is clear.

(O' Allah) I stand witness that he who likens Thee with the separateness of the limbs or with the joining of the extremities of his body did not acquaint his innerself with knowledge about Thee, and his heart did not secure conviction to the effect that there is no partner for Thee. It is as though he has not heard the (wrongful) followers declaiming their false gods by saying "*By Allah, we were certainly in manifest error when we equalled you with the Lord of the worlds.*" (Qur'an, 26:97-98). They are wrong who liken Thee to their idols, and dress Thee with apparel of the creatures by their imagination, attribute to Thee parts of body by their own thinking and consider Thee after the creatures of various types, through the working of their intelligence. I stand witness that whoever equated Thee with anything out of Thy creation took a match for Thee, and who-ever takes a match for Thee is an unbeliever, according to what is stated in thy unambiguous verses and indicated by the evidence of Thy clear arguments. (I also stand witness that) Thou art that Allah who cannot be confined in (the fetters of) intelligence so as to admit change of condition by entering its imagination nor in the shackles of mind so as to become limited and an object of alterations.

A part of the same sermon
About the greatest perfection in Allah's creation

He has fixed limits for every thing He has created and made the limits firm, and He has fixed its working and made the working delicate. He has fixed its direction and it does not transgress the limits of its position nor fall short of reaching the end of its aim. It did not disobey when it was commanded to move at His will; and how could it do so when all matters are governed by

His will. He is the Producer of varieties of things without exercise of imagination, without the urge of an impulse, hidden in Him, without (the benefit of) any experiment taken from the vicissitudes of time and without any partner who might have assisted Him in creating wonderful things.

Thus the creation was completed by His order and it bowed to His obedience and responded to His call. The laziness of any slug or the inertness of any excuse-finder did not prevent it from doing so. So He straightened the curves of the things and fixed their limits. With His power He created coherence in their contradictory parts and joined together the factors of similarity. Then He separated them in varieties which differ in limits, quantities, properties and shapes. All this is new creation. He made them firm and shaped them according as He wished and invented them.

A part of the same sermon, containing description of the sky

He has arranged the depressions and elevations of the openings of the sky. He has joined the breadths of its breaches, and has joined them with one another. He has made easy the approach to its heights for those (angels) who come down with His commands and those (angels) who go up with the deeds of the creatures. He called it when it was yet (in the form of) vapour. At once the links of its joints joined up. Then Allah opened up its closed door and put the sentinels of meteors at its holes, and held them with His hands (i.e. power) from falling into vastness of air.

He commanded it to remain stationary in obedience to His commands. He made its sun the bright indication for its day, and moon the gloomy indication for its night. He then put them in motion in their orbits and ordained their (pace of) movement in the stages of their paths in order to distinguish with their help between night and day, and in order that the reckoning of years

and calculations may be known by their fixed movements. Then He hung in its vastness its Sky and put therein its decoration consisting of small bright pearls and lamp-like stars. He shot at the over-hearers arrows of bright meteors. He put them in motion on their appointed routine and made them into fixed stars, moving stars, descending stars, ascending stars, ominous stars and lucky stars.

A part of the same sermon, containing description of Angels

Then Allah, the Glorified, created for inhabiting of His skies and populating the higher strata of his realm new (variety of) creatures namely the angels. With them He filled the openings of its cavities and populated with them the vastness of its circumference. In between the openings of these cavities there resounds the voices of angels glorifying Him in the enclosures of Sublimity, (behind) curtains of concealment and in veils of His Greatness. And behind this resounding which deafens the ears there is the effulgence of light which defies the approach of sight to it, and consequently the sight stands, disappointed at its limitation.

He created them in different shapes and with diverse characteristics. They have wings. They glorify the Sublimity of His Honour. They do not appropriate to themselves His skill that shows itself in creation. Nor do they claim they create anything in which He is unparalleled. *"But they are rather honoured creatures who do not take precedence over Him in uttering anything, and they act according to His command."* (Qur'an, 21: 26-27) He has made them the trustees of His revelation and sent them to Prophets as holders of His injunctions and prohibitions. He has immunised them against the waviness of doubts. Consequently no one among them goes astray from the path of His will. He has helped them with the benefits of succour and has covered their hearts with humility and peace. He has opened for them doors of submission to His Glories. He has fixed for

them bright minarets as signs of His Oneness. The weights of sins do not burden them and the rotation of nights and days does not make them move. Doubts do not attack with arrows the firmness of their faith. Misgivings do not assault the bases of their beliefs. The spark of malice does not ignite among them. Amazement does not tarnish what knowledge of Him their hearts possess, or His greatness and awe of His glory that resides in their bosoms. Evil thoughts do not lean towards them to affect their imagination with their own rust.

Among them are those who are in the frame of heavy clouds, or in the height of lofty mountains, or in the gloom of over-powering darkness. And there are those whose feet have pierced the lowest boundaries of the earth. These feet are like white ensigns which have gone forth into the vast expanse of wind. Under them blow the light wind which retains them upto its last end.

Occupation in His worship has made them carefree, and realities of Faith have served as link between them and His knowledge. Their belief in Him has made them concentrate on Him. They long from Him not from others. They have tasted the sweetness of His knowledge and have drunk from the satiating cup of His love. The roots of His fear have been implanted in the depth of their hearts. Consequently they have bent their straight backs through His worship. The length of the humility, and extreme nearness has not removed from them the rope of their fear.

They do not entertain pride so as to make much of their acts. Their humility before the glory of Allah does not allow them to esteem their own virtues. Languor does not affect them despite their long affliction. Their longings (for Him) do not lessen so that they might turn away from hope in (Allah) their Sustainer. The tips of their tongues do not get dry by constant prayers (to Allah). Engagements (in other matters) do not be-take them so as to turn their (loud) voices for Him into faint ones. Their shoulders do not get displaced in the

postures of worship. They do not move their necks (this and that way) for comfort in disobedience of His command. Follies of negligence do not act against their determination to strive, and the deceptions of desires do not overcome their courage.

They regard the Master of the Throne (Allah) as the store for the day of their need. Because of their love (for Him) they turn to Him even when others turn to the creatures. They do not reach the ending limit of His worship. Their passionate fondness for His worship does not turn them except to the springs of their own hearts, springs which are never devoid of His hope and His fear. Fear (of Allah) never leaves them so that they might slacken in their efforts, nor have temptations entrapped them so that they might prefer this light search over their (serious) effort.

They do not consider their past (virtuous) deeds as big, for if they had considered them big then fear would have wiped away hopes from their hearts. They did not differ (among themselves) about their Sustainer as a result of Satan's control over them. The vice of separation from one another did not disperse them. Rancour and mutual malice did not overpower them. Ways of wavering did not divide them. Differences of degree of courage did not render them into divisions. Thus they are devotees of faith. Neither crookedness (of mind), nor excess, nor lethargy nor languor breaks them from its rope. There is not the thinnest point in the skies but there is an angel over it in prostration (before Allah) or (busy) in quick performance (of His commands). By long worship of their Sustainer they increase their knowledge, and the honour of their Sustainer increases in their hearts.

**A part of the same sermon, in description
of earth and its spreading on water**

Allah spread the earth on stormy and tumultuous waves and the depths of swollen seas, where waves clashed with each other and high surges leapt over one another. They emitted foam like the he-camel at the time of sexual

excitement. So the tumult of the stormy water was subdued by the weight of the earth, when the earth pressed it with its chest its shooting agitation eased, and when the earth rolled on it with its shoulder bones the water meekly submitted. Thus after tumult of its surges it became tame and overpowered, and an obedient prisoner in the shackles of disgrace, while the earth spread itself and became solid in the stormy depth of this water. (In this way) the earth put an end to the pride, self conceit, high position and superiority of the water, and muzzled the intrepidity of its flow. Consequently it stopped after its stormy flow and settled down after its tumult.

When the excitement of water subsided under the earth's sides and under the weight of the high and lofty mountains placed on it shoulders Allah flowed springs of water from its high tops and distributed them through plains and low places and moderated their movement by fixed rocks and high mountain tops. Then its trembling came to a standstill because of the penetration of mountains in (various) parts of its surface and their being fixed in its deep areas, and their standing on its plains. Then Allah created vastness between the earth and firmament, and provided blowing wind for its inhabitants. Then He directed its inhabitants to spread all over its convenient places. Thereafter He did not leave alone the barren tracts of the earth where high portions lacked in water-springs and where rivers could not find their way, but created floating clouds which enliven the unproductive areas and grow vegetation.

He made a big cloud by collecting together small clouds and when water collected in it and lightning began to flash on its sides and the flash continued under the white clouds as well as the heavy ones He sent it raining heavily. The cloud was hanging towards the earth and southerly winds were squeezing it into shedding its water like a she-camel bending down for milking. When the cloud prostrated itself on the ground and delivered all the water it carried on itself Allah grew vegetation on the plain earth and herbage on dry mountains. As a result, the earth

felt pleased at being decorated with its gardens and wondered at her dress of soft vegetation and the ornaments of its blossoms. Allah made all this the means of sustenance for the people and feed for the beasts. He has opened up highways in its expanse and has established minarets (of guidance) for those who tread on its highways.

On the Creation of Man and the sending of the Prophet

When He has spread out the earth and enforced His commands He chose Adam (peace be upon him) as the best in His creation and made him the first of all creation. He made him to reside in Paradise and arranged for his eating in it, and also indicated from what He had prohibited him. He told him that proceeding towards it meant His disobedience and endangering his own position. But Adam did what he had been refrained from, just as Allah already knew beforehand. Consequently, Allah sent him down after (accepting) his repentance, to populate His earth with his progeny and to serve as a proof and plea for Him among his creatures.

Even when He made Adam die He did not leave them with-out one who would serve among them as proof and plea for His Godhead, and serve as the link between them and His knowledge, but He provided to them the proofs through His chosen Messengers and bearers of the trust of His Message, age after age till the process came to end with out Prophet Muhammad — Allah may bless him and his descendants — and His pleas and warnings reached finality.

He ordained livelihoods³ with plenty and with paucity. He distributed them narrowly as well as profusely. He did it with justice to test whomever He desired, with prosperity or with destitution, and to test through it the gratefulness or endurance of the rich and the poor. Then He coupled plenty with misfortunates of destitution, safety with the distresses of calamities and pleasures of enjoyment with pangs

of grief. He created fixed ages and made them long or short and earlier or later, and ended them up with death. He had made death capable of pulling up the ropes of ages and cutting them asunder.

He⁴ knows the secrets of those who conceal them, the secret conversation of those who engage in it, the inner feelings of those who indulge in guesses, the established certainties, the inklings of the eyes, the inner contents of hearts and depths of the unknown. He also knows what can be heard only by bending the holes of the ears, the summer resorts of ants and winter abodes of the insects, resounding of the cries of wailing women and the sound of steps. He also knows the spots in the inner sheaths of leaves where fruits grow, the hiding places of beasts namely caves in mountains and valleys, the hiding holes of mosquitoes on the trunks of trees and their herbage, the sprouting points of leaves in the branches, the dripping points of semen passing through passages of loins, small rising clouds and the big giant ones, the drops of rain in the thick clouds, the particles of dust scattered by whirlwinds through their skirts, the lines erased by rain floods, the movements of insects on sand-dunes, the nests of winged creatures on the cliffs of mountains and the singing of chattering birds in the gloom of their brooding places.

And He knows whatever has been treasured by mother-of-pearls, and covered under the waves of oceans, all that which is concealed under the darkness of night and all that on which the light of day is shining, as well as all that on which sometimes darkness prevails and sometimes light shines, the trace of every footstep, the feel of every movement, the echo of every sound, the motion of every lip, the abode of every living being, the weight of every particle, the sobs of every sobbing heart, and whatever is there on the earth like fruits of trees or falling leaf, or settling place of semen, or the congealing of blood or clot and the developing of life and embryo.

On all this He suffers no trouble, and no impediment hampers Him in the preservation of what he created nor any languor or grief hinders Him from the enforcement of commands and management of the creatures, His knowledge penetrates through them and they are within His counting. His justice extends to all of them and His bounty encompasses them despite their falling short of what is due to Him.

O' my Allah! thou deservest handsome description and the highest esteem. If wish is directed towards Thee, Thou art the best to be wished for. If hope is reposed in Thee, Thou art the Most Honoured to be hoped from. O' my Allah! Thou hast bestowed on me such power that I do not praise any one other than Thee, and I do not eulogise any one save Thee. I do not direct my praise towards others who are sources of disappointment and centres of misgivings. Thou hast kept away my tongue from the praises of human beings and eulogies of the created and the sustained. O' my Allah! every praiser has on whom he praises the right of reward and recompense. Certainly, I have turned to Thee with my eye at the treasures of Thy Mercy and stores of forgiveness.

O' my Allah! here stands one who has singled Thee with Oneness that is Thy due and has not regarded any one deserving of these praises and eulogies except Thee. My want towards Thee is such that nothing except Thy generosity can cure its destitution, nor provide for its need except Thy obligation and Thy generosity. So do grant us in this place Thy will and make us free from stretching hands to anyone other than Thee. *"Certainly, Thou art powerful over every thing."* (Qur'an, 66:8)

1. The name of this sermon is the Sermon of "*al-Ashbâh*". "*Ashbâh*" is the plural of *shabah* which means skeleton, since it contains description of angels and other kinds of beings it has been named by this name.

The ground for being angry on the questioner was that his request was unconnected with the obligations of *shari'ah* and beyond limits of human capacity.

2. Allah is the Guarantor of sustenance and Provider of livelihood as He says:

No creature is there crawling on the earth, but its provision rests on Allah . . .
(Qur'an, 11:6)

But His being guarantor means that He has provided ways for everyone to live and earn livelihood, and has allowed every one equal shares in forests, mountains, rivers, mines and in the vast earth, and has given everyone the right to make use of them. His bounties are not confined to any single person, nor is the door of His sustenance closed to any one. Thus, Allah says :

All We do aid, these and (also) those out of the bounty of thy Lord; and the bounty of thy Lord is not confined. (Qur'an, 17:20)

If some one does not secure these things through languor or easefulness and sits effortless it is not possible that livelihood would reach his door. Allah has laid the table with multifarious feeds but to get them it is necessary to extend the hand. He has deposited pearls in the bottom of the sea but it requires diving to get them out. He has filled the mountains with rubies and precious stones but they cannot be had without digging the stones. The earth contains treasures of growth but benefit cannot be drawn from them without sowing of seed. Heaps of edibles lie scattered on all four sides of the earth but they cannot be collected without the trouble of travelling. Thus, Allah says:

... Traverse ye then its broad sides, and eat ye of His provision... (Qur'an, 67:15)

Allah's providing livelihood does not mean that no effort is needed in searching livelihood or no going out of the house is required for it, and that livelihood should itself finds its way to the seeker. The meaning of His being the provider of livelihood is that He has given earth the property of growing, He has sent rain from clouds for germination, created fruits, vegetables and grains. All this is from Allah but securing them is connected with human effort. Whoever will strive will reap the benefits of his efforts, and whoever abstains from strife would face the consequences of his idleness and laziness. Accordingly Allah says :

And that man shall have nothing but what he striveth for. (Qur'an, 53:39)

The order of universe hinges on the maxim "Sow and reap." It is wrong to expect germination without sowing, to hope for results without effort. Limbs and faculties have been given solely to be kept active. Thus, Allah addresses Mary and says :

And shake towards thee the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on thee dates fresh (and) ripe. Then eat and drink and refresh the eye . . . (Qur'an, 19:25-26)

Allah provided the means for Mary's livelihood. He did not however plucked the dates from the tree and put them in her lap. This was because so far as production of food goes it is His concern. So he made the tree green, put fruits on it and ripened the fruits. But when the stage arrived for plucking them He did not intervene. He just recalled to Mary her job namely that she should now move her hand and get her food.

Again, if His providing the livelihood means that whatever is given is given by Him and whatever is received from Him, then whatever a man would earn and eat, and in whatever manner he would obtain it would be permissible for him, whether he obtains it by theft, bribery, oppression or violence, because it would mean Allah's act and the food would be that given by Him, wherein he would have no free will, and where anything is out of the limits of free action there is no question of permissible or for-bidden for it, nor is there any liability to account for it. But when it is not actually so and there is the question of permissible and forbidden then it should have bearing on human actions, so that it could be questioned whether it was secured in lawful or unlawful manner. Of course, where He has not bestowed the power of seeking the livelihood, there He has taken upon Himself the responsibility to provide the livelihood. Consequently He has managed for the feeding of the embryo in the mother's womb, and it reaches him there according to its needs and requirements. But when this very young life enters the wide world and picks up energy to move its limbs, then it can't get its food from the source without moving his lips (for sucking).

3. In the management of the affairs of this world Allah has connected the sequence with the cause of human acts as a result of which the power of action in man does not remain idle, in the same way He had made these actions dependent on His own will, so man should not rely on his own power of action and forget the Creator. This is the issue of the will between two wills in the controversy of "free will or compulsion."

Just as in the entire Universe nature's universal and sovereign law is in force in the same way the production and distribution of food also is provided in a set manner under the dual force of Divine ordainment and human effort. And this is somewhere less and somewhere more depending on the proportion of human effort and the aim of Divine ordainment. Since He is the Creator of the means of livelihood, and the powers of seeking food have also been bestowed by Him, the paucity or plenty of livelihood has been attributed to Him because He has fixed different and separate measures for livelihood keeping in view the difference in efforts and actions and the good of the creatures. Somewhere there is poverty and somewhere affluence, somewhere distress and somewhere comfort, and some one is enjoying pleasure while some one else is suffering the hardships of want.

Qur'an says :

... amplifieth He their sustenance unto whomsoever He willeth and straiteneth; Verily He knoweth all things. (Qur'an, 42:12)

In sermon 23 Amir al-mu'minin has referred to this matter and said :

The Divine command descends from the sky towards the earth with whatever is ordained for every one, whether less or more, just like rain drops.

So just as there is a fixed process and manner for the benevolence of rain namely that vapours rise from the sea with the store of water, spread over in the sky in the shape of dark clouds and then ooze the water by drops till they form themselves in regular lines. They irrigate plains as well as high lands thoroughly and proceed onwards to collect in the low areas, so that the thirsty may drink it, animals may use it and dry lands may be watered from it. In the same way Allah has provided all the means of livelihood but His bounty follows a particular mode in which there is never a jot of deviation. Thus, Allah says :

And there is not a thing but with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (Qur'an, 15:21)

If man's greed and avarice exceeds its bounds, then just as excess of rain ruins crops instead of growing and bringing the up, so the abundance of the articles of livelihood and necessities of life would make man oblivious of Allah and rouse him to revolt and unruliness. Consequently, Allah says :

And should Allah amplify the sustenance unto his servants, they would certainly rebel in the earth, but He sendeth it down by measure as he willeth; Verily of His servants, He is All-aware, All-seeing. (Qur'an, 42:27)

If He lessens the food then just as stoppage of rain makes the land arid and kills the animals, in the same way, by closure of the means of livelihood, human society would be destroyed and so there would remain no means of living and livelihood. Allah accordingly says :

Or who is that who can provide you with sustenance should He with-hold His sustenance? . . . (Qur'an, 67:21)

Consequently Allah, the Wise the Omniscient has put the organization for livelihood on moderate and proportionate lines, and in order to emphasize the importance of livelihood and sustenance and to keep them correlated with each other has introduced differences in the distribution of livelihood. Sometime, this difference and unequal distribution owes itself to the difference of human effort and sometimes it is the consequence of overall arrangement of the affairs of the Universe and Divine acts of wisdom and objectives. This is because, if by poverty and want He has tested the poor in endurance and patience, in affluence and wealth there is severe test of the rich by way of thanks-giving and gratifying the rights of others, namely whether the rich person gratifies the claims of the poor and the distressed, and whether he takes care of the destitute or not. Again, where there is wealth there would also be dangers of all sorts. Sometimes there would be danger to the wealth and property and sometimes fear of poverty and want.

Consequently, there would be many persons who would be more satisfied and happy for lack of wealth. For them this destitution and want would be far better than the wealth which might snatch away their comfort and peace. Moreover sometimes this very wealth which one holds dearer than life becomes the cause of loss of one's life. Further, it has also been seen that so long as wealth was lacking character was above reproach, life was unblemished, but the moment property and wealth changed into plenty the conduct worsened, character became faulty and there appeared the vice of drink, crowd of beauties and gathering of singing and music. In such a case the absence of wealth was a blessing. However being ignorant of Allah's objectives man cries out and being affected by transitory distress begins complaining but does not realize from how many vices which could have accrued owing to wealth he has remained aloof. Therefore, if wealth produces conveniences poverty serves as a guard for the character.

4. The eloquence with which Amir al-mu'minin has thrown on Allah's attributes of knowledge and the sublime words in which he has pictured the all-engrossing quality of His knowledge cannot but impress the mind of the most die-hard opponent. Thus, Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid has written :

If Aristotle, who believed that Allah is only aware of the universe and not of its particulars, had heard this speech, his heart too would have inclined, his hair would have stood on end and his thinking would have undergone a dramatic change. Do you not see the brightness, force, vehemence, sublimity, glory, seriousness and ripeness of this speech? Besides these qualities, there is sweetness, colourfulness, delicacy and smoothness in it. I have not found any utterance similar to it. Of course, if there is any utterance matching it, that can be the word of Allah only. And there is no wonder in it, because he is an off-shoot of the same tree (of the Prophet Ibrahim, who set up the Unity of Allah), a diversion of the same river and a reflection of the same light. (*Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.7, pp.23-24)

Those who regard Allah to possess only over-all knowledge argue that since details undergo changes, to believe Him to have knowledge of the changing details would necessitate changes in His knowledge but since knowledge is the same as His Being, His Being would have to be regarded as the object of change the result of which would be that He would have to be taken as having come into existence. In this way He would lose the attribute of being from ever. This is a very deceptive fallacy because changes in the object of knowledge can lead to changes in the knower only when it is assumed that the knower does not already possess knowledge of these changes. But since all the forms of change and alteration are crystal clear before Him there is no reason that with the changes in the objects of knowledge He too should be regarded changeable, although really this change is confined to the object of knowledge and does not affect knowledge in itself.

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SERMON 91

When people decided to swear allegiance¹ at Amir al-mu'minin's hand after the murder of `Uthman, he said:

Leave me and seek some one else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colours, which neither hearts can

stand nor intelligence can accept. Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernable. You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse. If you leave me then I am the same as you are. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make incharge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counsellor than as a chief.

1. When with the murder of `Uthman the seat of Caliphate became vacant Muslims began to look at `Ali (p.b.u.h.) whose peaceful conduct, adherence to principles, and *politia lacumen* had been witnessed by them to a great extent during this long period. Consequently they so rushed for swearing allegiance on his righteous in the same way as a traveller who had lost his way and catches sight of the objective would have rushed towards it, as the historian at-Tabari (in *at-Tārikh*, vol.1, pp.3066,3067,3076) records:

People thronged on Amir al-mu'minin and said, "We want to swear allegiance to you and you see what troubles are befalling Islam and how we are being tried about the near ones of the Prophet."

But Amir al-mu'minin declined to accede to their request whereupon these people raised hue and cry and began to shout loudly, "O' Abu'l-Hasan, do you not witness the ruination of Islam or see the advancing flood of unruliness and mischief? Do you have no fear of Allah?" Even then Amir al-mu'minin showed no readiness to consent because he was noticing that the effects of the atmosphere that had come into being after the Prophet had overcome hearts and minds of the people, selfishness and lust for power had become rooted in them, their thinking affected by materialism and they had become habituated to treating government as the means for securing their ends. Now they would like to materialize the Divine Caliphate too and play with it. In these circumstances it would be impossible to change the mentalities or turn the direction of temperaments. In addition to these ideas he had also seen the end in view that these people should get further time to think over so that on frustration of their material ends hereafter they should not say that the allegiance had been sworn by them under a temporary expediency and timely thought and that nature thought had not been given to it, just as `Umar's idea was about the first Caliphate, which appears from his statement that :

Abu Bakr's Caliphate came into being without thought but Allah saved us from its mischief. If anyone repeats such an affair you should kill him. (*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhari, vol.8, pp.210,211; *al-Musnad*, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol.1, p.55; aṭ-Ṭabari, vol.1, p.1822; Ibn al-Athir, vol.2, p.327; Ibn Hishām, vol.4, pp.308-309; Ibn Kathir, vol.5, p.246)

In short, when their insistence increased beyond limits Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon wherein he clarified that "If you want me for your worldly ends, then I am not ready to serve as your instrument. Leave me and select someone else who may fulfil your ends. You have seen my past life that I am not prepared to follow anything except the Qur'an and *sunnah* and would not give up this principle for securing power. If you select some-one else I would pay regard to the laws of the state and the constitution as a peaceful citizen should do. I have not at any stage tried to disrupt the collective existence of the Muslims by inciting revolt. The same will happen now. Rather, just as keeping the common good in view I have hitherto been giving correct advice, I would not grudge doing the same. If you let me in the same position it would be better for your worldly ends, because in that case I won't have power in my hands so that I could stand in the way of your worldly affairs, and create impediment against your hearts' wishes. However, if you are determined on swearing allegiance on my hand bear in mind that if you frown or speak against me I would force you to tread on the path of right, and in the matter of the right I would not care for anyone. If you want to swear allegiance even at this, you can satisfy your wish."

The impression Amir al-mu'minin had formed about these people is fully corroborated by later events. Consequently, when those who had sworn allegiance with worldly motives did not succeed in their objectives then broke away and rose against his government with baseless allegations.

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SERMON 92 1

About the annihilation of the Kharijites, the mischief mongering of Umayyads and the vastness of his own knowledge

So now, praise and eulogy be to Allah, O' people, I have put out the eye of revolt. No one except me advanced towards it when its gloom was swelling and its madness was intense. Ask me before you miss me,² because, by Allah,

who has my life in His hands, if you ask me anything between now and the Day of Judgement or about the group who would guide a hundred people and also misguide a hundred people I would tell you who is announcing its march, who is driving it in the front and who is driving it at the rear, the stages where its riding animals would stop for rest and the final place of stay, and who among them would be killed and who would die a natural death.

When I am dead hard circumstances and distressing events would befall you, many persons in the position of asking question would remain silent with cast down eye, while those in the position of replying would lose courage. This would be at a time when wars would descend upon you with all hardship, and days would be so hard on you that you would feel them prolonged because of hardship till Allah would give victory to those remaining virtuous among you.

When mischiefs come they confuse (right with wrong) and when they clear away they leave a warning. They cannot be known at the time of approach but are recognized at the time of return. They blow like the blowing of winds, striking some cities and missing others.

Beware that the worst mischief for you in my view is the mischief of Banu Umayyah, because it is blind and also creates darkness. Its sway is general but its ill effects are for particular people. He who remains clear-sighted in it would be affected by distress, and he who remains blind in it would avoid the distress. By Allah, you will find Banu Umayyah after me worst people for yourselves, like the old unruly she-camel who bites with its mouth, beats with its fore-legs, kicks with its hind legs and refuses to be milked. They would remain over you till they would leave among you only those who benefit them or those who do not harm them. Their calamity would continue till your seeking help from them would become like the seeking of help by the slave from his master or of the follower from the leader.

Their mischief would come to you like evil eyed fear and pre-Islamic fragments, wherein there would be no minaret of guidance or any sign (of salvation) to be seen. We *Ahlu'l-bayt* (the Household of the Prophet) are free from this mischief and we are not among those who would engender it. Thereafter, Allah would dispel it from you like the removal of the skin (from flesh) through him who would humble them, drag them by necks, make them drink full cups (of hardships), not extend them anything but sword and not clothe them save with fear. At that time Quraysh would wish at the cost of the world and all its contents to find me even only once and just for the duration of the slaughter of a camel in order that I may accept from them (the whole of) that of which at present I am asking them only a part but they are not giving me.

1. Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon after the battle of Nahrawān. In it mischiefs imply the battles fought in Basrah, Şifīn and Nahrawān because their nature was different from the battles of the Prophet. There the opposite party were the unbelievers while here the confrontation was with those who had veils of Islam on their faces. So people were hesitant to fight against Muslims, and said why they should fight with those who recited the call to the prayers and offered the prayers. Thus, Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari did not take part in the Battle of Şifīn till the falling of `Ammar ibn Yasir as martyr did not prove that the opposite party was rebellious. Similarly the presence of companions like Talhah and az-Zubayr who were included in the "Foretold Ten" on the side of `A'ishah in Basrah, and the prayer signs on foreheads of the Kharijites in Nahrawān and their prayers and worships were creating confusion in the minds. In these circumstances only those could have the courage to rise against them were aware of the secrets of their hearts and the reality of their faith. It was the peculiar perception of Amir al-mu'minin and his spiritual courage that he rose to oppose them, and testified the saying of the Holy Prophet :

You will fight after me with the breakers of allegiance (people of Jamal), oppressors (people of Syria) and deviators (the Kharijites). (*al-Mustadrak 'ala as-Sahihayn*, al-Hākim, vol.3, pp.139,140; *ad-Durr al-manthur*, vol.6, p.18; *al-Isti`āb*, vol.3, p.1117; *Usd al-ghābah*, vol.4, pp.32,33; *Tārikh Baghdad*, vol.8, p.340; vol.13, pp.186,187; *at-Tārikh*, Ibn `Asākir, vol.5, p.41; *at-Tārikh*, Ibn Kathir, vol.7,

pp.304,305,306; *Majma' az-zawā'id*, vol.7, p.238; vol.9, p.235; *Sharh al-mawāhib*, vol.3, pp.316-317; *Kanz al-ummāl*, vol.6, pp. 72,82,88,155,319,391,392; vol.8, p.215).

2. After the Holy Prophet, no one save Amir al-mu'minin could utter the challenge "Ask whatever you want to." Ibn `Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi` bayān al-ilm wa faḍlihi*, vol.1, p.58 and in *al-Isti'āb*, vol.3, p.1103; Ibn al-Athir in *Usd al-ghābah*, vo.4, p.22; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in *Sharh Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.7, p.46; as-Suyuti in *Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, p.171 and Ibn Hajar al-Haytami in *as-Sawā'iq al-muḥriqah*, p.76 have written that "None among the companions of the Holy Prophet ever said **Ask me whatever you want to** except `Ali ibn Abi Tālib." However, among other than the companions a few names do appear in history who did utter such a challenge, such as Ibrahim ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi, Muqātil ibn Sulayman, Qatadah ibn Di'amah, `Abd al-Rahman (Ibn al-Jawzi) and Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i etc. but everyone of them had to face disgrace and was forced to take back his challenge. This challenge can be urged only by him who know the realities of the Universe and is aware of the happenings of the future. Amir al-mu'minin the opener of the door of the Prophet's knowledge as he was, was the only person who was never seen being unable to answer any question on any occasion, so much so that even Caliph `Umar had to say that "I seek Allah's protection from the difficulty for the solution of which `Ali would not be available." Similarly, the prophesies of Amir al-mu'minin made about the future proved true word by word and served as an index to his vast know-ledge, whether they be about the devastation of Bann Umayyah or the risings of the Kharijites, the wars and destruction by the Tatars or the attacks of the English, the floods of Basrah or the ruination of Kufah. In short when these events are historical realities there is no reason why this challenge of Amir al-mu'minin should be wondered at.

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SERMON 93

Allah's praise and eulogy of the prophets

Exalted is Allah Whom heights of daring cannot approach and fineness of intelligence cannot find. He is such First that there is no extremity for Him so that He be contained within it, nor is there an end for Him where He would cease.

A part of the same sermon about the Prophet

Allah kept the Prophets in deposit in the best place of deposit and made them stay in the best place of stay. He moved them in succession from distinguished fore-fathers to chaste wombs. Whenever a predecessor from among them died the follower stood up for the cause of the religion of Allah.

About the Holy Prophet and his Descendants (Itrah)

Until this distinction of Allah, the Glorified, reached Muhammad — peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants. Allah brought him out from the most distinguished sources of origin and the most honourable places of planting, namely from the same (lineal) tree from which He brought forth other Prophets and from which He selected His trustees. Muhammad's descendants are the best descendants, his kinsmen the best of kin and his lineal tree the best of trees. It grew in esteem and rose in distinction. It has tall branches and unapproachable fruits.

He is the leader (Imam) of all who exercise fear (of Allah) and light for those who seek guidance. He is a lamp whose flame is burning, a meteor whose light is shining and a flint whose spark is bright. His conduct is upright, his behaviour is guiding, his speech is decisive and his decision is just. Allah sent him after an interval from the previous Prophets when people had fallen into errors of action and ignorance. Allah may have mercy on you.

May Allah shower His mercy on you! Do act according to the clear signs, because the way is straight and leads to the house of safety while you are in the place of seeking Allah's favour, and have time and opportunity. The books (of your doings) are open and pens (of angels) are busy (to record your actions) while your bodies are healthy, tongues are free, repentance is accepted and deeds are accorded recognition.

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SERMON 94

About the condition of the people at the time of the Prophet's proclamation and his actions to do with the dissemination of his message

Allah sent the Prophet at a time when the people were going astray in perplexity and were moving here and there in mischief. Desires had deflected them and self-conceit had swerved them. Extreme ignorance had made them foolish. They were confounded by the unsteadiness of matters and the evils of ignorance. Then the Prophet — blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants — did his best in giving them sincere advice, himself trod on the right path and called (them) towards wisdom and good counsel.

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SERMON 95

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet

Praise be to Allah who is such First that nothing is before Him and such Last that there is nothing after him. He is such Manifest that there is nothing above Him and such Hidden that there is nothing nearer than He.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

His place of stay is the best of all places and his origin the noblest of all origins in the mines of honour and the cradles of safety. Hearts of virtuous persons have been inclined towards him and the reins of eyes have been turned towards him. Through him Allah buried mutual rancour and put off the flames of revolt. Through him He gave them affection like brothers and separated those who were together (through unbelief). Through him He gave honour to the low and degraded honour (of unbelief). His speaking is clear and his silence is (indicative) like tongue.

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SERMON 96 1

Admonishing his own companions

Although Allah gives time to the oppressor His catch would not spare him. Allah watches him on the passage of his way and the position of that which suffocates the throats.

By Allah in Whose power my life lies, these people (Mu'awiyah and his men) will overcome you not because they have a better right than you but because of their hastening towards the wrong with their leader and your slowness about my right (to be followed). People are afraid of the oppression of their rulers while I fear the oppression of my subjects.

I called you for war but you did not come. I warned you but you did not listen. I called you secretly as well as openly, but you did not respond. I gave you sincere counsel, but you did not accept it. Are you present like the absent, and slaves like masters? I recite before you points of wisdom but you turn away from them, and I advise you with far reaching advice but you disperse away from it. I rouse you for *jihad* against the people of revolt but before I come to the end of my speech, I see you disperse like the sons of Saba.² You return to your places and deceive one another by your council. I straighten you in the morning but you are back to me in the evening as curved as the back of a bow. The straightener has become weary while those to be straightened have become incorrigible

O' those whose bodies are present but wits are absent, and whose wishes are scattered. Their rulers are on trial. Your leader obeys Allah but you disobeyed him while the leader of the people of Syria (ash-Sham) disobeys Allah but they obey him. By Allah, I wish Mu'awiyah exchanges with me like Dinars with Dirhams, so that he takes from me ten of you and give me one from them. O' people of Kufah, I have experienced in you three things and two

others : you are deaf in spite of having ears, dumb in spite of speaking, and blind in spite of having eyes. You are neither true supporters in combat nor dependable brothers in distress. Your hands may be soiled with earth. O' examples of those camels whose herdsman has disappeared, if they are collected together from one side they disperse from the other. By Allah, I see you in my imagination that if war becomes intense and action is in full swing you would run away from the son of Abi Tâlib like the woman who becomes naked in the front. I am certainly on clear guidance from my Lord (Allah) and on the path of my Prophet and I am on the right path which I adhere to regularly.

About the Household of the Holy Prophet

Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. Follow their footsteps because they would never let you out of guidance, and never throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up you rise up. Do not go ahead of them, as you would thereby go astray and do not lag behind of them as you would thereby be ruined.

I have seen the companions of the Prophet but I do not find anyone resembling them. They began the day with dust on the hair and face (in hardship of life) and passed the night in prostration and standing in prayers. Sometimes they put down their foreheads and sometimes their cheeks. With the recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coal. It seemed that in between their eyes there were signs like knees of goats, resulting from long prostrations. When Allah was mentioned their eyes flowed freely till their shirt collars were drench-ed. They trembled for fear of punishment and hope of reward as the tree trembles on the day of stormy wind.

1. In the atmosphere that had been created soon after the Prophet the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (members of his family) had no course except to remain secluded as a which result of world has remained ignorant of their real qualities and unacquainted

with their teachings and attainments, and to belittle them and keeping them away from authority has been considered as the greatest service to Islam. If `Uthman's open misdeeds had not given a chance to the Muslims to wake up and open their eyes there would have been no question of allegiance to Amir al-mu'minin and temporal authority would have retained the same course as it had so far followed. But all those who could be named for the purpose had no courage to come forward because of their own shortcomings while Mu'āwiyah was sitting in his capital away from the centre. In these circumstances there was none except Amir al-mu'minin who could be looked at. Consequently people's eyes hovered around him and the same common people who, following the direction of the wind, had been swearing allegiance to others jumped at him for swearing allegiance. Nevertheless, this allegiance was not on the count that they regarded his Caliphate as from Allah and him as an Imam (Divine Leader) to obey whom was obligatory. It was rather under their own principles which were known as democratic or consultative. However, there was one group who was swearing allegiance to him as a religious obligation regarding his Caliphate as determined by Allah. Otherwise, the majority regarded him a ruler like the other Caliphs, and as regards precedence, on the fourth position, or at the level of the common men after the three caliphs. Since the people, the army, and the civil servants had been impressed by the beliefs and actions of the previous rulers and immersed in their ways whenever they found anything against their liking they fretted and frowned, evaded war and were ready to rise in disobedience and revolt. Further, just as among those who fought in *jihad* with the Prophet there were some seekers of this world and others of the next world, in the same way here too there was no dearth of worldly men who were, in appearance, with Amir al-mu'minin but actually they had connections with Mu'āwiyah who had promised some of them positions and had extended to others temptation of wealth. To hold them as Shi'ahs of Amir al-mu'minin and to blame Shi'ism for this reason is closing the eyes to facts, because the beliefs of these people would be the same as of those who regarded Amir al-mu'minin fourth in the series. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid throws light on the beliefs of these persons in clear words :

Whoever observes minutely the events during the period of Caliphate of Amir al-mu'minin would know that Amir al-mu'minin had been brought to bay because those who knew his real position were very few, and the swarming majority did not bear that belief about him which was obligatory to have. They gave precedence to the previous Caliphs over him and held that the criterion of precedence was Caliphate, and in this matter those coming later followed the predecessors, and argued that if the predecessors had not the knowledge that the previous Caliphs had precedence over Amir al-mu'minin they would not have preferred them to him.

Rather, these people knew and took Amir al-mu'minin as a citizen and subject. Most of those who fought in his company did so on grounds of prestige or Arab partisanship, not on the ground of religion or belief. (*Sharh Nahj al-balāghah*, vol.7, p.72)

2. The progeny of Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya'rub ibn Qaḥṭan is known as the tribe of Saba'. When these people began to falsify prophets then to shake them Allah sent to them flood of water by which their gardens were submerged and they left their houses and property to settle down in different cities. This proverb arose out of this event and it is now applied wherever people so disperse that there be no hope of their joining together again.

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SERMON 97

Oppression of the Umayyads

By Allah, they would continue like this till there would be left no unlawful act before Allah but they would make it lawful and no pledge but they would break it, and till there would remain no house of bricks or woollen tent but their oppression would enter it. Their bad dealings would make them wretched, till two groups of crying complainants would rise, one would cry for his religion and the other for this world and the help of one of you to one of them would be like the help of a slave to his master, namely when he is present he obeys him, but when the master is away he backbites him. The highest among you in distress would be he who bears best belief about Allah. If Allah grants you safety accept it, and if you are put in trouble endure it, because surely (good) result is for the God-fearing.

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SERMON 98

About abstinence of the world and vicissitudes of time

We praise Allah for what has happened and seek His succour in our affairs for what is yet to happen, and we beg Him for safety in the faith just as we beg Him for safety in our bodies.

O' creatures of Allah! I advise you to keep away from this world which is (shortly) to leave you even though you do not like its departure, and which would make your bodies old even though you would like to keep them fresh. Your example and its example is like the travellers who travel some distance and then as though they traverse it quickly or they aimed at a sign and reached it at once. How short is the distance to the aim if one heads towards it and reaches it. And how short is the stage of one who has only a day which he cannot exceed while a swift driver is driving him in this world till he departs from it.

So do not hanker after worldly honour and its pride, and do not feel happy over its beauties and bounties nor wail over its damages and misfortune because its honour and pride would end while its beauty and bounty would perish, and its damages and misfortunes would pass away. Every period in it has an end and every living being in it is to die. Is not there for you a warning in the relics of the predecessors and an eye opener and lesson in your fore-fathers, provided you understand?

Do you not see that your predecessors do not come back and the surviving followers do not remain? Do you not observe that the people of the world pass mornings and evenings in different conditions? Thus, (somewhere) the dead is wept for, some-one is being consoled, someone is prostrate in distress, someone is enquiring about sick, someone is passing his last breath, some-one is hankering after the world while death is looking for him, someone is forgetful but he is not forgotten (by death), and on the footsteps of the predecessors walk the survivors.

Beware ! At the time of committing evil deeds remember the destroyer of joys, the spoiler of pleasures, and the killer of desires (namely death). Seek assistance of Allah for fulfilment of His obligatory rights, and for (thanking Him) for His countless bounties and obligations.

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SERMON 99

About the Holy Prophet and his Descendants

Praise be to Allah Who spreads His bounty throughout the creation, and extends His hand of generosity among them. We praise Him in all His affairs and seek His assistance for fulfilment of His rights. We stand witness that there is no god except He and that Muhammad (p. b. u. h. a. h. p.) is His slave and Prophet. He sent him to manifest His commands and speak about His remembrance. Consequently, he fulfilled it with trustworthiness, and he passed away while on the right path.

He left among us the standard of right. Whoever goes further from it goes out of Faith, whoever lags behind it is ruined. Whoever sticks to it would join (the right) . Its guide is short of speech, slow of steps, and quick when he rises. When you have bent your necks before him and pointed towards him with your fingers his death would occur and would take him away. They would live after him as long as Allah wills till Allah brings out for you one who would collect you together and fuse you after diffusion. Do not place expectations in one who does not' come forward and do not lose hope in one who is veiled, because it is possible that one of the two feet of the veiled one may slip while the other may remain sticking, till both return to position and stick.

Beware! The example of the descendants (*Āl*) of Muhammad — peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants —

is like that of stars in the sky. When one star sets another one rises. So you are in a position that Allah's blessings on you have been perfected and He has shown you what you used to wish for.

1. The implication is that if for the time being your expectations are not being fulfilled, you should not be disappointed. It is possible matters may improve, the impediments in the way of improvement may be removed and matters may be settled as you wish.

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SERMON 100

About the vicissitudes of time

He (Allah) is the First before every first and the Last after every last. His Firstness necessitates that there is no (other) first before Him and His Lastness necessitates that there is no other last after Him. I do stand witness that there is no god but Allah both openly as well as secretly, with heart as well as with tongue.

O' people, do not commit the crime of opposing me, do not be seduced into disobeying me and do not wing at each other with eyes when you hear me. By Allah, Who germinates the seed and blows the wind, whatever I convey to you is from the Prophet. Neither the conveyor (of Allah's message, i.e. the Prophet) lied nor the hearer misunderstood.

Well, it is as though I see a misguided man¹ who is shouting in Syria (ash-Sham) and has put his banners in the out-skirt of Kufah. When his mouth would be fully opened, his recalcitrance would become intense and his steps on earth would become heavy (and tyrannic) then the disorder (so created) would cut the people with its teeth and war would rage with (all) its waves, days would become severe and nights full of toil. So when the crop grows and stands on stalks, its foam shoots forth and its lightning shines, the banners of misguiding

rebellion would fire up and shoot forth like darkening night and surging sea. This and how many other storms would rend Kufah and gales would sweep over it, and shortly heads would clash with heads, the standing crop would be harvested and the harvest would be smashed.

1. Some people have taken this to refer to Mu`awiyah and others to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.

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SERMON 101

On the same subject — Day of Judgement.

That day would be such that Allah would collect on it the anteriors and the posteriors, to stand in obedience for exaction of accounts and for award of recompense for deeds. Sweat would flow upto their mouths like reins while earth would be trembling under them. In the best condition among them would be he who has found a resting place for both his feet and an open place for his breath.

A part of the same sermon about future troubles (fitan)

The troubles are like a dark night. Horses would not stand for (facing) them nor would their banners turn back. They would approach in full reins and ready with saddles. Their leader would be driving them and the rider would be exerting (them). The trouble-mongers are a people whose attacks are severe. Those who would fight them for the sake of Allah would be a people who are low in the estimation of the proud, unknown in the earth but well known on the

sky. Woe to you O' Basrah, when an army of Allah's infliction would face upon you without (raising) dust of cries. Your inhabitants would then face bloody death and dire hunger.

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SERMON 102

About abstemiousness and fear of Allah

O' people ! look at the world like those who abstain from it, and turn away from it. By Allah, it would shortly turn out its inhabitants and cause grief to the happy and the safe. That which turns and goes away from it never returns and that which is likely to come about is not known or anticipated. Its joy is mingled with grief. Herein men's firmness inclines towards weakness and languidness. The majority of what pleases you here should not mislead you because that which would help you would be little.

Allah may shower His mercy on him who ponders and takes lesson thereby, and when he takes lesson he achieves enlightenment. Whatever is present in this world would shortly not exist, while whatever is to exist in the next world is already in existence. Every countable thing would pass away. Every anticipation should be taken to be coming up and every thing that is to come up should be taken as just near.

A part of the same sermon on the attributes of a learned person

Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth. Certainly, the most hated man with Allah is he whom Allah has left for his own self. He goes astray from the right path, and moves without a guide. If he is called to the plantation of this world he is active,

but if he is called to the plantation of the next world he is slow. As though what he is active for is obligatory upon him whereas in whatever he is slow was not required of him.

A part of the same sermon concerning future times

There would be a time wherein only a sleeping (inactive) believer would be safe (such that) if he is present he is not recognized but if he is absent he is not sought after. These are the lamps of guidance and banners of night journeys. They do not spread calumnies nor divulge secrets, nor slander. They are those for whom Allah would open the doors of His mercy and keep off from them the hardships of His chastisement.

O' people! a time will come to you when Islam would be capsized as a pot is capsized with all its contents. O' people, Allah has protected you from that He might be hard on you but He has not spared you from being put on trial. Allah the Most Sublime of all speakers has said :

Verily in this are signs and We do only try (the people). (Qur'an, 23:30)

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: As regards Amir al-mu'minin's words "*kullu mu'minin nuwamah*" (every sleeping believer), he implies thereby one who is talked of little and causes no evil. And the word "*al-masayih*" is the plural of "*misyah*". He is one who spreads trouble among people through evils and calumnies. And the word "*al-madhāyi*" is the plural of "*midhyā*". He is one who on hearing of an evil about some one spreads it and shouts about it. And "*al-budhur*" is the plural of "*badhur*". He is one who excels in foolishness and speaks rubbish.

SERMON 103

About the condition of the people before the proclamation of prophethood and the Prophet's performance in spreading his message

So now, certainly Allah deputed Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as the Prophet while no one among the Arabs read the Book nor claimed prophethood or revelation. He had to fight those who disobeyed him in company with those who followed him, leading them towards their salvation and hastening with them lest death overtook them. When any weary person sighed or a distressed one stopped he stood at him till he got him his aim, except the worst in whom there was not virtue at all. Eventually he showed them their goal and carried them to their places (of deliverance). Consequently their affairs moved on and their hand-mill began to rotate (i.e. position gained strength), their spears got straightened.

By Allah, I was among their rear-guard till they turned back on their sides and were flocked in their rope. I never showed weakness or lack of courage, nor did I betray or become languid. By Allah, I shall split the wrong till I extract right from its flanks.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: I have quoted a selected part of this sermon before, but since I have found in the narration that this part differs from the previous one, more or less, I deemed it necessary to quote it again here.

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SERMON 104

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet

Then Allah deputed Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as a witness, giver of good tidings and warner, the best in the universe as a child and the chastest as a grown up man, the purest of the purified in conduct, the most generous of those who are approached for generosity.

About the Umayyads

This world did not appear sweet to you in its pleasures and you did not secure milk from its udders except after having met it when its nose-rein was trailing and its leather girth was loose. For certain peoples its unlawful items were like bent branches (laden with fruit) while its lawful items were far away, not available. By Allah, you would find it like a long shade upto a fixed time. So the earth is with you without let or hindrance and your hands in it are extended while the hands of the leaders are held away from you. Your swords are hanging over them while their swords are held away from you.

Beware that for every blood (that is shed) there is an avenger and for every right there is a claimant. The avenger for our blood is like the judge for his own claim, and it is Allah who is such that if one seeks Him, then He does not disappoint him, and one who runs away from Him cannot escape Him. I swear by Allah, O' Bani Umayyah, shortly you will see it (i.e. your possession) in the hands of others and in the house of your enemy. Know that the best looking eye is that whose sight catches virtue and know that the best hearing ear is that which hears good advice and accept it.

About the functions of the Imams

O' people, secure light from the flame of lamps of the preacher who follows what he preaches and draw water from the spring which has been cleaned of dirt.

O' creatures of Allah, do not rely on your ignorance, do not be obedient to your desires because he who stays at this place is like one who stays on the brink of a bank undermined by water carrying ruin on his back from one portion to the other following his opinion which he changes (one after the other). He wants to make adhere what cannot adhere and to bring together what cannot keep together. So fear Allah and do not place your complaints before him who cannot redress your grievance, nor undo with his opinion what has been made obligatory for you.

Certainly, there is no obligation on the Imam except what has been devolved on him from Allah, namely to convey warnings, to exert in good advice, to revive the *Sunnah*, to enforce penalties on those liable to them and to issue shares to the deserving. So hasten towards knowledge before its vegetation dries up and before you turn yourselves away from seeking knowledge from those who have it. Desist others from the unlawful and abstain from it yourself, because you have been commanded to abstain (yourself) before abstaining (others).

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SERMON 105

About Islam

Praise be to Allah who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to its columns against any one who tries to overpower it. So Allah made it (a source of) peace for him who clings to it, safety for him who enters it, argument for him who speaks about it, witness for him who fights with its help, light for him who seeks light from it, understanding for him who provides it, sagacity for him who exerts, a sign (of guidance) for him who perceives, sight for him who resolves, lesson for him who seeks advice, salvation for him who testifies, confidence for him who trusts, pleasure for him who entrusts, and shield for him who endures.

It is the most bright of all paths, the clearest of all passages. It has dignified minarets, bright highways, burning lamps, prestigious field of activity, and high objective. It has a collection of race horses. It is approached eagerly. Its riders are honourable. Certification (of Allah, Prophet etc.) is its way, good deeds are its minarets, death is its extremity, this world is its race-course, the Day of Judgement is its horses and Paradise is its point of approach.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

The Prophet lighted flames for the seeker and put bright signs for the impeded. So he is Thy trustworthy trustee, Thy witness on the Day of Judgement, Thy deputy as a blessing and Thy messenger of truth as mercy. My Allah distribute to him a share from Thy Justice and award him multiples of good by Thy bounty. My Allah heighten his construction over the constructions of others, honour him when he comes to Thee, dignify his position before Thee, give him honourable position, and award him glory and distinction, and bring us out (on Day of Judgement) among his party, neither ashamed, nor repentant, nor deviators, nor pledge-breakers, nor strayers, nor misleads, nor seduced.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: This sermon had already appeared earlier but we have repeated it here because of the difference between the two versions.

A part of the same sermon addressed to his followers

By bounty of Allah over you, you have acquired a position where even your slave maids are honoured, your neighbours are treated well. Even he over whom you enjoy no distinction or obligation honours you. Even those people fear you who had no apprehension of attack from you or any authority over you. You now see pledges of Allah being broken but do not feel enraged although you fret and frown on the breaking of traditions of your forefathers. Allah's matters have been coming to you, and going from and again coming back to you; but you have made over your place to wrong-doors and thrown towards them your responsibilities, and have placed Allah's affairs in their hands. They act in doubts and tread in (fulfilment of) desires. By Allah, even if they disperse you under every star Allah would surely collect you on the day that would be worst for them.

SERMON 106

Delivered during one of the days of Şiffin

I have seen your flight and your dispersal from the lines. You were surrounded by rude and low people and Bedouins of Syria (ash-Sham), although you are the chiefs of Arabs and summit of distinction, and possess dignity as that of high nose and big hump of camel. The sigh of my bosom can subside only when I eventually see you surrounding them as they surrounded you, and see you dislodging them from their position as they dislodged you, killing them with arrows and striking them with spears so that their forward rows might fall on the rear ones just like the thirsty camels who have been turned away from their places of drink and removed from their water-points.

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SERMON 107

It is one of the sermons about the vicissitudes of time

Praise be to Allah Who is Manifest before His creation because of themselves. Who is apparent to their hearts because of clear Proof; who created without meditating, since meditating does not befit except one who has thinking organs while He has no thinking organ in Himself. His knowledge has split forth the inside of unknown secrets and covered the bottom of deep beliefs.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

Allah chose him from the lineal tree of prophets, from the flame of light, from the forehead of greatness, from the best part of the valley of al-Baṭha', from the lamps for darkness, and from the sources of wisdom.

A part of the same sermon

The Prophet was like a roaming physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He followed with his medicines the spots of negligence and places of perplexity.

Blaming Muslims

They (people) did not take light from the lights of his wisdom nor (lid they produce flame from the flint of sparkling knowledge. So in this matter they are like grazing cattle and hard stones. Nevertheless hidden things have appeared for those who perceive, the face of right has become clear for the wanderer, the approaching moment has raised the veil from its face and signs have appeared for those who search for them.

What is the matter with me! I see you just bodies without spirits and spirits without bodies, devotees without good, traders without profits, wakeful but sleeping, present but unseen, seeing but blind, hearing but (leaf and speaking but dumb.

I notice that misguidance has stood on its centre and spread (all round) through its off-shoots. It weighs you with its weights and confuses you with its measures. Its leader is an out-cast from the community. He persists on misguidance. So on that day none from among you would remain except as the sediment in a cooking pot or the dust left after dusting a bundle. It would scrape you as leather is scraped, and trample you as harvest is trampled, and pick out the believer as a bird picks out a big grain from the thin grain.

Where are these ways taking you, glooms misleading you, and falsehoods deceiving you? Whence are you brought and where are you driven? For every period there is a written document and everyone who

is absent has to return. So listen to your godly leader and keep your hearts present. If he speaks to you be wakeful. The forerunner must speak truth to his people, should keep his wits together and maintain presence of mind. He has clarified to you the matter as the stitch-hole is cleared, and scraped it as the gum is scraped (from the twigs).

Nevertheless, now the wrong has set itself on its places and ignorance has ridden on its riding beasts. Unruliness has increased while the call for virtue is suppressed. Time has pounced upon like devouring carnivore, and wrong is shouting like a camel after remaining silent. People have become brothers over ill-doings, have forsaken religion, are united in speaking lie but bear mutual hatred in the matter of truth.

When such is the case, the son would be a source of anger (instead of coolness of the eye to parents) and rain the cause of heat, the wicked would abound and the virtuous would diminish. The people of this time would be wolves, its rulers beasts, the middle class men gluttons and the poor (almost) dead. Truth would go down, falsehood would overflow, affection would be claimed with tongues but people would be quarrelsome at heart. Adultery would be the key to lineage while chastity would be rare and Islam would be worn overturned like the skin.

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SERMON 108

About the Might of Allah

Everything submits to Him and everything exists by Him. He is the satisfaction of every poor, dignity of the low, energy for the weak and shelter for the oppressed. Whoever speaks, He hears his speaking,

and whoever keeps quit, He knows his secret. On Him is the livelihood of everyone who lives, and to Him returns whoever dies.

(O' Allah!) The eyes have not seen Thee so as to be aware of Thee, but Thou wert before the describers of Thy creation. Thou didst not create the creation on account of loneliness, nor didst make them work for gain. He whom Thou catchest cannot go farther than Thee, and he whom Thou holdest cannot escape Thee. He who disobeys Thee does not decrease Thy authority, and he who obeys Thee does not add to Thy Might. He who disagrees with Thy judgement cannot turn it, and he who turns away from Thy command cannot do without Thee. Every secret before Thee is open and for Thee every absent is present.

Thou art everlasting; there is no end to Thee. Thou art the highest aim, there is no escape from Thee, Thou art the promised (point of return) from which there is no deliverance except towards Thee. In Thy hand is the forelock of every creature and to Thee is the return of every living being. Glory to Thee! How great is Thy creation that we see, but how small is this greatness by the side of Thy Might. How awe-striking is Thy realm that we notice, but how humble is this against what is hidden from us out of Thy authority. How extensive are Thy bounties in this world, but how small are they against the bounties of the next world.

A part of the same sermon about the Angels

Thou (O' Allah) made angels reside in Thy skies and placed them high above from Thy earth. They have the most knowledge about Thee and Thy whole creation, the most fearing from Thee, and the nearest to Thee. They never stayed in loins nor were retained in wombs. They were not created "*from man water* (semen)" (Qur'an, 32:8; 77:20). They were not dispersed by vicissitudes of time. They are on their places (distinct)

from Thee and in their positions near Thee. Their desires are concentrated in Thee. Their worship for Thee is much. Their neglect from Thy command is little. If they witness what remains hidden about Thee they would regard their deeds as very little they would criticise themselves and would realize that they did not worship Thee according to Thy right for being worshipped and did not obey Thee as Thou hast the right for being obeyed.

**About the bounties and guidance of Allah,
and those who are ungrateful**

Glorified art Thou, the Creator, the Worshipped, on account of Thy good trials of Thy creatures. Thou created a house (the Paradise) and provided in it for feasting, drinks, foods, spouses, servants, places, streams, plantations and fruits. Then Thou sent a messenger to invite towards it, but the people did not respond to the caller, and did not feel persuaded to what Thou persuaded them nor showed eagerness towards what Thou desired them to feel eager. They jumped on the carcass (of this world), earned shame by eating it and became united on loving it.

When one loves a thing it blinds him and sickens his heart. Then he sees but with a diseased eye, hears but with unhearing ears. Desires have cut asunder his wit, and the world has made his heart dead, while his mind is all longing for it. Consequently, he is a slave of it and of everyone who has any share in it. Wherever it turns, he turns towards it and wherever it proceeds, he proceeds towards it. He is not desisted by any desister from Allah, nor takes admonition from any preacher. He sees those who have been caught in neglect whence there is neither rescission nor reversion.

About Death

Whatever they were ignoring has befallen them, separation from this world, from which they took themselves safe, has come

to them, and they have reached that in the next world which they had been promised. Whatever has befallen them cannot be described. Pangs of death and grief for losing (this world) have surrounded them. Consequently their limbs become languid and their complexion changes. Then death increases its struggle over them.

In some one it stands in between him and his power of speaking although he lies among his people, looking with eyes, hearing with his ears, with full wits and intelligence. He then thinks over how he wasted his life and in what (activities) he passed his time. He recalls the wealth he collected when he had blinded himself in seeking it, and acquired it from fair and foul sources. Now the consequences of collecting it have overtaken him. He gets ready to leave it. It would remain for those who are behind him. They would enjoy it and benefit by it.

It would be an easy acquisition for others but a burden on his back, and the man cannot get rid of it. He would thereupon bite his hands with teeth out of shame for what was disclosed to him about his affairs at the time of his death. He would dislike what he coveted during the days of his life and would wish that he who envied him on account of it and felt jealous over him for it should have amassed it instead of he himself.

Death would go on affecting his body till his ears too would behave like his tongue (and lose functioning). So he would lie among his people, neither speaking with his tongue nor hearing with his ears. He would be rotating his glance over their faces, watching the movements of their tongues, but not hearing their speaking. Then death would increase its sway over it, and his sight would be taken by death as the ears had been taken and the spirit would depart from his body. He would then become a carcass among his own people. They would feel loneliness from him and get away from near him. He would not join a mourner or respond to a caller. Then they would carry him to a small place in the ground and deliver him in it to (face) his deeds. They abandoned visiting him.

About the Day of Judgement

Till whatever is written as ordained approaches its end, the affairs complete their destined limits, the posteriors join the anteriors and whatever Allah wills takes place in the shape of resurrection of His creation. Then He would convulse the sky and split it. He would quake the earth and shake it. He would root out the mountains and scatter them. They would crush each other out of awe of His Glory and fear of His Dignity.

He would take out everyone who is in it. He would refresh them after they had been worn out and collect them after they had been separated. Then He would set them apart for questioning about the hidden deeds and secret acts. He would then divide them into two groups, rewarding one and punishing the other. As regards the obedient people He would reward them with His nearness and would keep them for ever in His house from where those who settle therein do not move out. Their position would not undergo change, fear would not overtake them, ailments would not befall them, dangers would not affect them and journey would not force them (from place to place).

As for people of sins, He would settle them in the worst place, would bind their hands with the necks, bind the forelocks with feet and would clothe them in shirts of tar and dresses cut out of flames. They would be in punishment whose heat would be severe, door would be closed on the inmates—in fire which is full of shouts and cries and rising flames and fearful voices. Its inmate does not move out of it, its prisoner cannot be released by ransom and its shackles cannot be cut. There is no fixed age for this house so that it might perish, or period for its life that might pass away.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

He treated this world disdainfully and regarded it low. He held it contemptible and hated it. He realized that Allah kept it away from him with

intention and spread it out for others by way of contempt. Therefore, he remained away from it by his heart, banished its recollection from his mind and wished that its attraction should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it. He conveyed from 'Allah the pleas (against committing sins), counselled his people as a warner (against Divine chastisement), called (people) towards Paradise as conveyer of good tidings.

About the Descendants of the Holy Prophet

We are the tree of prophethood, staying place of (Divine) Message, descending place of angels, mines of knowledge and the sources of wisdom. Our supporter and lover awaits mercy while our enemy and he who hates us awaits wrath.

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SERMON 109

About Islam

The best means by which seekers of nearness to Allah, the Glorified, the Exalted, seek nearness, is the belief in Him and His Prophet, fighting in His cause, for it is the high pinnacle of Islam, and (to believe) in the *kalimatu'l-'ikhl4* (the expression of Divine purification) for it is just nature and the establishment of prayer for it is (the basis of) community, payment of *zakat* (Islamic tax) for it is a compulsory obligation, fasting for the month of *Ramadan* for it is the shield against chastisement, the performance of *hail* of the House of Allah (i.e. Ka`bah) and its *`umrah* (other than annual visit) for these two acts banish poverty and wash away sins, regard for kinship for it increases wealth and length of life, to giving

alms secretly for it covers shortcomings, giving alms openly for it protects against a bad death and extending benefits (to people) for it saves from positions of disgrace.

About the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah

Go ahead with the remembrance of Allah for it is the best remembrance, and long for that which He has promised to the pious, for His promise is the most true promise. Tread the course of the Prophet for it is the most distinguished course. Follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet for it is the most right of all behaviours. Learn the Qur'an for it is the fairest of discourses and understand it thoroughly for it is the best blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light for it is the cure for hearts. Recite it beautifully for it is the most beautiful narration. Certainly, a scholar who acts not according to his knowledge is like the off-headed ignorant who does not find relief from his ignorance; but on the learned the plea of Allah is greater and grief more incumbent, and he is more blameworthy before Allah.

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SERMON 110

Caution about this world

So now, certainly I frighten you from this world for it is sweet and green, surrounded by lusts, and liked for its immediate enjoyments. It excites wonder with small things, is ornamented with (false) hopes and decorated with deception. Its rejoicings

do not last and its afflictions cannot be avoided. It is deceitful, harmful, changing, perishable, exhaustible, liable to destruction, eating away and destructive. When it reaches the extremity of desires of those who incline towards it and feel happy with it, the position is just what Allah the Glorified, says (in the Qur'an):

. . . like the water which send We down from heaven, and the herbage of the earth mingleth with it, then it becometh dry stubble which the winds scatter; for Allah over all things hath power.
(18:45)

No person gets rejoicing from this world but tears come to him after it, and no one gets its comforts in the front but he has to face hardships in the rear. No one receives the light rain of ease in it but the heavy rain of distress pours upon him. It is just worthy of this world that in the morning it supports a man but in the evening it does not recognize him. If one side of it is sweet and pleasant the other side is bitter and distressing.

No one secures enjoyment from its freshness but he has to face hardship from its calamities. No one would pass the evening under the wing of safety but that his morning would be under the feathers of the wing-tip of fear. It is deceitful, and all that is there in it is deception. It is perishable and all that is on it is to perish. There is no good in its provisions except in piety. Whoever takes little from it collects much of what would give him safety, while one who takes much from it takes much of what would ruin him. He would shortly depart from his collection. How many people relied on it but it distressed them; (how many) felt peaceful with it but it tumbled them down; how many were prestigious but it made them low and how many were proud but it made them disgraceful.

Its authority is changing. Its life is dirty. Its sweet water is bitter. Its sweetness is like myrrh. Its food are poisons. Its means are weak. The living in it is exposed to death; the healthy in it is exposed to disease. Its realm is (liable to be) snatched away. The strong in it is

(liable to be) defeated and the rich is (liable to be) afflicted with misfortune. The neighbour in it is (liable to be) plundered.

Are you not (residing) in the houses of those before you, who were of longer ages, better traces, had bigger desires, were more in numbers and had greater armies. How they devoted themselves to the world and how they showed preference to it? Then they left it without any provision that could convey them through, or the back (of a beast for riding) to carry them.

Did you get the news that the world was ever generous enough to present ransom for them, or gave them any support or afforded them good company? It rather inflicted them with troubles, made them languid with calamities, molested them with catastrophes, threw them down on their noses, trampled them under hoofs and helped the vicissitudes of time against them. You have observed its strangeness towards those who went near it, acquired it and appropriated it, till they depart from it for good. Did it give them any provision other than starvation, or make them stay in other than narrow places, or give them light other than gloom, or give them in the end any-thing other than repentance? Is this what you much ask for or remain satisfied with, or towards which you feel greedy? How bad is this abode for him he did not suspect it (to be so) and did not entertain fear from it?

You should know, as you do know, that you have to leave it and depart from it. While in it, take lesson from those "*who proclaimed 'who is more powerful than we'*" (Qur'an, 41:15) but they were carried to their graves, though not as riders. They were then made to stay in the graves, but not as guests. Graves were made for them from the surface of the ground. Their shrouds were made from earth. Old bones were made their neighbour. They are neighbours who do not answer a caller nor ward off trouble, nor pay heed to mourner.

If they get rain they do not feel happy, and if they face famine they do not get disappointed. They are together but each one apart. They are close together but do not see each other. They are near but do not meet. They are enduring and have no hatred. They are ignorant and their malice has died away. There is no fear of trouble from them and no hope of their warding off (troubles). They have exchanged the back (surface) of the earth with its stomach (interior), vastness with narrowness, family with loneliness, and light with darkness. They have come to it (this world) as they had left it with bare feet and naked bodies. They departed from it with their acts towards the continuing life and everlasting house as Allah has said:

.. As we caused the first creation, so will We get it return. (It is) a promise binding Us, verily We were doing it. (Qur'an, 21:104)

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SERMON 111

About the Angel of Death and departing of spirit

Do you feel when the Angel of Death enters a house, or do you see him when he takes out life of anyone? How does he take out the life of an embryo in the womb of his mother? Does he reach it through any part of her body or the spirit responded to his call with the permission of Allah? Or does he stay with him in the mother's interior? How can he who is unable to describe a creature like this, describe Allah?

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SERMON 112

About this world and its people

I warn you of the world for it is the abode of the unsteady. It is not a house for foraging. It has decorated itself with deception and deceives with its decoration. It is a house which is low before Allah. So He has mixed its lawful with its unlawful, its good with its evil, its life with its death, and its sweetness with its bitterness. Allah has not kept it clear for His lovers, nor has He been niggardly with it towards His foes. Its good is sparing. Its evil is ready at hand. Its collection would dwindle away. Its authority would be snatched away. Its habitation would face desolation. What is the good in a house which falls down like fallen construction or in an age which expires as the provision exhausts, or in time which passes like walking?

Include whatever Allah has made obligatory on you in your demands. Ask from Him fulfilment of what He has asked you to do. Make your ears hear the call of death before you are called by death. Surely the hearts of the abstemious weep in this world even though they may (apparently) laugh, and their grief increases even though they may appear happy. Their hatred for themselves is much even though they may be envied for the subsistence they are allowed. Remembrance of death has disappeared from your hearts while false hopes are present in you. So this world has mastered you more than the next world, and the immediate end (of this world) has removed you away from the remote one (of the next life). You are brethren in the religion of Allah. Dirty natures and bad conscience have separated you. Consequently you do not bear burdens of each other nor advise each other, nor spend on each other, nor love each other.

What is your condition? You feel satisfied with what little you have secured from this world while much of the next world of which you have been deprived does not grieve you. The little of this world which you lose pains you so much so that it becomes apparent in your faces, and in the

lack of your endurance over whatever is taken away from you; as though this world is your permanent abode, and as though its wealth would stay with you for good. Nothing prevents anyone among you to disclose to his comrade the shortcomings he is afraid of, except the fear that the comrade would also disclose to him similar defects. You have decided together on leaving the next world and loving this world. Your religion has become just licking with the tongue. It is like the work of one who has finished his job and secured satisfaction of his master.

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SERMON 113

About abstemiousness, fear of Allāh and importance of providing for the next life

Praise be to Him Who makes praise followed by bounty and bounty with gratefulness. We praise Him on His bounties as on His trails. We seek His help against these hearts which are slow to obey what they have been commended but quick towards what they have been desisted from. We seek His forgiveness from that which His knowledge covers and His document preserves knowledge which does not leave anything and document which does not omit anything. We believe in Him like the belief of one who has seen the unknown and has attained the promised rewards—belief, the purity whereof keeps off from belief in partners of Allah, and whose conviction removes doubt.

We stand witness that there is no god but Allah, the One, Who has no partner for Him, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet, Allah may bless him and his descendants. These two certifications heighten the utterance and raise the act. The scale wherein they would be placed would not be light while the scale from which they are removed would not become heavy.

Enjoining people to Piety

O' creatures of Allah ! I advise you to have fear of Allah which is the provision (for next world) and with it is (your) return. The provision would take you (to your destination) and the return would be successful. The best one, who is able to make people listen has called towards it and the best listener has listened to it. So the caller has proclaimed and the listener has listened and preserved.

O' creations of Allah ! certainly fear of Allah has saved the lovers of Allah from unlawful items and gave His dread to their hearts till their nights are passed in wakefulness and their noons in thirst. So they achieve comfort through trouble and copious watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near and therefore hastened towards (good) actions. They rejected their desires and so they kept death in their sight.

Then, this world is a place of destruction, tribulations, changes and lessons. As for destruction, the time has its bow pressed (to readiness) and its dart does not go amiss, its wound does not heal; it afflicts the living with death, the healthy with ailment and the safe with distress. It is an eater who is not satisfied and a drinker whose thirst is never quenched. As for tribulation, a man collects what he does not eat and builds wherein he does not live. Then he goes out to Allah without carrying the wealth or shifting the building.

As for its changes, you see a pitiable man becoming en-viable and an enviable man becoming pitiable. This is because the wealth has gone and misfortune has come to him. As for its lessons, a man reaches near (realization of) his desires when (suddenly) the approach of his death cuts them; then neither the desire is achieved nor the desires spared. Glory to Allah, how deceitful are its pleasures, how thirst-rousing its quenching and how sunny its shade. That which approaches (i.e. death) cannot be sent back, he who goes away does not return.

Glory to Allah, how near is the living to the dead because he will meet him soon and how far is the dead from the living because he has gone away from him.

Certainly nothing is viler than evil except its punishment, and nothing is better than good except its reward. In this world everything that is heard is better than what is seen, while of everything of the next world that is seen is better than what is heard. So you should satisfy yourself by hearing rather than seeing and by the news of the unknown. You should know that what is little in this world but much in the next is better than what is much in this world but little in the next. In how many cases little is profitable while much causes loss.

Certainly that which you have been commanded to do is wider than what you have been refrained from, and what has been made lawful for you is more than what has been prohibited. Then give up what is less for what is much, and what is limited for what is vast. Allah has guaranteed your livelihood and has commanded you to act. Therefore, the pursuit of that which has been guaranteed to you should not get preference over that whose performance has been enjoined upon you.

But by Allah, most certainly the position is that doubt has overtaken and certainty has been shattered and it seems as if what has been guaranteed to you is obligatory on you and what was made obligatory on you has been taken away from you. So, hasten towards (good) actions and dread the suddenness of death, because the return of age cannot be hoped for, as the return of livelihood can be hoped. Whatever is missed from livelihood today may be hoped tomorrow with increase, but whatever is lost from the age yesterday, its return cannot be expected today. Hope can be only for that which is to come, while about that which is passed there is only disappointment. So *"fear Allah as He ought to be feared and do not die until you are (true) Muslim."* (Qur'an, 3:102)

SERMON 114

Seeking rain

O' my Allah ! surely our mountains have dried up and our earth has become dusty. Our cattle are thirsty and are bewildered in their enclosures. They are moaning like the moaning of mothers for their (dead) sons. They are tired of going to their meadows and longing for their watering places. O' my Allah ! have mercy on the groan of the groaning and yearn of the yearning. O' my Allah! have mercy on their bewilderment and their passages and their groaning in their yards.

O' my Allah ! we have come out to Thee when the years of drought have crowded over us like (herd of) thin camels, and rain clouds have abandoned us. Thou art the hope for the afflicted and succour for the seeker. We call Thee when the people have lost hopes, cloud has been denied and cattle have died, that do not seize us for our deeds and do not catch us for our sins, and spread Thy mercy over us through raining clouds, rain-fed blossoming, amazing vegetation, and heavy down-pours with which all that was dead regains life and all that was lost returns.

O' my Allah ! give rain from Thee which should be life giving, satisfying, thorough, wide-scattered, purified, blissful, plentiful and invigorating. Its vegetation should be exuberant its branches full of fruits and its leaves green. With it Thou re-invigorates the weak among Thy creatures and bringest back to life the dead among Thy cities.

O' my Allah ! give rain from Thee with which our high lands get covered with green herbage, streams get flowing, our sides grow green, our fruits thrive, our cattle prosper, our far-flung areas get watered and our dry areas get its benefit, with Thy vast blessing and immeasurable grant on Thy distressed universe and Thy untamed beasts. And pour upon us rain which is drenching, continuous and heavy; wherein one cycle of rain clashes with the other and one

rain drop pushes another (into a continuous chain), its lightning should not be deceptive, its cheek not rainless, its white clouds not scattered and rain not light, so that the famine-stricken thrive with its abundant herbage and the drought stricken come to life with its bliss. Certainly, Thou pourest down rain after the people lose hopes and spreadest Thy mercy, since Thou art the Guardian, the praiseworthy.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi says: The wonderful expressions of this sermon: Amir al-mu'minin's words "*insāḥat jibālunā*" means the mountains cracked on account of drought. It is said "*insāḥa'ththawbu* " when it is torn. It is also said "*insāḥa'n-nabtu* " or "*sāḥa* " or "*sawwaḥa* " when vegetation withers and dries up.

His words "*wa hamat dawābbuna*" means became thirsty, as "*huyam* " means thirst.

His words "*ḥadābiru's-sinin*". This is plural of "*hidbar*" It means the camel whom treading has made thin. So Amir al-mu'minin likened with such or camel the year in which drought had occurred. The Arab poet Dhū ar-Rummah has said-

These thin camels remain in their places, facing hardships and move only when we take them to some dry area.

His words "*wa lā qaza`in rababuha*". Here "*al-qaza`* " means small pieces of cloud scattered all round.

His words "*wa lā shaffānin dhihābuhā*". It stands for "*wa lā dhāta shaffānin dhihābuha* ". "*ash-shaffān* " means the cold wind and "*adh-dhihāb*" means light rain. He omitted the word "*dhāta*" from here because of the listener's knowledge of it.

SERMON 115

About troubles which would arise and the Day of Judgement

Allah deputed him (the Prophet) as a caller towards Truth and a witness over the creatures. The Prophet conveyed the messages of Allah without being lazy and without any short-coming, and he fought His enemies in the cause of Allah without being languid and without pleading excuses. He is the foremost of all who practice piety and the power of perception of all those who achieve guidance.

A part of the same sermon, complaining about his men

If you know what I know of the unknown that is kept wrapped up from you certainly you would have gone out into the open weeping over your deeds and beating yourselves in grief and you would have abandoned your properties without any guard for it on any substitute over it. Everyone would then have cared for his own self without paying attention to anyone else. But you have forgotten what was recalled to you and felt safe from what you had been warned. Consequently, your ideas went astray and your affairs were dispersed.

I do long that Allah may cause separation between me and you and give me those who have a better right to be with me than you. By Allah, they are people of blissful ideas, enduring wisdom and true speech. They keep aloof from revolt. They trod forward on the path (of Allah) and ran on the high-road. Consequently, they achieved the everlasting next life and easeful honours.

Beware? by Allah, a tall lad of swinging gait from Banu Thaqif would be placed over you. He would eat away your vegetation and melt your fat. So, O' Aba Wadhāhah, is that all?

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍi says: "*al-Wadhāhah*" means "*al-khun-*

fusā' (dung-beetle)." In this sentence Amir al-mu'minin has referred to al-Hajjāj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi and he had an incident with "*al-Khunfusā'*", which need not be related here ¹

1. The detail of this incident is that one day al-Hajjāj stood up for saying prayers when a dung-beetle advanced towards him. al-Hajjāj held out his hand to stop him but he bit him whereby his hand got swollen and eventually he died of it.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that "*al-Wadhāḥah* " means the dung that remains sticking to the tail of an animal, and this surname is intended to disgrace him.

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SERMON 116

Rebuking Misers

You spend no wealth in the cause of Him Who gave it, nor do you risk your lives for the sake of Him Who created them. You enjoy honour through Allah among His creatures, but you do not honour Allah among His creatures. You should derive lessons from your occupying the places of those who were before you and from the departure of your nearest brothers.

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SERMON 117

In praise of his faithful companions

You are supporters of Truth and brethren i faith. You are the shield on the day of tribulation, and (my) trustees among the rest of the people. With your support I strike the runner away and hope for the obedience of him who advances forward. Therefore, extend to me support which is free from deceit and pure from doubt because, by Allah, I am the most preferable of all for the people.

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SERMON 118

Amir al-mu'minin collected the people and exhorted them¹ to jihād but they observed long silence. Then he said: "What is the matter with you. Have you become dumb?" A group of them replied. "O' Amir al-mu'minin if you go forth we shall be with you." Whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said :

What has happened to you? You may not be guided aright or shown the right path. Should in these circumstances I go forth? In fact, at this time one of the brave and the valorous among you whom I select should go out. It does not suit me to leave the army, the city, the public treasury, the land revenue, the dispensation of justice among Muslims and looking after the demands of the claimants and to follow one contingent after the other moving here and there like featherless arrow moving in the quiver.

I am the axis of the mill. It rotates on me while I remain in my position. As soon as I leave it the centre of its rotation would be disturbed and its lower stone would also be disturbed. By Allah, this is a very bad advice.

By Allah, if I had not been hoping for martyrdom by my meeting with the enemy—and my meeting with him has been ordained, I would have secured my carrier and went away from you and would not have sought you so long as North and South differed.

There is no benefit in the majority of your numbers because of lack of unity of your hearts. I have put you on the clear path whereon no one will perish except who perishes by himself. He who sticks to it would achieve Paradise and he who deviates goes to Hell.

1. When after the Battle of Şiffin, Mu`awiyah's forces began to attack various places in Amir al-mu'minin's area, he asked the Iraqis to check them but they declined on the plea that they would follow him if he himself came forward. Thereupon he delivered this sermon, and clarified his limitations, that if he himself went out it was impossible to run the affairs of the state, and that the enemy's attacks had already started on all sides. In these circumstances it was impolitic to keep the centre unguarded. But what could be hoped from those who changed the victory at Şiffin into defeat and opened the door for these attacks.

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SERMON 119

About the greatness of Ahlu'l-bayt and the importance of the laws of Islam

By Allah, I have knowledge of the conveyance of messages, fulfilment of promises and of entire expressions. We the people of the house (of the Prophet—Ahlu'l-bayt) possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance. Beware that the paths of religion are one and its highways are straight. He who follows them achieves (the aim) and secures (the objective). And he who stood away from it went astray and incurred repentance.

Do act for the day for which provisions are stored, and when the intentions would be tested. If a person's own intelligence which is present with him does not help him, the wits (of others) which are remote from him are more unhelpful and those which are away from him more useless.. Dread the fire whose flame is severe, whose hollow is deep, whose dress is iron and whose drink is bloody puss. Beware! The ¹ good name of a man retained by Allah, the Sublime, among the people is better than wealth inherited by those who would not praise him.

1. If a person gives away something in his life time then the recipient feels obliged to him. But if wealth is extracted by force then the extractor does not feel himself under his obligation, nor does he praise it. The same is the case of one who dies. His successors think that whatever he had left behind was their right and they should have received it. In this there is no obligation of his to be acknowledged. But if he had done some good act with this very wealth his name would have remained behind him and people would have praised him also.

A Persian couplet says :

Happy is he who is remembered well after himself, for nothing save the name remains after the man is dead.

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SERMON 120

A man from among the companions of Amir al-mu'minin stood up and said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin, you first stopped us from Arbitration and thereafter gave order for it. We do not know which of these two was more appropriate." Amir al-mu'minin struck one hand over the other and said :

This is the reward of one who breaks pledge. By Allah, when I gave you my orders (namely) to abide by arbitration I had led you to an undesirable

thing (namely war) in which Allah had ordained good. If you had been steadfast I would have guided you, if you had been bent I would have straightened you and if you had refused I would have rectified you. This was the surest way. But with whom and to whom. I wanted my treatment from you but you proved to be my disease, like the extractor of thorn with the thorn when he knows that the thorn bends towards itself.

My Allah, the physicians have despaired of this fatal ailment and water-drawers have become tired with the rope of this well. Where ¹ are those who were invited to Islam and they accepted it? They read the Qur'an and decided according to it. They were exhorted to fight and they leapt (towards it) as she-camels leap towards their youngs. They took their swords out of the sheaths and went out into the world in groups and rows. Some of them perished and some survived. The good news of survival does not please them nor do they get condoled about the dead. Their eyes have turned white with weeping. Their bellies are emaciated because of fasting. Their lips are dry because of (constant) praying. Their colour is pale because of wakefulness. Their faces bear the dust of God-fearing. These are, my comrades who have departed. We should be justified if we feel eager for them and bite our hands in their separation.

Certainly, Satan has made his ways easy for you and wants to unfasten the knots of religion one by one and to cause division among you in place of unity. Keep away from his evil ideas and enchantments and accept good advice of one who offers it to you and preserve it in your minds.

1. Although all those who fought under the banner of Amir al-mu'minin were called Shi'ahs of `Ali, yet only those who had tears in their eyes, paleness on their faces, the Qur'anic verses on their tongues, zeal of religion in their hearts, steadfastness in their feet, determination and courage in their spirits, and patience and endurance in their minds could in true sense be called Shi `ahs of `Ali. These were the people in whose separation Amir al-mu'minin's feelings were coming out in the shape of sighs through the breath, while the flames of the fire

of separation were consuming his heart and spirit. These were the people who leapt towards death like mad men and did not feel happy if they survived. Rather, their heart's slogan was as the Persian hemistich says :

We are ashamed why we have remained alive.

He who has even a slight brilliance of these qualities can alone be called the follower of the Descendants of the Prophet or the Shi'ah of `Ali, otherwise it would be a word which has lost its meaning and been bereft of its dignity through misuse. Thus tradition has it that Amir al-mu'minin saw a group of men at his door and enquired from Qanbar who they were and he answered they were his Shi'ahs. On hearing this Amir al-mu'minin had a frown on his forehead and said, "Why are They called Shi'ahs? They have no sign of Shi'ahs." Thereupon Qanbar enquired what were the signs of Shi'ahs and Amir al-mu'minin replied:

Their bellies are thin through hunger, their lips dry through thirst and their eyes bleared through weeping.

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SERMON 121

When the Khārijites persisted in their rejecting the Arbitration, Amir al-mu'minin went to their camp and addressed them thus:

Were all of you' with us in Şiffin? They replied that some of them were but some of them were not. Amir al-mu'minin said:

Then you divide yourselfes into two groups. One of those who were in Şiffin and other of those who were not present there, so that I may address each as I see suitable. Then he shouted to the people:

Stop talking and keep quiet to listen to what I say. Turn your hearts to me. Whomever we ask for evidence, he should give it according to his knowledge about it.

Then he had a long conversation with them during which he said :

When they had raised the Qur'an by way of deceit, craft, artifice and cheat, did you not say "They are our brothers and our comrades in accepting Islam. They want us to cease fighting, and ask for protection through the Book of Allah, the Glorified. Our opinion is, to agree with them and to end their troubles." Then I said to you, "In this affair the outer side is Faith but the inner side is enmity. Its beginning is pity and the end is repentance. Consequently you should stick to your position, and remain steadfast on your path. You should press your teeth (to put all your might) in *jihād* and should not pay heed to the shouts of the shouter.' If he is answered he would mislead, but if he is left (unanswered) he would be disgraced."

But when this thing (Arbitration) was done I found that you agree to it. By Allah, if I had refused it, it would not have been obligatory on me. Nor would Allah have laid its sin on me. And by Allah, now that I have accepted it, I alone am the rightful person who should be followed, for certainly the Qur'an is with me. I never forsake it since I adopted its company. We have been with the Prophet in battles wherein those killed were fathers, sons, brothers and relations of one another. Nevertheless, every trouble and hardship just increased us in our belief, in our treading on the right path, in submission to (divine) command and in endurance of the pain of wounds.

We now had to fight our brethren in Islam because of entry into Islam of misguidance, crookedness, doubts and (wrong) interpretation. However, if we find any way by which Allah may collect us together in our disorder and by which we may come near each other in whatever common remains between us we would accept it and would give up everything else.

1. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes that this sermon comprises three parts which do not fit together, because as-Sayyid ar-Radi selected some parts of Amir al-mu'minin's sermons and did not record other parts as a result of which the continuity of utterance was not maintained. Thus, one part ends at "if he is left unanswered he would be disgraced," the other at "and endurance at the pain of wound" and the third runs till the end of the sermon.

2. This reference is to Mu`awiyah or `Amr ibn al-`Ãs.

End of Volume I.